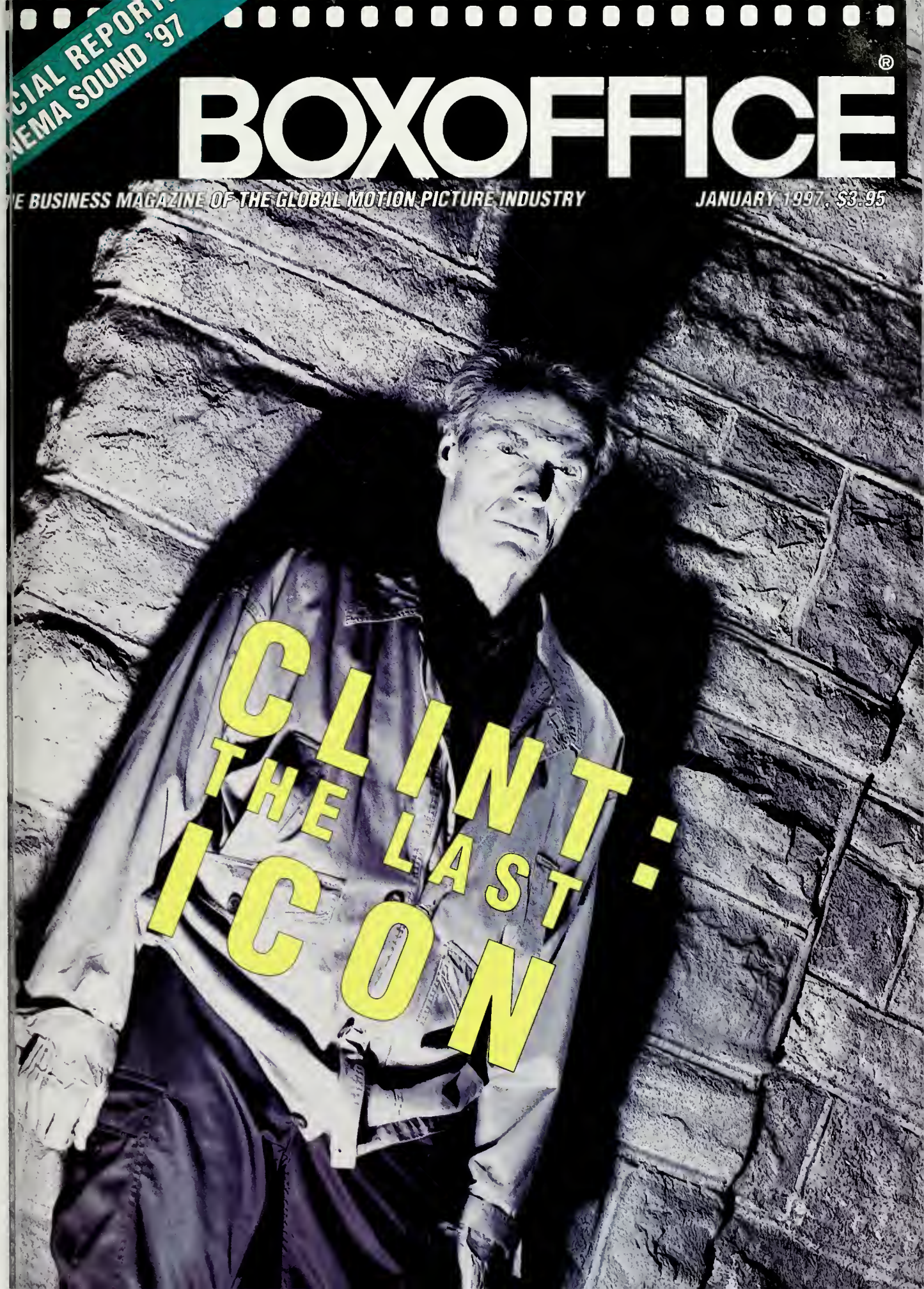


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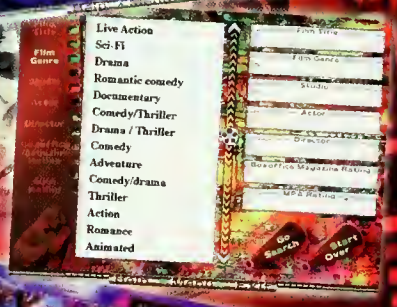
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OPENING CREDITS

A new year is upon us, and it seems fitting to use the opportunity of the first 1997 Opening Credits editorial to take a brief look backward at 1996. Our annual summation of what we've attempted and achieved in these pages during the year just past is a task we at BOXOFFICE look forward to; we view this yearly address to our readers as a kind of report to our stockholders, and we are proud to say that, just as 1996 was a great year for exhibition and the film industry in general, it's been an amazing period for this publication as well.

In point of fact, by several standards of measurement, 1996 was the best year in BOXOFFICE MAGAZINE'S modern history. A record-setting 1,198 pages of editorial material passed through our presses in the year which is about to end—every single one of which was dedicated to the business of film. Our regular domestic and foreign business pages were expanded by a total of some 200 percent while our Trailers section grew by a third. We added new features to and completely redesigned our September Buyers Directory to make it an easier and more informative read. And we improved on almost every one of our existing editorial departments by adding new features like Late Movie Moves (which tells Trailers readers when film release dates change suddenly); Day and Date (a regular part of our Reviews pages which offers a long-lead critical appraisal of a film keyed to our cover date); and two Q & A features (wherein our Exhibition Briefings and International News reporters bring you up close and personal with leading figures of domestic and foreign exhibition).

As we promised in the beginning of 1996, one of our major goals for the coming year was to do our best to find creative solutions to the problem of getting timely reviews into a magazine that comes out once a month. As some of you may remember, we pointed out in *last* January's editorial that there was very little we could do to increase the currency of certain studio titles as they are reviewed here. Knowing the power that exhibition has in the "making or breaking" of a pricey feature, the majors are often reluctant to give BOXOFFICE an advance peek at blockbusters, because they know that, wherever it is necessary to do so, BOXOFFICE is sure to tell exhibition when a studio colossus has feet of clay.

But BOXOFFICE has never made it a policy to accept situations which in any way undermine our ability to serve the professional interests of our audience. And so, in 1996, we overcame the "review crisis" in two ways, using one old-fashioned technique, and one that was state-of-the-art.

The state-of-the-art approach came via our website, BOXOFFICE ONLINE (available on the Internet at **http://www.boxoff.com**). By making weekly updates to our site each Friday, BOXOFFICE made sure that virtually every review we published this year (including our assessments of those same blockbusters the studios don't want us to tell you about) was available in a timely fashion.

Ideally, we'd like to have long-lead reviews show up in print in a timely fashion as well. Which is where solution number two came in, in which we got long-lead reviews to you the old-fashioned way: by doing the legwork—legwork which took us from Canada to Italy to France to Prague.

The results, once we did the math, were startling, even to us. In 1996, BOXOFFICE covered a wide range of film festivals all over the world to bring its readers the earliest possible word on over 200 long-lead titles, in the process publishing almost two-thirds as many long-lead reviews in 1996 as we did reviews of any kind in 1995. Our review tally for the year came in at a grand total of 464 film titles—some 40 percent more reviews than appeared in any other U.S.-based or international publication for theatrical exhibitors. As a result, BOXOFFICE readers were able to make some 150 informed booking or acquisitions choices that were unavailable to exhibitors or distributors who received their information from another source.

While art-house and specialty market subscribers benefitted the most from this windfall of titles (owing to the particular niche most festivals fill), the mainstreaming of the specialty market that has occurred in the 1990s ensured that exhibitors everywhere found full and useful long-lead information on virtually every major art-house title released in the U.S. this year—many months *before* making their booking decisions.

If there is any one thing we are most proud of about 1996, it's that, *finally*, we are able to say with pride that the long-standing canard about the timeliness of our reviews can be retired. And believe us when we tell you, it's been retired for *keeps*.

Additional achievements we're proud of include the vast expansion of our international news pages; the doubling of our "Exhibition Briefings" coverage; the recent addition of the new and thoroughly unique "Moviegoer Activity Chart" prepared for BOXOFFICE by our friends at MovieFone; and a myriad of minor format changes and modifications which may have gone unnoticed, but whose cumulative impact we're sure has made BOXOFFICE even more entertaining and instructive as a reading experience.

But that was then, this is now. So, happy 1997, and, from all of us at BOXOFFICE please accept this New Year's vow: You ain't seen nothin' yet.

Until next time,



Ray Greene
Editor-in-chief
BOXOFFICE

Our review tally for the year came in at 464 film titles—some 40 percent more reviews than appeared in any other publication for exhibitors. As a result,* BOXOFFICE *readers were able to make some 150 informed booking or acquisitions choices that were unavailable to exhibitors who received their information from another source.

BOXOFFICE
JANUARY, 1997 VOL. 133 NO. 1

UNQUOTE: *You should forget anybody's ever gonna see a film when you're making it. Some of my best films were the least attended, in my mind.* **—CLINT EASTWOOD**

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BOXOFFICE's *annual look at cinema sound investigates new technologies and brings you up close & personal with the top execs in the industry!*

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Clint Eastwood isn't the only prominent actor to direct feature films, although he is one of the most successful. BOXOFFICE takes a walk down moviemaking's memory lane to survey the acting/directing impulse. ***By Ray Greene***

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HOLLYWOOD UPDATES

The Fighting Irish: Instead of punching out the paparazzi, **George Clooney** is really hitting them where it hurts. The rising superstar is using his Hollywood power to strike a blow for all stalked celebrities. When Paramount's TV tabloid show "Hard Copy" did an unauthorized segment on Clooney's personal life, the star announced that he would boycott Paramount Domestic Television, including celebrity interview show "Entertainment Tonight." The program will be shut out from interviews with him concerning TV's "ER" and the upcoming high-profile films "One Fine Day," "Batman and Robin" and "The Peacemaker." Joining Clooney in his stand are Madonna, Steven Spielberg, Whoopi Goldberg, Rosie O'Donnell, Dean Cain and the entire cast of "ER." In response, Paramount claims they have enacted a new policy restricting "videorazzi" footage, but Clooney has not yet ended his boycott, saying he plans to tape "Hard Copy" every night to make sure they keep their promise.

Hot off his hip hit adaptation of "Romeo & Juliet," director **Baz Luhrmann** has signed a two-year exclusive writing, directing and producing deal with **20th Century Fox.** He will have an office on the studio's lot, and another in his homeland of Australia. Luhrmann also helmed 1992's acclaimed "Strictly Ballroom."

Caravan Pictures has entered into a non-exclusive agreement with **Eddie Murphy Prods.** to develop films which Murphy will produce and possibly star in or direct. The first film under the deal is "Holy Man," which will go into production this summer and is scripted by Academy Award-winner Tom Schulman ("Dead Poets Society"). Murphy worked with Caravan on his latest film, "Metro," to be distributed through Buena Vista.

Writer-producer **Judd Apatow** ("The Cable Guy") has signed a two-year, first-look development deal with **New Line Cinema.** Under the agreement, Apatow will co-write and direct "Making Amends," a comedy about an alcoholic who, as part of his recovery, must apologize to everyone he's ever wronged.

Mel Gibson's Icon Entertainment will take over London-based sales company **Majestic Films.** Majestic will be merged into Icon as its London sales division. The deal will allow Icon to reclaim some of its early movies, including "The Man Without a Face" and "Immortal Beloved," which Majestic co-financed before Icon created its own sales company. Majestic's current films include the Jack Nicholson starrer "Blood and Wine" and "The Brave," which is helmed by Johnny Depp; the company also has international rights to the Bill Murray comedy "Larger Than Life."

"Shine" helmer **Scott Hicks** has signed a one-year, first-look production and directing deal with **DreamWorks SKG.** A project under the pact is already in development, though details were not available at press time. The critically acclaimed "Shine," an Australian film starring Geoffrey Rush as a brilliant but schizophrenic classical pianist, is an odds-on favorite for multiple Oscar nominations. Also "ink"ing with DreamWorks is **Ted Danson** and his **Anasazi Prods.,** for a first-look deal to produce feature films, TV movies, miniseries and family programming. Danson, of TV's "Cheers" fame, is currently the star of DreamWorks' sitcom "Ink," in which he and his real-life wife, Mary Steenburgen, play newspaper reporters. Anasazi most recently produced the Paramount telefilm "The Canterville Ghost," starring Patrick Stewart, for ABC. No projects have yet been announced under the Danson/DreamWorks deal.

Universal Pictures has entered into a five-year producing, distribution and co-financing deal with **Beacon Communications.** Beacon will deliver up to four films a year for Universal, and production and promotion costs will be split equally between the two companies, with Beacon retaining international distribution rights. Beacon's current production slate includes "A.F.O." starring Harrison Ford; "A Thousand Acres" with Michelle Pfeiffer and Jessica Lange; and "Playing God," which stars David Duchovny of TV's "The X-Files."

Miramax Films, which paid $10 million for **Billy Bob Thornton**'s directorial debut "Sling Blade," has signed Thornton to a deal in which he will write, direct and possibly act in at least three films, to be produced by "Sling Blade" production company The Shooting Gallery. "Sling Blade," which Thornton also scripted and starred in, is about a mildly retarded man who is released from an asylum, returns to his hometown and befriends a lonely boy. The drama won the Special Jury Prize at the Chicago Film Festival. The first project under the deal with Miramax will be "A Thousand Miles," a comedy Thornton will write, helm and star in.

Director **Betty Thomas** ("Private Parts") and HBO Pictures vice president **Jenna Topping** have teamed up to form an as-yet-unnamed production company, and are considering first-look deals with several studios. Topping is executive producing Thomas' next directing project, the Eddie Murphy starrer "Dr. Dolittle." The two first worked together on 1995's "The Brady Bunch Movie."

The American Film Institute (AFI) and **The Walt Disney Company** have launched a showcase honoring American movie heritage at the Disney-MGM Studios in Orlando, Fla. The showcase includes rare movie artifacts and memorabilia; interactive kiosks about AFI; a video wall; and exhibits on the careers of AFI's 25 Life Achievement Award recipients. Also included will be displays on film preservation and on the disciplines of directing, producing, editing, cinematography, screenwriting and production design.

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HOLLYWOOD REPORT



LAURENCE FISHBURNE

On "Horizon"



ELLEN DEGENERES

"Goodbye" Girl



CHOW YUN-FAT

"Killer" Diller

"EVENT HORIZON" Laurence Fishburne ("Hoods") has left Francis Ford Coppola's "The Rainmaker" (replaced by Danny Glover) to star in this sci-fi thriller as the head of an exploration team whose members encounter a mysterious force on their mission to salvage a spaceship that surfaces near Neptune after having been missing for seven years. Joely Richardson ("101 Dala-matians") co-stars as the team's navigator; Kathleen Quinlan ("Apollo 13") plays the medical technician. "Mortal Kombat's" Paul Anderson directs from Phillip Eisner's script. (Paramount)

"GOODBYE LOVER" This black comedy thriller will star Ellen DeGeneres ("Mr. Wrong") as a detective on the case of a murder mystery. Patricia Arquette ("Flirting With Disaster"), Dermot Mulroney ("The Trigger Effect") and Don Johnson ("Tin Cup") also star. Roland Joffe ("The Scarlet Letter") will helm. (Distribution is to be set)

"STILL BREATHING" In this comedy, Brendan Fraser ("Mrs. Winterbourne") plays an eccentric street performer who has a psychic vision of his soul mate. When he encounters the woman ("Inventing the Abbotts'" Joanna Going), she turns out to be a con artist who sees him as an easy mark. Ann Magnuson, Lou Rawls and Michael McKean also star. (Distribution is to be set)

"THE REPLACEMENT KILLERS" Chow Yun-Fat ("The Killer") will make his American film debut opposite Oscar winner Mira Sorvino ("Mighty Aphrodite") in this actioner about a Chinese dissident-turned-assassin (Chow) who teams with a forger (Sorvino) to prevent a murder he had originally agreed to commit. Antoine Fuqua directs; John Woo executive produces. (Columbia)

"AMY FOSTER" In this romance about two people whose love is thwarted by numerous obstacles, a Ukrainian emigrant (Vincent Perez, "The Crow: City of Angels") is trapped in England and falls in love with a young woman ("Chain Reaction's" Rachel Weisz) who helps him. Ian McKellen ("Richard III") will play a doctor who befriends Perez's character. Beeban Kidron ("To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything, Julie Newmar") will direct. The screenplay was adapted by Tim Willocks from a Joseph Conrad novella. (Distribution is to be set)

"MOST WANTED" This action-comedy written by and starring Keenen Ivory Wayans ("The Glimmer Man") and Jon Voight ("Mission: Impossible") is about a man who is framed for attempting to assassinate the First Lady. "Barb Wire's" David Hogan will direct. Eric Roberts ("It's My Party") and Paul Sorvino ("Romeo and Juliet") will also star. (New Line)

"THE BLACKOUT" Matthew Modine ("Cutthroat Island"), Dennis Hopper ("Waterworld"), Beatrice Dalle ("Night on Earth") and supermodel Claudia Schiffer will star for director Abel Ferrara ("The Funeral") in this film about a man who gets drunk one evening and blacks out, only to wake the next morning to find his best friend has been murdered and he's the prime suspect. (Distribution is to be set)

"DIGGING TO CHINA" Kevin Bacon ("Sleepers") plays a mentally handicapped man who forms a friendship with a 10-year-old girl (Evan Wood), in spite of objections from the girl's mother (Cathy Moriarty, "Casper") and older sister (Mary Stuart Masterson, "Bed of Roses"). Actor Timothy Hutton makes his directorial debut. (Distribution is to be set)

"THE JEAN SEBERG STORY" Troubled actress Jean Seberg will be portrayed by Diane Lane ("Murder at 1600") in this biopic. Seberg, a small-town girl who rose to superstardom after being cast in Otto Preminger's 1957 drama "Saint Joan," lived a tumultuous life, had ties to the Black Panther movement, and was found dead under mysterious circumstances in 1979. Mark Rydell ("On Golden Pond") will helm from a screenplay by James Hicks, based on the book "Played Out" by David Richards. (Distribution is to be set)

"MOUSEHUNT" "The Birdcage's" Nathan Lane will star in this live-action comedy about two brothers who inherit an historic mansion and try to sell it, but find themselves repeatedly outsmarted by a mouse who already lives there. Director Gore Verbinski makes his feature debut; Adam Rifkin wrote the script. (DreamWorks)

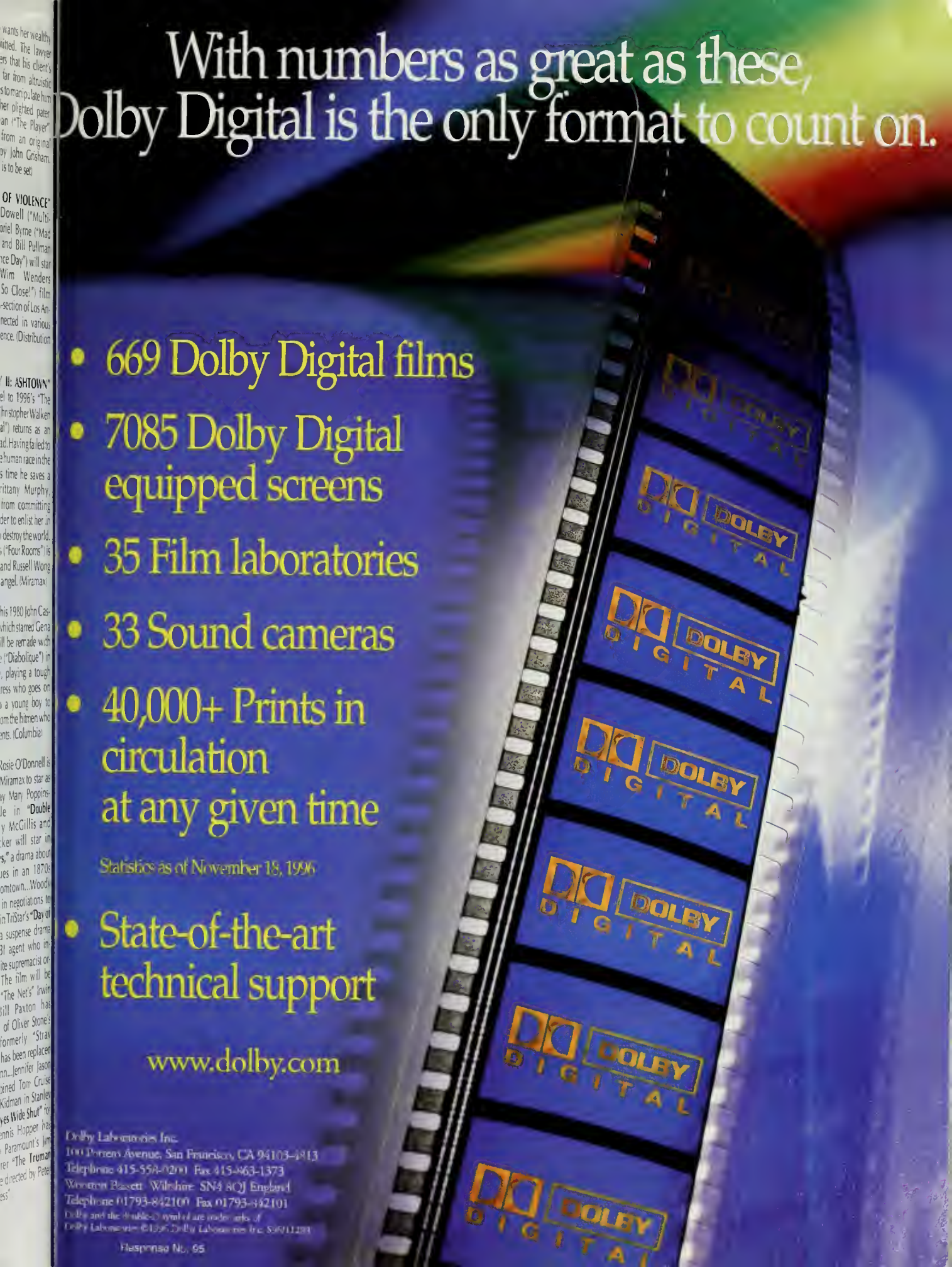
"THE GINGERBREAD MAN" This legal drama set in the South will star Kenneth Branagh ("Hamlet") as a lawyer who takes the case of a beautiful woman who wants her wealthy father committed. The lawyer soon discovers that his client's motives are far from altruistic when she tries to manipulate him into killing her plighted pater. Robert Altman ("The Player") will direct from an original screenplay by John Grisham. (Distribution is to be set)

"THE END OF VIOLENCE" Andie MacDowell ("Multiplicity"), Gabriel Byrne ("Mad Dog Time") and Bill Pullman ("Independence Day") will star in this Wim Wenders ("Faraway, So Close!") film about a cross-section of Los Angeleans connected in various ways by violence. (Distribution is to be set)

"PROPHECY II: ASHTOWN" In this sequel to 1996's "The Prophecy," Christopher Walken ("The Funeral") returns as an angel gone bad. Having failed to annihilate the human race in the last film, this time he saves a woman (Brittany Murphy, "Clueless") from committing suicide in order to enlist her in his mission to destroy the world. Jennifer Beals ("Four Rooms") is the heroine, and Russell Wong plays a good angel. (Miramax)

"GLORIA" This 1980 John Cassavetes film which starred Gena Rowlands will be remade with Sharon Stone ("Diabolique") in the title role, playing a tough ex-mob mistress who goes on the run with a young boy to protect him from the hitmen who killed his parents. (Columbia)

ET CETERA: Rosie O'Donnell is in talks with Miramax to star as a modern-day Mary Poppins-with-attitude in **"Double Wish"**...Kelly McGillis and Brenda Fricker will star in **"Prarie Doves,"** a drama about five prostitues in an 1870s Western boomtown...Woody Harrelson is in negotiations to take the lead in TriStar's **"Day of the Rope,"** a suspense drama about an FBI agent who infiltrates a white supremacist organization. The film will be directed by "The Net's" Irwin Winkler...Bill Paxton has dropped out of Oliver Stone's **"U-Turn"** (formerly "Stray Dogs"), and has been replaced by Sean Penn...Jennifer Jason Leigh has joined Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman in Stanley Kubrick's **"Eyes Wide Shut"** for Warner...Dennis Hopper has signed onto Paramount's Jim Carrey starrer **"The Truman Show,"** to be directed by Peter Weir ("Fearless").


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THE BOXOFFICE INTERVIEW

POWER

At the Height of His Career as Both Director and Star CLINT EASTWOOD Makes His Bid For "Absolute Power"

By Ray Greene

The fastest surface route between Los Angeles in Southern California and Carmel in the north takes approximately six hours of drive time, although "it's been done in four" according to Clint Eastwood, Carmel's most famous citizen. While not the most scenic trip available to the northward traveller (the coastal roads, which can add four hours to the trip, offer spectacular vistas at the edge of nearly every harrowing, hairpin turn), the direct route is not without its points of interest. Among these is a site smack in the middle of the most lonesome and nondescript part of the trek: the place on Highway 46 where James Dean cut short his too-brief career and sealed his legend by slamming his Porsche into an oncoming Ford on September 30, 1955 and dying instantly at the age of 24.

There's a small marker on the roadside to indicate the exact spot of Dean's crash if you know where to look for it, although most people pass right by it without noticing. This is fitting in a way, since Dean's legacy isn't really rooted in the exact circumstances of his death, nor is it based entirely on his screen career (which, after all, spanned just three roles). It could be argued that Dean's legend is predominantly the byproduct of his embodiment of a certain negative perception of celebrity—the too-much-too-soon, live-fast-die-young credo which the public finds so compelling as a definition of the fruits of fame.

The counterbalance to that particular brand of screen immortality lives further north in Carmel—a picturesque village where tourists and townies vie for parking spaces on narrow roads, and ecological conservation is taken so seriously that every tree is reportedly registered individually with the local authorities. Clint Eastwood has called Carmel his home for close to four decades, and it is surely no coincidence that this particular screen icon—whose disaffection with the film industry's standard operating procedures is demonstrated by the almost total autonomy he has maintained since ascending to superstar status in the late 1960s—has made his primary residence so far from the company town where his professional interests continue to thrive. Eastwood's star burns as brightly as any in Hollywood history—so brightly, in fact, that its sheen for many years obscured what may be his most enduring accomplishments as a filmmaker, especially in America, a country his best films, as both actor and director, have had so much to say about.

He has been world-famous for over 30 years—a superstar, remarkably resistant to the trends that elevate and bury screen careers with tidal regularity. "At this point, audiences have seen me a lot," he says, in his typically self-deprecatin way, "and they've seen me for as long as maybe anybody. Maybe to long," he adds, laughing. "Who knows?"

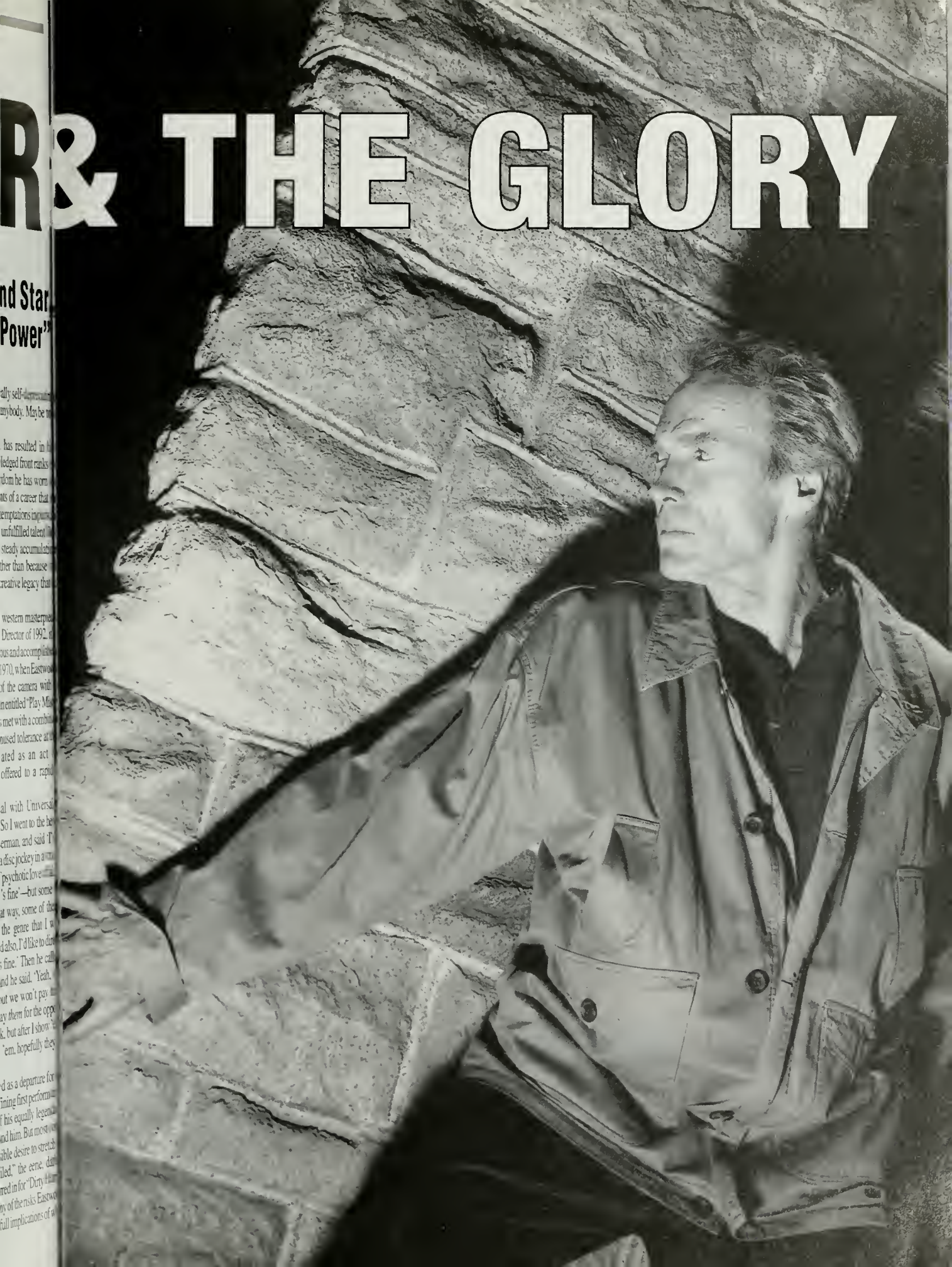
But what makes Eastwood unique, and what has resulted in h relatively recent second ascension into the acknowledged front ranks contemporary American filmmakers, isn't the stardom he has worn s lightly for so long but the accrued accomplishments of a career that retrospect managed to resist most of the customary temptations in pursu of a more complicated agenda. The flame-out of an unfulfilled talent lik Dean's offers high tabloid drama, but Eastwood's steady accumulatio of achievements—many pulled off in spite of, rather than because o his long reign as a bankable star—has made for a creative legacy that that much more likely to endure.

Thanks to "Unforgiven," the darkly revisionist western masterpie that brought him Oscars for Best Picture and Best Director of 1992, it today a foregone conclusion that Eastwood is a serious and accomplishe filmmaker. But it wasn't always that way. Back in 1970, when Eastwoo first decided to try his hand on the other side of the camera with psychological thriller about a DJ and an obsessed fan entitled "Play Mist For Me," his request was met with a combina tion of wariness and bemused tolerance at th executive level—treated as an act benevolent indulgence offered to a rapidl rising star.

> "I never appeared to have any anxieties, but you do [when you're first starting out]. The challenge is not accompanied with any great anxieties now."

"I had signed a deal with Universal Eastwood remembers. "So I went to the hea of the studio, Lew Wasserman, and said 'I got this little story about a disc jockey in a sma town who gets in a sort of psychotic love affai And he said, 'Well, that's fine'—but some the execs didn't feel that way, some of the felt that it was out of the genre that I w playing. And I said, 'And also, I'd like to dire it.' And he said, 'That's fine.' Then he calle my agent to one side, and he said, 'Yeah, w want him to direct it, but we won't pay hi anything.' I said, 'I'll pay *them* for the oppo tunity. I realize it's a risk, but after I show 'e what I think I can show 'em, hopefully they be encouraged to look kindly on this.'"

"Play Misty For Me" was correctly recognized as a departure for i star, who in 1971 was just coming off a career-defining first performanc as Dirty Harry and who already had all three of his equally legendar Sergio Leone-directed "spaghetti westerns" behind him. But most con mentators of the day focused on Eastwood's visible desire to stretch an actor (as did most opinion on "The Beguiled," the eerie, dark brilliant Civil War-era melodrama Eastwood starred in for "Dirty Harry director Don Siegel that same year). As with many of the risks Eastwoo took in the early phases of his superstardom, the full implications of wh


R& THE GLORY

he was up to were largely missed, for with "Play Misty For Me," an incremental process had begun. "One thing led to another, I started continuing on, occasionally doing one, and not directing others. But every other one or every third one I'd do, and eventually here you are in '96, [having directed] 20 films."

It is the promotion of the latest of these directorial efforts, the political thriller "Absolute Power," that has brought Eastwood down from his home in the hills above Carmel to the conference room of the Mission Ranch—the unassuming hotel-restaurant complex Eastwood purchased in 1986 because it was in danger of being razed and he remembered it fondly from his days as a military trainee at nearby Fort Ord back in 1951. It must have been with reluctance that Eastwood left hearth and home. His wife of one year, Dina Ruiz, is eight and a half months pregnant on this rainy November day, and Eastwood mentions in passing that his 88-year-old mother Ruth is feeling under the weather as well.

But Eastwood, who comes off in person as plain-spoken and even courtly despite his many achievements, is also a very driven filmmaker, and perhaps Hollywood's quietest empire builder. A recent British biography went so far as to claim that films produced by Malpaso, the production company Eastwood formed to make "Hang 'Em High" back in 1968 and which he has run out of the Warner lot since 1976, account for "an astonishing 20 percent of Warner Bros. lifetime corporate turnover." Product is coming to market, and it is a notable facet of his personality that Clint Eastwood has always had a healthy respect for the promotional imperatives of product—especially product that he not only stars in, but has chosen to direct.

Based on the bestseller by David Baldacci, "Absolute Power" is a Cadillac project, with a screenplay adaptation by William Goldman and a cast including Eastwood, his "Unforgiven" co-star Gene Hackman, and "Husbands and Wives" Oscar nominee Judy Davis. A Castle Rock release (as was 1993's "In the Line of Fire," one of Eastwood's most popular films ever), "Power" is almost sure to stir up some political controversy, dealing as it does with the uncomfortably contemporary dilemma of a philandering U.S. president (Hackman) whose character deficiencies result in high crimes and misdemeanors which threaten to bring the whole government down.

As this conversation takes place, less than two weeks have passed since Bill Clinton's re-election after a campaign in which the issue of presidential character played a predictably prominent role. The timeliness of "Absolute Power" offers a fairly radical departure for Eastwood from such recent efforts as the romantic "Bridges of Madison County" or the rural *policier* "A Perfect World." Even director Wolfgang Petersen's "In the Line of Fire," which put Eastwood on the trail of a would-be presidential assassin, offered few points of purchase for op-ed analysis; its themes of guilt and expiation were closer in spirit to "Unforgiven" than to anything currently under discussion in the pages of the Washington Post.

When the subject of "Absolute Power's" topicality is broached, a wide smile plays across Eastwood's lips. But he hastens to say that no specific political references are intended or implied.

"It's not meant to emulate any particular politician," he says. "True that this president is philandering a little bit, but that's probably happened a lot of times in history. He doesn't resemble anybody that we know currently on the scene, he's just a guy who is where he shouldn't be."

Given Hackman's potent ability to convey both charm and malevolence simultaneously, it still seems likely that audiences will, at least subliminally, project some of their darker fears about government onto "Absolute Power." "Well they might," Eastwood says, intrigued by the idea. "People are always suspicious, I think mainly because we've seen some flawed politicians in recent years, and also the press is very vehement about exploiting that now. We're living in sort of a tabloidesque age, because politicians are the product of television now, more than they used to be. They've become like television actors who are all of a sudden vulnerable to the same kind of speculation.

"Personally, if a person does the job well, I think that's probably what they should be judged upon. What does a president or any politician in this country owe us? They owe us to do the best job, and to live up to the faith we put in them by voting them in. In the old days, you didn't have to be a television star, but now you have to have a certain television charisma to get by. The era of the best person winning... I don't know if it was ever here. Who knows? But there's more to it now than just qualifications."



TEAM PLAYER: *Clint with Jack Green, one of many multi-picture Eastwood collaborators.*

If a few incidental parallels to current events mark "Absolute Power" as an exceptional effort in Eastwood's recent ouevre, its production reflected the continuation of several significant hallmarks of his work as a director. In addition to Hackman's fresh pairing with the director who helped him garner a Best Supporting Actor Oscar for his work in "Unforgiven," "Absolute Power" reunited Eastwood with many of the technicians whose talents he's been utilizing for years. His relationship with "Absolute Power" cinematographer Jack N. Green is emblematic of the way Eastwood tends to stick with people he works well with. Green, who began his career working as a camera operator for Eastwood's other favorite cinematographer Bruce Surtees, graduated to interim director of photography when Surtees fell ill during one Eastwood production. With Surtees' encouragement, Eastwood "promoted" Green to director of photography beginning with "Heartbreak Ridge" in 1986. With the exception of the Eastwood-produced "The Stars Fell on Henrietta" (shot by Surtees), Green has lensed every Eastwood/Malpaso project made since.

"I can talk shorthand to him," Eastwood says of their relationship. "He brings a lot of ideas to the table, and I encourage that with every single member of the crew. I say, 'Don't be afraid to express yourself. Because you're not doing any good if you're just putting a bolt in and tightening it up on the other end. If there's a better way to put the bolt in, a faster way to tighten it, or a more efficient way to operate, by all means, tell me.'"

On some sets, such openness might be seen as an invitation to production slowdowns and a breakdown of the chain of command. But not so with Eastwood, who is something of a legend within the industry for the frugality and decisiveness of his shooting methods. It's a skill he learned from his television work as an actor on the old "Rawhide" series, and from his five collaborations with the late Don Siegel—perhaps the most significant professional association of Eastwood's long career. "Don was very prolific," Eastwood says of a man he characterizes as his "mentor." "Don could pull together a movie really fast. If he

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

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"POWER" (continued from page 12)

had the script and he liked the script, he was right off and running."

Like Siegel, Eastwood shoots lean and brings his films in on time and under budget as a matter of principle. With "Absolute Power," Eastwood outdid himself; the film came in a full 17 days earlier than its schedule said it would—in part because of Eastwood's sense of his cast and crew as creative equals, whose time is as valuable as his own.

"Crews get a sense if you're screwing around," he says. "They get a sense if you're lost, and they get a sense if you're just dilly-dallying. They'll bear with you, through take after take, if they feel that you're trying desperately to get something that isn't quite happening. But they fade on you if they see you're just wasting time—and justifiably so."



PIECE OF CAKE: *Celebrating another efficient Eastwood shoot at the wrap for "Absolute Power."*

Fastidious as his directing may be, Eastwood's career has been characterized by anything but the taking of safe bets. While he has consistently attended to his superstar status (all five "Dirty Harry" projects could be viewed in this light), he has just as consistently subverted it, tackling highbrow themes and an enormous range of characters that the critics who decried as pointlessly sadistic his career-making "spaghetti westerns" with Leone would never have predicted for him. Meanwhile, the Leone films—"A Fistful of Dollars," "For a Few Dollars More" and "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly"—have come in for their own share of revisionism, so that it's now a critical given that Eastwood's career as a leading man started with three masterpieces in a row.

When Eastwood talks about the projects he's proudest of, they are almost always the ones that stretched him as actor or director, and almost never the ones that grabbed the biggest grosses—except in those instances (as with "Unforgiven," which made over $100 million domestically) where those two priorities dovetailed into one another. "You make a film, hoping that somebody wants to see it," he says. "You certainly don't make it for a lot of empty seats in a theatre. But I had a line in 'White Hunter, Black Heart' where the [movie director] I was playing is criticizing the writer, and he says, 'You should forget anybody's ever gonna see a film when you're making it.' And you know, there's something to that. Yeah, you hope that a reviewer'd like it, just the same as you hope everyone else does. Nobody wants to have somebody going out of the theatre going, 'Oh boy, that was a yawner,' but that happens, that's just the way it goes. Some of my best films were the least attended, in my mind."

Eastwood has an almost paternal fondness for some of his shaggier, more image-busting efforts, such as the depression-era drama "Honkytonk Man" and the rodeo comedy "Bronco Billy." "Every Which Way But Loose," the screwball comedy in which Clint lost the girl but rode off into the sunset with an orangutan, was a film that particularly delighted him, not least because it became an unexpected boxoffice smash despite the studio's distinct lack of faith in it. "The studio would have sold it for 10 cents on the dollar before it was released. All their..." He pauses, using inflection to signify his disdain. "'Research'...said the picture wasn't going to work."

At least two of the many movies he has directed and starred in seem to hold particularly special places in Eastwood's heart: "Unforgiven," a film he clearly would have loved even if it never made a dime, and the picaresque 1976 western "The Outlaw Josey Wales"—a ruminative, character-driven epic that stands as perhaps his first fully realized directorial effort, and the film which he credits with beginning the decades-long process of his filmmaking finally emerging from the long shadow cast by his status as a boxoffice star.

"I think maybe it started turning in the '70s, with 'The Outlaw Josey Wales,'" he says, "which I think is a movie that stands up today. If that came out on the market today, I think it would be appreciated, maybe even more than it was then, because maybe there was too much prejudice [back then] against the genre, or the person making it."

In fact, in looking over Eastwood's many credits, what emerges is something almost no one would have imagined him capable of when "Play Misty For Me" first entered the marketplace back in 1971. Given his willingness to embellish and violate his screen persona, what Eastwood has created, in his art and in his life, is nothing less than a multi-leveled rumination on the American concept of heroism, and on what it means to be an American star.

That's a high-toned argument which Eastwood might resist endorsing, though it is interesting to note he is quite emphatic about his hope that, when the time comes to tally up his achievements, he'll be remembered more as a filmmaker than as a star. Hardly one to wallow in nostalgia, it will be enough for him if the history books recognize "just the fact that he made some films that were important, or that they somehow fit into the scheme of film history. And I hope to do some more."

In the meantime, there's "Absolute Power" and whatever else the future may bring to a man who, creatively and personally, views the present as the prime of his life. He lives for the moment, and this particular moment is especially right for him.

"After 'Bridges of Madison County,' I took a year off from work," he says. "I felt fine. I had a good time, I contemplated a lot of things, worked on my personal life a little. Took time out to do some things that I maybe felt I should have, that you neglect when you're younger and you're striving to get things going. There's that thing actors go through in their early stages, where they say, 'This is my last job.' So another job comes up, pretty soon you're accepting [all of] them. I used to accept them back to back, and I see young actors now doing that—accepting work, back to back to back. It's that thing where you've got the brass ring, you feel like you've got to keep riding it, stay on the merry-go-round. But at some point, you realize it's not necessary. You've got sort of a history.

"There's always something new, a new challenge, which makes it fun. But the challenge is not accompanied with any great anxieties now. I never appeared to have any anxieties, that's not my appearance, but you do [when you're first starting out]. You get the brass ring, and you go start grinding, and if they want you, you keep grinding. Maybe that's a point in life when you feel you should do that, because you're afraid that maybe two or three films, and maybe you'll be selling used cars somewhere. But then after awhile, you build up your chops."

"Absolute Power." Starring Clint Eastwood, Gene Hackman and Judy Davis. Directed by Clint Eastwood. Produced by Clint Eastwood and Karen Spiegel. Screenplay by William Goldman, based on the novel by David Baldacci. A Malpaso Production. A Columbia Release. Feb. 7.

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WILLPOWER

How producer Karen Spiegel helped get "Absolute Power" to the screen

By Bridget Byrne

Karen Spiegel describes herself as "a pretty relaxed person," but she's also, by her own admission, a phone fanatic who can use up multiple cordless phone batteries in a day.

"I've always been able to keep anyone on the telephone, so I guess I was destined to be a producer," she laughs, acknowledging the qualities of perseverance that helped her keep her footing and now triumph in a difficult business rife with rejection. But it was more than phone skills that led her to become co-producer of "Absolute Power," sharing the credit with Clint Eastwood, the film's star and director. This thriller, a Malpaso production for Castle Rock Entertainment, is based on the best-selling novel by David Baldacci. It was Spiegel, who met Baldacci in 1992, who helped the author bring his three-line synopsis to fruition.

As an avid believer in the art of story, it's not surprising that Spiegel can tell a good one of her own. Seated in a conference room at Castle Rock, she is an appealing mixture of old-fashioned common sense and cutting-edge enthusiasm. She's wearing a stylish dark checked suit redolent of "power lunches," but her still-girlish face is more reflective of a cozy sorority gab fest. She's "thirtysomething" and a player of both volleyball and bridge (worthwhile, enjoyable endeavors, but also good networking sports). She has a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Southern California's Cinema/Television Production program, several years of experience in assistant producer and production coordinator roles at various studios including Paramount, Warner and Sony, and her own company, Copper Beech Productions.

"That's beech, not beach," she points out, aware that this is the West Coast. (She's from the East and attended Boston University before USC.) She chose the Copper Beech name for a number of reasons. "It's a very thick-trunked, deep-rooted tree, hard to knock over. And I'm a big girl, hard to knock over," she explains. "And it's a tree that provides the greatest shade, a place to sit and think under or to take a nap! Also, I've always loved mysteries, and there's a Sherlock Holmes story called 'The Case of the Copper Beeches,'" says the upward-bound producer, whose projects in development include the 54 stories and two novels which made up the old radio series "I Love A Mystery."



Photo Credit: Hugh Milstein

"I've always been able to keep anyone on the telephone, so I guess I was destined to be a producer."

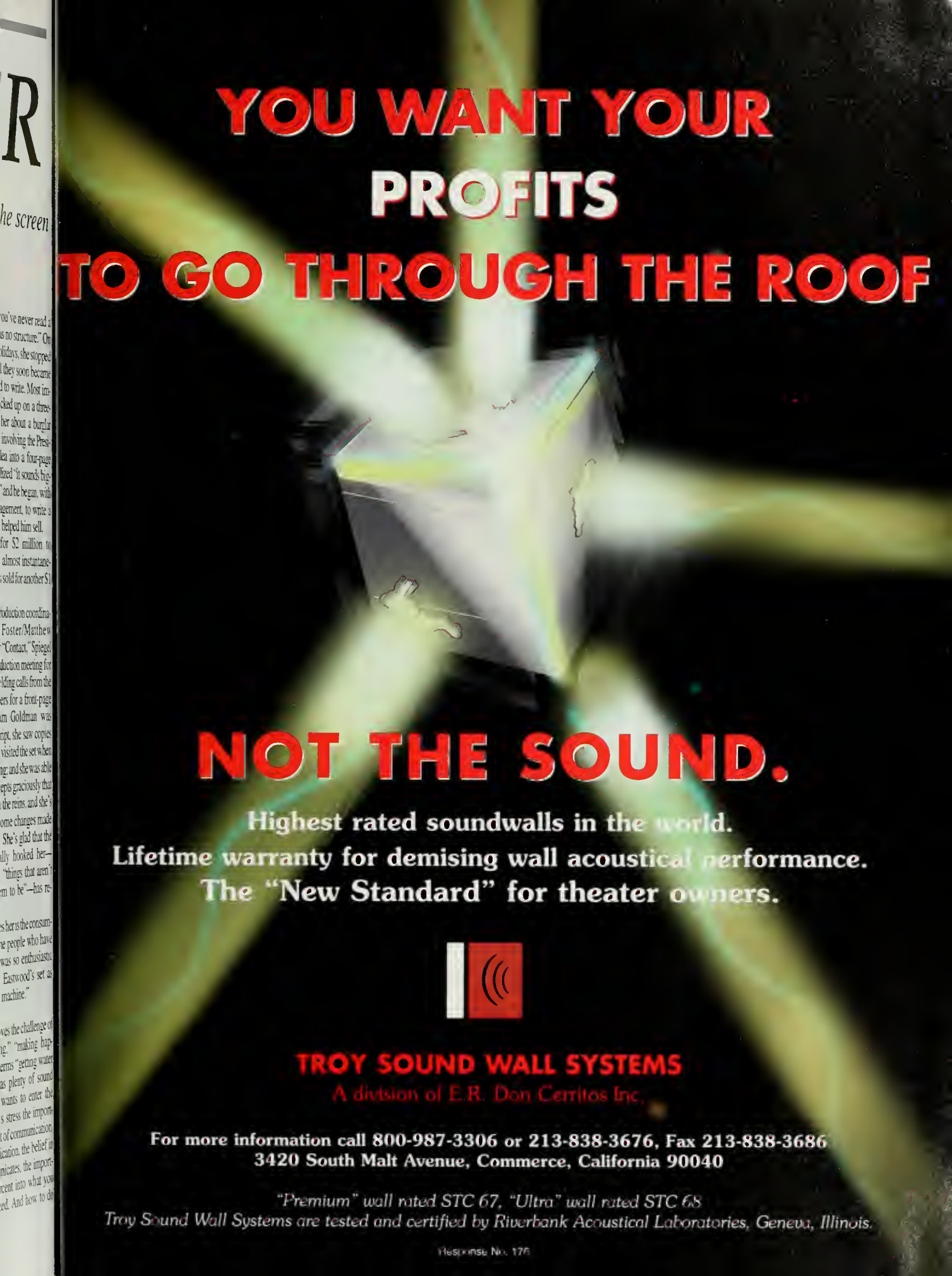
The case of "Absolute Power" started when a friend from Connecticut linked her up with Baldacci, a Washington, D.C. lawyer who wanted someone in Hollywood to read a screenplay he was working on—someone who would be "honest and forthright, and tell him what he ought to hear," Spiegel says. Spiegel liked his script, an action thriller, loved how he told a story and developed character, but told him "Obviously you've never read a screenplay, because this has no structure." On her way back east for the holidays, she stopped over to meet him, and they soon became friends as he continued to write. Most importantly of all, she picked up on a three-sentence idea he told her about a burglar who witnesses a crime involving the President. He turned the idea into a four-page treatment, but they realized "it sounds bigger than a screenplay," and he began, with her input and encouragement, to write a novel, which she then helped him sell.

The novel went for $2 million to Warner Books. Then, almost instantaneously, the movie rights sold for another $1 million.

Still working as a production coordinator on the Jodie Foster/Matthew McConaughey starrer "Contact," Spiegel found herself in a production meeting for "Absolute Power," fielding calls from the Hollywood trade papers for a front-page story. When William Goldman was signed to write the script, she saw copies of each new draft; she visited the set when Eastwood was directing; and she was able to see dailies. She accepts graciously that higher clout has taken the reins, and she's philosophical about some changes made from novel to screen. She's glad that the concept that originally hooked her—Baldacci's interest in "things that aren't necessarily what they seem to be"—has remained intact.

What particularly pleases her is the consummate professionalism of the people who have taken on the project she was so enthusiastic about, and she describes Eastwood's set as running like "a well-oiled machine."

As someone who loves the challenge of "calling," "finding," "making happen"—what she terms "getting water from the moon"—she has plenty of sound advice for anyone who wants to enter the movie business. "I always stress the importance of enthusiasm, the art of communication, the art of visual communication, the belief in a great story that communicates, the importance of throwing 110 percent into what you believe in until it's realized. And how to do 'good phone.'"


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★ 1997 Barometer Star Poll ★

The accompanying ballot is for your vote in the 1997 Barometer Star Poll. The following list includes lead actors and actresses from films that made their stateside debut in 1996. Feel free to write in your own selection if we have omitted someone whom you feel merits recognition.

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The results of your voting will be published in the March 1997 issue of BOXOFFICE.

Male Star of the Year

1. Alan Alda ("Everyone Says I Love You")
2. Jason Alexander ("Dunston Checks In")
3. Woody Allen ("Everyone Says I Love You")
4. Alan Arkin ("Mother Night")
5. Tom Arnold ("The Stupids," "Carpool," "Big Bully")
6. Dan Aykroyd ("Celtic Pride")
7. Kevin Bacon ("Sleepers")
8. Alec Baldwin ("Ghosts of Mississippi," "The Juror")
9. Stephen Baldwin ("Fled," "Bio-Dome")
10. Antonio Banderas ("Evita")
11. Tom Berenger ("The Substitute")
12. David Bowie ("Basquiat")
13. Kenneth Branagh ("Hamlet")
14. Marlon Brando ("Dr. Moreau")
15. Jeff Bridges ("The Mirror Has Two Faces," "White Squall")
16. Matthew Broderick ("The Cable Guy," "Infinity")
17. Albert Brooks ("Mother")
18. Pierce Brosnan ("The Mirror Has Two Faces," "Mars Attacks")
19. Edward Burns ("She's the One")
20. Steve Buscemi ("Fargo," "Trees Lounge")
21. James Caan ("Eraser," "North Star")
22. Nicolas Cage ("The Rock")
23. Jim Carrey ("The Cable Guy")
24. Sean Connery ("The Rock")
25. Kevin Costner ("Tin Cup")
26. Tom Cruise ("Jerry Maguire," "Mission: Impossible")
27. Tim Curry ("Muppet Treasure Island")
28. Jeff Daniels ("101 Dalmatians," "Fly Away Home")
29. Daniel Day-Lewis ("The Crucible")
30. Robert De Niro ("Marvin's Room," "Sleepers," "The Fan")
31. Gerard Depardieu ("Bogus")
32. Johnny Depp ("Dead Man")
33. Danny DeVito ("Matilda," "Mars Attacks")
34. Leonardo DiCaprio ("Marvin's Room," "Romeo & Juliet")
35. Matt Dillon ("Albino Alligator," "Beautiful Girls")
36. Vincent D'Onofrio ("The Whole Wide World," "Feeling Minnesota")
37. Michael Douglas ("The Ghost and the Darkness")
38. Richard Dreyfuss ("Night Falls On Manhattan," "Mad Dog Time")
39. Charles Dutton ("Get On the Bus")
40. Robert Duvall ("A Family Thing")
41. Chris Farley ("Black Sheep")
42. Ralph Fiennes ("English Patient")
43. Michael J. Fox ("The Frighteners")
44. Brendan Fraser ("Mrs. Winterbourne")
45. Morgan Freeman ("Chain Reaction," "Moll Flanders")
46. Edward Furlong ("The Grass Harp," "Before and After")
47. Andy Garcia ("Night Falls On...")
48. James Garner ("My Fellow Americans")
49. Richard Gere ("Primal Fear")
50. Mel Gibson ("Ransom")
51. Sir John Gielgud ("Shine")
52. Jeff Goldblum ("ID4")
53. Kelsey Grammer ("Down Periscope")
54. Hugh Grant ("Extreme Measures")
55. Richard E. Grant ("Jack & Sarah")
56. Lukas Haas ("Everyone Says I Love You," "Boys," "johns")
57. Gene Hackman ("The Chamber," "Extreme Measures," "The Birdcage")
58. Tom Hanks ("That Thing You Do!")
59. Woody Harrelson ("The People Vs. Larry Flynt," "Kingpin")
60. Ed Harris ("The Rock," "Eye for an Eye")
61. Phil Hartman ("Jingle All The Way")
62. Nigel Hawthorne ("Twelfth Night")
63. Dustin Hoffman ("Sleepers," "American Buffalo")
64. Paul Hogan ("Flipper")
65. Anthony Hopkins ("Surviving Picasso")
66. William Hurt ("Michael," "Jane Eyre")
67. Timothy Hutton ("Substance of Fire," "Beautiful Girls")
68. Samuel L. Jackson ("The Long Kiss Goodnight," "A Time To Kill")
69. Derek Jacobi ("Hamlet")
70. Don Johnson ("Tin Cup")
71. James Earl Jones ("A Family Thing")
72. Michael Keaton ("Multiplicity")
73. Val Kilmer ("The Ghost and the Darkness," "The Island of Dr. Moreau")
74. Greg Kinnear ("Dear God")
75. Martin Landau ("Pinocchio")
76. Martin Lawrence ("A Thin Line...")
77. Denis Leary ("Two If By Sea")
78. John Leguizamo ("Romeo & Juliet," "The Fan," "Executive Decision")
79. Jack Lemmon ("My Fellow Americans")
80. Jon Lovitz ("High School High")
81. Kyle MacLachlan ("Trigger Effect")
82. John Malkovich ("Portrait of a Lady," "Mary Reilly," "The Ogre")
83. Cheech Marin ("Tin Cup")
84. Steve Martin ("Sgt. Bilko")
85. Walter Matthau ("The Grass Harp," "I'm Not Rappaport")
86. Dennis Miller ("Bordello of Blood")
87. Armin Mueller-Stahl ("Shine")
88. Dermot Mulroney ("Trigger Effect")
89. Eddie Murphy ("Nutty Professor")
90. Bill Murray ("Larger Than Life," "Space Jam," "Kingpin")
91. Liam Neeson ("Michael Collins," "Before and After")
92. Jack Nicholson ("The Evening Star," "Mars Attacks")
93. Leslie Nielsen ("Spy Hard")
94. Nick Nolte ("Mother Night," "Mulholland Falls")
95. Chris O'Donnell ("In Love and War," "The Chamber")
96. Al Pacino ("Looking For Ricard," "City Hall")
97. Chazz Palminteri ("Diabolique," "Faithful," "Mulholland Falls")
98. Jason Patric ("Sleepers")
99. Bill Paxton ("The Evening Star," "Twister")
100. Brad Pitt ("Sleepers")
101. Bill Pullman ("ID4," "Mr. Wrong")
102. Dennis Quaid ("Dragonheart")
103. Randy Quaid ("ID4," "Kingpin")
104. Michael Rapaport ("The Pallbearer," "Beautiful Girls")
105. Robert Redford ("Up Close & Personal")
106. Keanu Reeves ("Feeling Minnesota," "Chain Reaction")
107. Burt Reynolds ("Striptease")
108. Ving Rhames ("Rosewood," "Ransom," "Mission: Impossible," "Striptease")
109. Eric Roberts ("It's My Party")
110. Kurt Russell ("Escape From L.A.," "Executive Decision")
111. Adam Sandler ("Bulletproof," "Happy Gilmore")
112. Arnold Schwarzenegger ("Jingle All the Way," "Eraser")
113. Steven Seagal ("The Glimmer Man," "Executive Decision")
114. Pauly Shore ("Bio-Dome")
115. Martin Short ("Mars Attacks")
116. Sinbad ("Jingle..." "First Kid")
117. Gary Sinise ("Ransom")
118. Christian Slater ("Broken Arrow," "Bed of Roses")
119. Will Smith ("Independence Day")
120. Wesley Snipes ("The Fan")
121. David Spade ("Black Sheep")
122. James Spader ("2 Days in the Valley")

123. Brent Spiner ("Star Trek: First Contact," "ID4," "Phenomenon")
124. Sylvester Stallone ("Daylight")
125. Daniel Stern ("Celtic Pride")
126. Patrick Stewart ("Star Trek...")
127. Ben Stiller ("Flirting With Disaster")
128. Kiefer Sutherland ("Eye For An Eye")
129. Noah Taylor ("Shine")
130. Jonathan Taylor Thomas ("Pinocchio")
131. John Travolta ("Michael," "Phenomenon," "Broken Arrow")
132. Jean-Claude Van Damme ("Maximum Risk," "The Quest")
133. Jon Voight ("Rosewood," "Mission: Impossible")
134. Christopher Walken ("The Funeral," "Last Man Standing")
135. Denzel Washington ("The Preacher's Wife," "Courage Under Fire")
136. Damon Wayans ("Bulletproof," "Celtic Pride," "The Great White Hype")
137. Robin Williams ("Birdcage," "Jack")
138. Bruce Willis ("Last Man Standing")
139. Elijah Wood ("Flipper")
140. James Woods ("Ghosts of Mississippi")

Female Star of the Year

1. Isabelle Adjani ("Diabolique")
2. Patricia Arquette ("Infinity," "Flirting With Disaster")
3. Lauren Bacall ("The Mirror Has Two Faces," "My Fellow Americans")
4. Drew Barrymore ("Everyone Says I Love You," "Scream")
5. Halle Berry ("The Rich Man's Wife," "Executive Decision," "Race the Sun")
6. Juliette Binoche ("English Patient")
7. Sandra Bullock ("In Love and War," "A Time To Kill," "Two If By Sea")
8. Ellen Burstyn ("The Spitfire Grill")
9. Helena Bonham Carter ("Twelfth Night," "Margaret's Museum")
10. Cher ("Faithful")
11. Glenn Close ("101 Dalmatians," "Mars Attacks," "Mary Reilly")
12. Jamie Lee Curtis ("House Arrest")
13. Claire Danes ("Romeo & Juliet," "To Gillian On Her 37th Birthday")
14. Geena Davis ("Long Kiss Goodnight")
15. Laura Dern ("Citizen Ruth")
16. Cameron Diaz ("Feeling Minnesota," "She's the One," "The Last Supper")
17. Illeana Douglas ("Grace of My Heart")
18. Sally Field ("Eye for an Eye")
19. Linda Fiorentino ("Unforgettable")
20. Gina Gershon ("Bound")
21. Whoopi Goldberg ("The Associate," "Bogus," "Eddie")
22. Goldie Hawn ("The First Wives Club," "Everyone Says I Love You")
23. Salma Hayek ("Fled," "From Dusk Till Dawn")
24. Mariel Hemingway ("Bad Moon")
25. Lauren Holly ("Down Periscope," "Beautiful Girls")
26. Whitney Houston ("Preacher's Wife")
27. Helen Hunt ("Twister")
28. Diane Keaton ("Marvin's Room," "The First Wives Club")
29. Nicole Kidman ("Portrait of A Lady")
30. Mia Kirshner ("The Crow 2")
31. Alice Krige ("Star Trek: First Contact")
32. Ricki Lake ("Mrs. Winterbourne")
33. Diane Lane ("Jack")
34. Sheryl Lee ("Mother Night")
35. Jennifer Jason Leigh ("Kansas City")
36. Juliette Lewis ("The Evening Star," "From Dusk Till Dawn")
37. Andie MacDowell ("Michael," "Multiplicity")
38. Shirley MacLaine ("The Evening Star," "Mrs. Winterbourne")
39. Madonna ("Evita")
40. Mary Stuart Masterson ("Bed of Roses")
41. Samantha Mathis ("Jack & Sarah," "Broken Arrow")
42. Catherine McCormack ("The Honest Courtesan," "North Star")
43. Frances McDormand ("Fargo")
44. Bette Midler ("The First Wives Club")
45. Helen Mirren ("Some Mother's Son," "Losing Chase")
46. Demi Moore ("Striptease," "The Juror")
47. Mary Tyler Moore ("Flirting With Disaster")
48. Rosie O'Donnell ("Harriet the Spy")
49. Anna Paquin ("Fly Away Home," "Jane Eyre")
50. Sarah Jessica Parker ("Substance of Fire," "Extreme Measures," "The First Wives Club," "If Lucy Fell")
51. Rhea Perlman ("Matilda," "Sunset Park")
52. Michelle Pfeiffer ("One Fine Day," "To Gillian on Her 37th Birthday," "Up Close & Personal")
53. Natalie Portman ("Mars Attacks," "Everyone Says...," "Beautiful Girls")
54. Debbie Reynolds ("Mother")
55. Joely Richardson ("101 Dalmatians")
56. Miranda Richardson ("Kansas City")
57. Julia Roberts ("Everyone Says I Love You," "Michael Collins," "Mary Reilly")
58. Gena Rowlands ("Unhook the Stars")
59. Rene Russo ("Ransom," "Tin Cup")
60. Meg Ryan ("Courage Under Fire")
61. Winona Ryder ("The Crucible," "Boys")
62. Kyra Sedgwick ("Phenomenon," "Losing Chase")
63. Elisabeth Shue ("The Trigger Effect")
64. Sharon Stone ("Last Dance," "Diabolique")
65. Meryl Streep ("Marvin's Room," "Before and After")
66. Barbra Streisand ("The Mirror Has Two Faces")
67. Kristy Swanson ("The Phantom")
68. Kristin Scott Thomas ("English Patient")
69. Uma Thurman ("The Truth About Cats and Dogs," "Beautiful Girls")
70. Jennifer Tilly ("Bound," "House Arrest")
71. Marisa Tomei ("Unhook the Stars")
72. Dianne Wiest ("The Associate," "The Birdcage," "Drunks")
73. Vanessa Williams ("Eraser")
74. Mara Wilson ("Matilda")
75. Kate Winslet ("Hamlet," "Jude")
76. Reese Witherspoon ("Fear")
77. Robin Wright ("Moll Flanders")

Breakout Star of the Year—Male

1. Jean-Marc Barr ("Breaking the Waves")
2. Charles Berling ("Ridicule")
3. Jackie Chan ("Supercop," "Rumble In The Bronx," "First Strike")
4. Ben Chaplin ("Truth...Cats & Dogs")
5. George Clooney ("One Fine Day," "From Dusk Till Dawn")
6. Chris Cooper ("Lone Star")
7. Christopher Eccleston ("Jude")
8. Andre Eisermann ("Brother of Sleep")
9. Jared Harris ("I Shot Andy Warhol")
10. Michael Jordan ("Space Jam")
11. Nathan Lane ("The Birdcage")
12. William H. Macy ("Fargo")
13. Matthew McConaughey ("A Time To Kill," "Larger Than Life," "Lone Star")
14. Ewan McGregor ("Trainspotting")
15. Vincent Perez ("The Crow 2")
16. Geoffrey Rush ("Shine")
17. David Schwimmer ("Pallbearer")
18. Tom Everett Scott ("That Thing You Do!")
19. David Thewlis ("The Island of Dr. Moreau," "Dragonheart")
20. Billy Bob Thornton ("Sling Blade")
21. Stanley Tucci ("Big Night")
22. Mark Wahlberg ("Fear")
23. Jeffrey Wright ("Basquiat")
24. Billy Zane ("The Phantom")

Breakout Star of the Year—Female

1. Pamela Anderson ("Barb Wire")
2. Vanessa Angel ("Kingpin")
3. Jennifer Aniston ("She's the One")
4. Fairuza Balk ("Dr. Moreau," "The Craft")
5. Emmanuelle Beart ("Mission Impossible")
6. Brenda Blethyn ("Secrets and Lies")
7. Ellen DeGeneres ("Mr. Wrong")
8. Alison Elliott ("The Spitfire Grill")
9. Vivica Fox ("Set It Off," "ID4")
10. Charlotte Gainsbourg ("Jane Eyre")
11. Janeane Garofalo ("The Truth About Cats and Dogs," "Larger Than Life")
12. Marianne Jean-Baptiste ("Secrets & Lies")
13. Angela Jones ("Curdled")
14. Tea Leoni ("Flirting With Disaster")
15. Courtney Love ("The People Vs. Larry Flynt," "Feeling Minnesota")
16. Leslie Mann ("The Cable Guy")
17. Heather Matarazzo ("Welcome To the Dollhouse")
18. Gwyneth Paltrow ("Emma," "The Pallbearer")
19. Jada Pinkett ("Set It Off," "The Nutty Professor")
20. Theresa Randle ("Space Jam," "Girl 6")
21. Imogen Stubbs ("Twelfth Night")
22. Lili Taylor ("Ransom," "I Shot Andy Warhol," "Girls Town")
23. Michelle Trachtenberg ("Harriet the Spy")
24. Robin Tunney ("The Craft")
25. Liv Tyler ("That Thing You Do!," "Stealing Beauty," "Heavy")
26. Emily Watson ("Breaking the Waves")
27. Rachel Wiesz ("Chain Reaction")

MAKING HIS "POINTE"

Actor John Cusack Turns Writer/ Producer With "Grosse Pointe Blank"

By Bridget Byrne



Director George Armitage (left), Joan Cusack and John Cusack discuss a scene for Buena Vista's "Grosse Pointe Blank."

John Cusack had an agreement with two of his pals that, if the script they were developing got financed, they had to go back to their high school reunion. But this wasn't just some kind of casual joke. Their script, called "Grosse Pointe Blank," was structured around just such a gathering.

The deal indeed was made, so the bet had to be met. Cusack recalls the emotion he experienced in the parking lot before entering the Evanston, Ill. hotel where his classmates of years earlier had assembled. "Although I'd been in many major motion pictures and felt the responsibility of carrying millions of dollars on the strength of my performance, somehow I'd never felt so anxious in my life," says the 30-year-old actor, who has been working in film since he was a high-schoolish 16 and scored a supporting role in the romance-at-prep-school movie "Class." His breakthrough came two years later, with "The Sure Thing"; since then, his roles of greatest prominence include a con artist in "The Grifters," a baseball player in "Eight Men Out," a playwright in "Bullets Over Broadway" and a mayor's right-hand man in "City Hall."

Once Cusack was inside the hotel and back with his former school fellows, his anxiety eased, and he was able to observe much of what he expected to see: "Things that were tragic, things that were sick, and things that were really beautiful."

"Grosse Pointe Blank," now a completed film and slated for February release via Buena Vista's Hollywood Pictures label, covers similar ground in its reunion scenes, but it also includes much that might be unexpected. The film hangs many complexities of both tone and content over the framework of a nontraditional trip back to a hometown. Cusack plays Martin Blank, a professional killer trying to fulfill a contract while catching up with his past and rekindling a lost romance.

But, Cusack says, "I think it's a comedy," aware that the film doesn't fit snugly into type. "It's a comedy with teeth to it. I don't think it could be seen as a normal studio release. Hopefully, it's very funny—a black comedy with action and romance. It has those two [latter elements] in good measure, but at the end of the day it's a comedy."

The project first came to the attention of Cusack and longtime friends Steve Pink and D.V. DeVincentis, who co-wrote the script with him, as a spec work of about 40 pages. "We liked the idea and thought [the Blank role was] a good character for a comedy about American self-interest, about the disconnection of behavior from self-image," Cusack says.

Cusack stuck to his belief in "Grosse Pointe Blank" through a period when he had a production deal at Paramount and later when the script was at MGM. Eventually, the project was acquired by Donna Roth and Susan Arnold (the producer duo of Diane Keaton's critically lauded "Unstrung Heroes") and joined the slate at Disney-affiliated Caravan Pictures. Filmed on a $15 million budget, "Grosse Pointe Blank" was shot mainly in Los Angeles, with some second-unit work in Detroit, where the reunion is set. (The "Grosse Pointe" part of the title refers to that Motor City suburb.)



Throughout his career, Cusack has wanted to be more than "a hired gun." Not entirely facetiously, he says, "'Actor' is kind of a bad word, isn't it?" So he appreciated his triple-tier involvement as co-writer and co-producer as well as the movie's lead. "Most films are organized chaos, without much thought given to the actors and to protecting what would be best for their performance," says Cusack, pleased that his producer status often enabled him to make choices more sensitive to actors' needs. "You can dictate the way you want to work when you have the power and hire people who understand actors," he says.

"I like a director who...is interested in behavior and not just plot.... Someone who can catch 'moments.'"

Asked about not taking on the director's chair (Cusack has helmed several plays for his Chicago-based New Criminals stage company), Cusack replies, "It' arrogant enough to write, produc and act. That's enough." Instead George Armitage took the reins." had seen his 'Miami Blues' an loved it. I felt George would un derstand what I wanted, whic was to do something that is no normally tried: t keep it tense, t keep it real, bu to go for the ab surdity withou being camp.

"He did a grea job. I like a direc tor who...is inter ested in behavio and not just plo Someone wh understands wha actors do. Some one who can catch 'moments.'"

The film's oddball cast in cludes Cusack's actress siste Joan and his longtime friend Jer emy Piven, as well as Alan Arkin Dan Aykroyd and Minnie Drive For his part, Cusack's part-choi boy, part-gigolo look seems righ for a role that demands he be bot sensitive and slick—a cute dat and a bad appointment.

After "Grosse Pointe Blank," Cusack will turn his attention t other projects he has in develop ment. One is a western about "re demption and sacrifice," anoth an off-kilter look at the NFL i which he would play "the quarte back." But audiences will next se Cusack in a mammoth action/a venture, "Con Air" (arrivin this spring via Disney Touchstone wing), in whic he stars opposite Nicol Cage and John Malkovich. it, Cusack plays a U.S. ma shal. That sounds like an a gressive role for Cusack, b he describes his "Con Ai character as "an eccentr goodie." Somehow, th sounds like an apt descriptio for one of his roles—and f Cusack himself.

"Grosse Pointe Blank." Sta ring John Cusack, Minnie Driv Dan Aykroyd, Joan Cusack an Alan Arkin. Directed by Geor Armitage. Written by To Jankiewicz, D.V. DeVincenti Steve Pink and John Cusack. Pr duced by Susan Arnold, Don Roth and Roger Birnbaum. Co edy. A Buena Vista release. N yet rated. Feb. 14.

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FEBRUARY TRAILERS

Conflagration comes to Hollywood

Things are going to get hot this month. Not only because February is the month of romance, or because its middle weekend finds distributors swakking audiences with a dozen-plus titles, thanks to Valentine's and Presidents' Days sharing a three-day.

It's also because the bubbling war between volcano epics—Universal's "Dante's Peak" and Fox's "Volcano" (see "Volcano" illustration below)—has gone molten. As this issue headed to press, Universal announced it was trying to finish "Dante's Peak" a month early for a Feb. 7 debut—three weeks before "Volcano" erupts. Fox's (at least initial) response was to leave its date unchanged. As befits such a magma quagmire, it's a fluid situation.

In "Dante's Peak," Pierce Brosnan ("GoldenEye") is a vulcanologist studying seismic activity in a small Pacific Northwest



town. Despite others' disbelief in his theories, he persuades the local mayor (Linda Hamilton) that their long-dormant mountain is about to explode. Roger Donaldson directs; Leslie Bohem scripts; Gale Anne Hurd and Joseph M. Singer produce.

Exploitips: *Donaldson ("White Sands," "The Getaway") rebounded with "Species," and Hurd (the "Terminator" series) has delivered before. Brosnan and "T"/"T2" heroine Hamilton are also known quantities, and so is Digital Domain ("True Lies," "Apollo 13"), which contributes $8 million of special effects. Yet Fox's epic—which conflagrates Los Angeles, not rural tinytown—is grander scale, disaster-wise. The next move is Fox's; might it be to who-blinks-first head to head?*

FEBRUARY 7

Absolute Power

A master thief, Luther Whitney (Clint Eastwood), witnesses a bizarre murder while burglarizing the Washington, D.C. mansion of a Capitol Hill powerbroker. The murderers, linked to the White House, learn that they've been seen, and they set about stalking the solitary witness—even as Whitney works behind the scenes to bring them down. Gene Hackman (who also starred in the Eastwood masterpiece "Unforgiven") portrays President Alan Richmond; Laura Linney ("Primal Fear") plays Kate Whitney. Scott Glenn, Dennis Haysbert, Judy Davis and Ed Harris co-star. Clint Eastwood directs, and he produces for Castle Rock with Karen Spiegel; William Goldman scripts, adapting the novel by David Baldacci. *See this issue's cover stories.* (Columbia, 2/7)

Exploitips: *Before Castle Rock entered its cool streak, Eastwood's "In the Line of Fire" was a big hit for the company, and it's likely hoping for second lightning with Eastwood back for another political thriller. Expect great numbers; all other studios do, given they're waiting for 2/14.*

The Pest

In this urban comedy, John Leguizamo ("William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet") portrays charming scam artist Pestario "The Pest" Vargas, who has an uncanny ability to transform himself into almost any sort of person: fast-talking Chinese delivery boy, unorthodox Orthodox rabbi, karaoke-singing Japanese businessman, over-the-top African in kente cloth. And his chameleonry comes in handy, because a crazy German named Gustav ("Ed Wood's" Jeffrey Jones) and the Mob (the Scottish mob, that is) are after him. Edoardo Ballerini and Freddy Rodriguez co-star for director Paul Miller. David Bar Katz and John Leguizamo script; Sid Sheinberg, Bill Sheinberg and Jon Sheinberg produce for their Bubble Factory. *See our Sept. '96 issue Sneak Preview.* (TriStar, 2/7)

Exploitips: *"The Pest" was moved off its late-October date to winter release to avoid another TriStar comedy, "High School High." If "The Pest" buzzes at the boxoffice, it could vault Leguizamo into film-lead status, a la Jim Carrey. On the other hand, Leguizamo's early lead outing, "A Pyromaniac's Love Story," didn't pull. At the moment, emphasize the hijinks genre to maximize mainstream response.*

Rhyme & Reason

This hip-hop documentary takes moviegoers behind the scenes in the rap music world and follows the development of the music from its early days in the South Bronx to its status as one of today's dominant forms. Ice-T, Heavy D, KRS-One, Nas, MC Eiht, Salt N Pepa and The Fugees (recent top MTV Europe award winner) appear; tunes from Tha Dogg Pound, Mack 10, Busta Rhymes and A Tribe Called Quest highlight the soundtrack. Peter Spirer directs; Chuck Block produces. (Miramax, 2/7 ltd.)

Exploitips: *A similar rap effort from Savoy came and went (like most Savoy releases); Miramax is likely to prove more savvy with its marketing. A radio station/record store tie-in is a given here, with Priority/Buzztone Records having been promoting the album and releasing singles since November. Expect a predominantly male youth demo in both urban and suburban locations. Catchline: "The ultimate backstage pass."*

Gridlock'd

In this comedy, two performance artist/addicts named Stretch and Spoon try to go straight but find the bureaucratic system they're about to enter even more confusing than the lives they're trying to leave behind. Tim Roth, the late Tupac Shakur and Thandie Newton star. Actor Vondie Curtis-Hall makes his writing/directing debut in the Interscope/Polygram/DEF production. (Gramercy, 2/5)

Exploitips: *"Gridlock'd" will generate extra media attention and moviegoer consideration because of the presence of Shakur, the rapper/actor ("Poetic Justice") murdered last year in Las Vegas. But urban and suburban youth demos will also be drawn by solid performers Roth and Newton.*

subUrbia

Twentysomething slackers reexamine their lives when a former friend, now a rock star, returns home. Nicky Katt, Parker Posey ("Party Girl") and Steve Zahn ("That Thing You Do!") are the best known among the young ensemble cast. Richard Linklater ("Before Sunrise") directs; Eric Bogosian adapts his play; Ann Walker-McBay produces for Castle Rock. (Sony Classics, 2/7)

Exploitips: *Fans of Linklater's "Dazed and Confused" are the key target here (see review, this issue). Also citing the older Bogosian's "Talk Radio" could expand patron interest beyond the usual Gen-X suspects.*

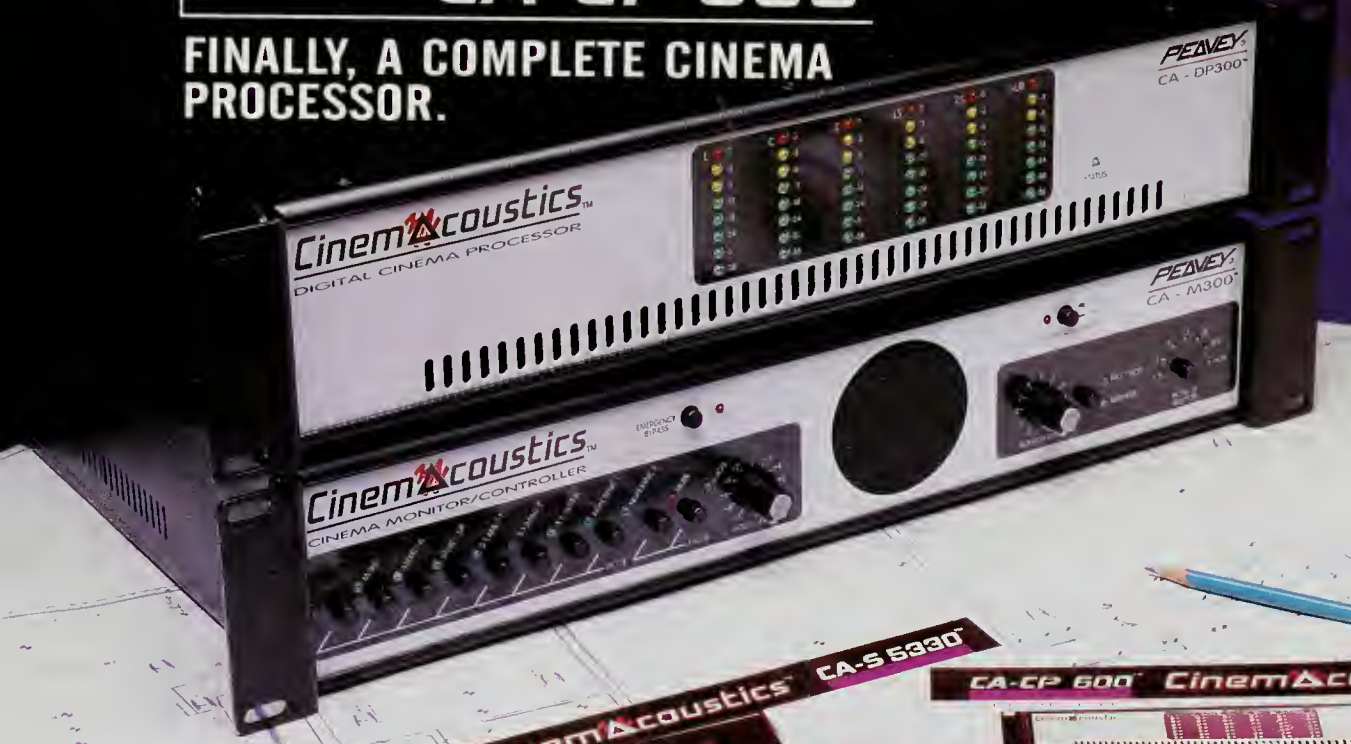
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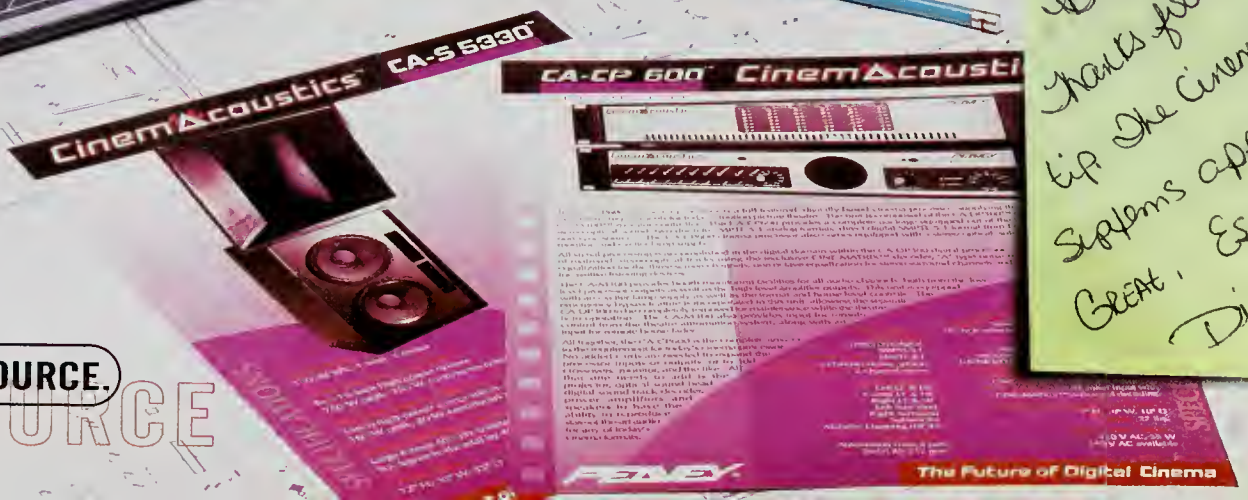
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GROSSE POINTE BLANK

In this black comedy, a charming but efficient hitman named Martin (John Cusack) undertakes an odd search to find "fulfillment and truth" by going home to Grosse Point, Mich., for his 10-year high school reunion. There, he hopes to reunite with his long-lost love ("Sleepers'" Minnie Driver) and perform one final hit. But Martin's archrival, Grocer (Dan Aykroyd), arrives with alternate plans for him. George Armitage ("Miami Blues") directs; Tom Jankiewicz and D.V. DeVincentis & Steve Pink & John Cusack script; Susan Arnold and Donna Arkoff Roth (the "Unstrung Heroes" duo) and Caravan head Roger Birnbaum produce for Hollywood Pictures. *See our Sneak Preview this issue.* (Buena Vista, 2/14)

Exploitips: *The crime/black comedy subgenre remains a popular one (if too trammeled post-Tarantino), and star Cusack—who adds screenwriter and co-producer credits here—will be out promoting the film. Driver is building a following, and Aykroyd remains a known quantity with mainstream audiences. A suggested catchline, "He's home for his reunion. He's in love. And he's a hitman," conveys both the plot and the film's off-kilter take. Expect the date's other big comedy, the older-skewing "The Beautician and the Beast," to split the genre's audience: Males and those under 35 will opt for Cusack, females and the older generation will go for Drescher. Note: Disney's in a valentine mood in any case, having logged its third consecutive $1+ billion boxoffice year in 1996 and seen its stock rise 25 percent in last year's first 11 months to a historic Dow high.*

FEBRUARY 14

Vegas Vacation

Though no longer sporting the National Lampoon label, this "Vacation" puts the Griswold family on the road again for a typically ill-fated trip, this time to Las Vegas. Chevy Chase, Beverly D'Angelo and Randy Quaid reprise their roles; Wayne Newton and Siegfried & Roy join the festivities. Stephen Kessler directs; Elisa Bell scripts; Jerry Weintraub produces for Weintraub Prods. (Warner, 2/14)

Exploitips: *Of the many 2/14 openers, this is the only one for adults that's presold (for kids, it's "That Darn Cat'"), in the sense that moviegoers know what to expect when you combine Chase with "Vacation."*

The Beautician and the Beast

A street-smart New York hairstylist, Joy Miller (Fran Drescher), crosses paths with Boris Pochenko (former James Bond man Timothy Dalton), a foul-tempered despot who rules an Eastern European country called Slovetzia. It's comic confusion: When Joy is offered a job as tutor for the "President for Life's" children, the prez thinks she's an academic ready to help westernize his kids for a post-Communist world; Joy thinks they want a beautician. Cultures clash and romantic sparks fly. Ian McNeice, Lisa Jakub, Phyllis Newman and Michael Lerner co-star for director Ken Kwapis ("Dunston Checks In"). Todd Graff ("Used People") scripts, and he produces with Howard W. Koch, Jr. ("Primal Fear"). (Paramount, 2/14)

Exploitips: *Drescher's character and the film's plot seem designed to go down easy with fans of her current TV sitcom, "The Nanny," in which Drescher plays a former Jewish beautician who now works as a nanny to children of a wealthy man. Although serious moviegoers are likely to say "oy, vey" and give this a wide berth, light-fare aficionados and even those of the older set who prefer the home fire's small screen are likely to give this a look.*

Fools Rush In

In this romantic comedy, two lovers who could hardly be more different appear to be fated to be together. He comes from the cold corporate climes of Manhattan; she was raised in the fiery desert heat of Las Vegas. Their first night together makes them parents; their second, husband and wife. But what comes next? Matthew Perry and Salma Hayek ("From Dusk Till Dawn") star with Jon Tenney and Jill Clayburgh. Andy Tennant directs; Joan Taylor and Katherine Reback script; Doug Draizin produces. *See our Sneak Preview in our Dec. '96 issue.* (Columbia, 2/14)

Exploitips: *A romantic comedy nicely timed for a romantic holiday, "Fools Rush In" will benefit more from its crowd-pleasing genre and odd-couple characterizations than from its leads, who though certainly talented and attractive aren't yet boxoffice A-list draws on their own. (This could change that.) To highlight the romantic proceedings, exhibitors can decorate their halls with bows of hearts, and do a contest tie-in with a local romantic restaurant offering a prize of dinner for two.*

That Darn Cat

In this update of the 1965 Disney classic, "Casper's" Christina Ricci stars as Patti, a 16-year-old bored with her sleepy hometown until her tomcat D.C. (for Darn Cat) becomes involved in a mysterious kidnapping. Suddenly, Patti finds herself working with a novice FBI agent ("Cool Runnings'" Doug E. Doug). George Dzundza ("Dangerous Minds"), Peter Boyle, Michael McKean and Bess Armstrong co-star for director Bob Spiers (best known for helming British TV import "Absolutely Fabulous"); even more improbably, Scott Alexander and Larry Karaszewski ("The People Vs. Larry Flynt") script, adapting the Undercover Cat" novel by The Gordons and a script by The Gordons and Bill Walsh; Robert Simonds produces. (Buena Vista, 2/14)

Exploitips: *This title was tentatively slated for this past summer and then fall, but the current slating makes good counterprogramming sense: Of its date's dozen-plus releases, "That Darn Cat" is the only one aimed at kids. PG fare for the family crowd, this has a certain presold element: its known title, which will make boomer parents feel content about bringing/sending the kids. However, with Spiers and the Alexander/Karaszewski duo aboard, expect a certain warping of the original that could play well with adults—though this is most likely to remain primarily matinee fare.*

Trial and Error

Out-of-work actor Ricky Rome ("So I Married an Axe Murderer's" Michael Richards) wants to give his best friend, a lawyer named Charlie Tuttle ("101 Dalmatians'" Jeff Daniels), the mother of all bachelor's parties. But Charlie's father-in-law-to-be first sends him to a desolate desert town to handle a secret family legal matter. Ricky and three pals arrive and take Charlie out on the town; the next morning, with his friend far too hung over to handle legal proceedings, Ricky heads to court to impersonate Charlie, thus beginning a wacky trial. Meanwhile, recovered Charlie finds happy solace in his sad fate in waitress Pinky ("2 Days in the Valley's" Charlize Theron)—until bride-to-be Tiffany arrives. Jonathan Lynn ("My Cousin Vinny") directs; Sara Bernstein and Gregory Bernstein script; Gary Ross ("Dave," "Big") produces. (New Line, 2/14)

Exploitips: *Teaming Daniels and Richards (best known for his work on TV's "Seinfeld") holds humorous promise. But there's much comedy competition this holiday weekend.*

Roseanna's Grave

In this comedy, a dying wife ("The Fisher King's" Mercedes Ruehl) has one last wish: that she be buried in her Italian village's graveyard

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Response No. 35

LATE MOVIE MOVES INTO JANUARY...

Zeus and Roxanne

A roguish dog named Zeus and a delightful dolphin named Roxanne form a unique relationship. And the unusuol bonding leads to family togetherness, romance and freedom. Steve Guttenberg ("The Big Green") and Kathleen Quinlan ("Apollo 13") star. George T. Miller ("Andre") directs; Tom Benedek ("Carlo Collodi's Pinocchio") scripts; Frank Price produces for Rysher Entertainment. (MGM, 1/10)

Exploitips: *This family film arrives after the holidays, but if that demo is looking for something new this one has them all to itself.*

Walkabout

Jenny Agutter, Lucien John and David Gumpilil star in this 1971 Australian film by then debuting director Nicholas Roeg, in which two white, sophisticated British children find themselves lost in the wilds



Down Under and must trust themselves to a young aborigine to survive. Edward Bond scripts, adapting the novel by James Vance Marshall; Si Litvinoff produces; Roeg also handled the cinematography. (Films Inc., going wider Jan.)

Exploitips: *Chicago-based Films Incorporated on 12/27/96 began re-releasing "Walkabout" in a "director's cut"—the 100-minute version that was available outside the United States. (In 1971, Fox first released a 95-minute, R-rated version, then followed with a further shortened GP-rated version.) This "Walkabout" is unrated; Films Inc. notes it includes full frontal nudity. The distributor also emphasizes that "Walkabout" has never been available on video in the U.S. (Films Inc. will handle that window in second-quarter '97.)*

A Mongolian Tale

In "Hei Ma," a Chinese orphan, Bayinbulag, is raised by a foster grandmother on the Mongolian steppes, with her young granddaughter, Somiya, and a lost foal. Grown, Bayinbulag promises to marry Somiya when he returns from veterinary studies but, when he comes back with his stallion, he discovers her pregnant and leaves for a dozen years. Journeying to the steppes, and now become a folk singer, Bayinbulag finds Somiya married to an alcoholic and she the mother of four sons and one daughter—who is desperate for a good father. Berlin fest favorite Xie Fei, one of China's Fifth Generation directors, helms; Zhang Chengzhi adapts his story, "Gangang Hara" ("A Song of the Grassland"). (New Yorker, 1/17)

Exploitips: *One production catchline—"Mongolia, 30 years ago. A black stallion, an orphan and the girl he loved"—makes this Mongolian- and Mandarin-language effort sound like a children's or teenager's movie, which it's not. What it is, and salably so, is the latest foreign-language art-houser from the man who made the critically acclaimed "Women of the Lake of Scented Souls."*

Prisoner of the Mountains

A sometimes comic fable of love and war, the latest by Russian filmmaker Sergei Bodrov ("I Wanted to See Angels") relates the adventures of two Russian soldiers, the dashing and experienced Sacha ("Burnt by the Sun's" Oleg Menshikov) and raw recruit Vania (newcomer Sergei Bodrov Jr.). Captured by a Chechen father, they are held hostage in the man's village home in his hope of bartering them for his captured son. As time elapses, Sacha develops a bond with Vania, and Vania begins romancing their captor's daughter. Producers Sergei Bodrov and Boris Giller script with Arif Aliev. (Orion Classics, 1/31 NY)

Exploitips: *Marketably, "Prisoner of the Mountains" was awarded the Fipresci International Critics Prize at last year's Cannes fest, and it's been selected as Russia's foreign-language Oscar entry. The film is a contemporary adaptation of Leo Tolstoy's "A Prisoner of the Caucasus," so bookstore tie-ins would help draw the literary-minded art-house demo.*

where her dead child was laid to rest several years before. The one problem: The cemetery is almost full, with only four sites remaining—and people seem to be dropping dead right and left. Her loving husband ("Mission: Impossible's" Jean Reno) goes to laughable lengths to save her a spot. Polly Walker ("Restoration") co-stars for director Paul Weiland. Saul Turteltaub, Dick Clement and Ian Le Frenais script; Paul Trijbits, Alison Owen and Dario Poloni produce. (Fine Line, 2/14)

Exploitips: *"Roseanna's Grave" is an in-house production by Fine Line, and the distributor was certain enough of this English-language entry that it took the film to Showeast. Fine Line is also releasing this art-house effort in SDDS and Dolby SR-D, another sign it thinks this film has the potential to cross over to mainstream audiences.*

Smilla's Sense of Snow

Bille August ("The House of the Spirits") helms this adaptation of the Peter Hoag novel about a woman ("Sabrina's" Julia Ormond) who's an expert on glaciers; after a neighbor child's death, she ventures into the ice fields in search of vengeance. Gabriel Byrne and Richard Harris co-star. Anne Biderman and Andrew Birkin ("The Cement Garden") script; Constantin Film head Bernd Eichinger produces. (Fox Searchlight, 2/14 NY/LA, wider 2/21)

Exploitips: *"The House of the Spirits" did poorly stateside (yet well overseas), but Danish director August's "The Best Intentions" won the 1992 Cannes fest Palme d'Or. Some of Fox Searchlight's slate seems almost mainstream (e.g., "Ice Storm"), but this seems more likely for the art-house crowd, who will respond to the August, Byrne and Birkin names.*

When We Were Kings

This documentary about the historic "Rumble in the Jungle" heavyweight bout between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman, which was held in Zaire in 1974, features footage that's been in the can since the last punch was thrown 22 years ago. In 1995, with rights issues at last resolved, filmmaker Taylor Hackford began assisting director Leon Gast in cutting the hundreds of hours of film into a cohesive whole. The final result includes fight footage; musical performances by B.B. King, James Brown and others from a fest organized around the bout; and new interviews with the likes of Norman Mailer, George Plimpton and Spike Lee. (Gramercy, 2/14 ltd)

Exploitips: *Gramercy opened "When We Were Kings" for one week in October in L.A. to Oscar-qualify; the film already has a Special Jury Prize from the Sundance fest.*

Hotel de Love

Aden Young, Saffron Burrows ("Circle of Friends") and Simon Bossell star in this romantic comedy about two brothers who fall in love with the same woman. One wins but then loses her heart; the other is left pining. Ten years later, she returns to the honeymoon hotel at which the brothers' parents are retaking their marital vows. Of course, adventures ensue. Craig Rosenberg directs and scripts; David Parker produces. (Live, 2/14)

Exploitips: *Based on Toronto fest critics' response, Live has a hit on its hands. Our reviewer (see Nov. '96) calls the film a "remarkably well-written and directed first feature.... [A] thoroughly winsome, heartwarming, spirited and clever romantic comedy."*

Kama Sutra

Filmmaker Mira Nair ("The Perez Family") transforms the great Indian book on the art of lovemaking into a movie about a princess (Sarita Choudhury) and a servant girl (Indira Varma) who grow up as inseparable companions but then part over the attentions of a raj ("The English Patient's" Naveen Andrews). Helena Kriel co-scripts with Nair; Lydia Dean Pilcher produces. (Trimark, 2/14)

Exploitips: *Our Toronto-fest critic (see review this issue) gives "Kama Sutra" only a fair grade (two stars), but one comment ("the movie...is full of nudity and sex") suggests the most marketable element of the film.*

Forever Mozart

This latest French-language effort from filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard tells four distinct stories, each of which shares one narrative similarity: An elderly director is trying to cast and shoot a movie about recent events in Bosnia. Ingrid Rubio, Carlos Fuentes and Agata Lys star; Alain Sarde and Ruth Waldenburger produce. (New Yorker, 2/14)

Exploitips: *Our Toronto-fest critic (see this issue's review section) gives "Forever Mozart" four stars, saying Godard "tackles ideas with intellectual rigor while retaining a suggestive and poetic air." Another comment—"although Godard is not to everyone's taste, "Forever Mozart" should delight the filmmaker's loyal following"—suggests this is for the most dedicated art-house fans.*

Nightwatch

See our Nov. '96 Holiday Highlights. (Miramax, 2/14)

Bliss

See our Aug. '96 Trailers. (Triumph, 2/14 ltd)

The Graduate

See our Dec. '96 Trailers. (Strand, 2/14)

Unhook the Stars

See our Nov. '96 Holiday Highlights. (Miramax, exp 2/14 after Nov. excl opening)

FEBRUARY 21

The Empire Strikes Back

The second in the "Star Wars" series returns in digitally updated form. In this 1980 episode, Luke Skywalker, Han Solo and Princess Leia find the tide turning against them and in favor of Darth Vader and the Imperial Fleet. Key developments: Yoda trains Luke; Vader reveals a secret; Han is frozen. Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher and Billy Dee Williams star for director Irvin Kershner in what many critics consider the best of the trilogy, thanks in part to great script work by a then unknown Lawrence Kasdan. (Fox, 2/21)

Exploitips: *What began on 26 screens in 1977 is reemerging on some 2,000 in 1997. Although Fox is spending under $50 million to market the trilogy relaunch, promo tie-ins with Pepsi and its restaurant subsidiaries Taco Bell, Pizza Hut and KFC will help spread the word. The studio is giving preference to digital houses (the films are going out in Dolby SR-D, DTS and SDDS) and is trying to meet exhibitor demand by booking each of the three to competing chains in given markets. "Star Wars" arrived 1/31; "Return of the Jedi" lands 3/7.*

Cosi

Based on a true story, this oddly named Down Under comedy tells the story of an aspiring theatre director so desperate for work he agrees to stage Mozart's "Cosi Fan Tutte" opera in a mental hospital—with unexpectedly miraculous results. Ben Mendelsohn ("The Year My Voice Broke"), Barry Otto ("Strictly Ballroom"), Pamela Rabe ("Sirens") and the "Muriel's Wedding" duo, Toni Collette and Rachel Griffiths, star for director Mark Joffe ("The Efficiency Expert"). Louis Nowra ("Map of the Human Heart") scripts; Richard Brennan ("Prisoners of the Sun") and Timothy White ("Death in Brunswick") produce. (Miramax, 2/21)



ROSEWOOD

In this drama, when a white woman falsely accuses a black man of rape, vigilantes burn down the all-black town of Rosewood, Fla. A handful of residents, including the sole white shopkeeper (Jon Voight) and a black WWI vet ("Striptease's" Ving Rhames), work to save women and children. Don Cheadle ("Devil in a Blue Dress"; also in this month's "Volcano"), Esther Rolle and Michael Rooker co-star for director John Singleton ("Higher Learning"); Gregory Poirier scripts, basing his work on a true 1923 incident; Jon Peters ("My Fellow Americans") produces for his Peters label. (Warner, 2/21 wide)

Exploitips: *The direct and then indirect collisions between the $25 million "Rosewood" and the similarly themed "Ghosts of Mississippi" in the end was avoided altogether with this move to 2/21. Exhibitors should still trailer "Rosewood" with showings of the Reiner film, though, and the six-week elbow room between the two titles should work to each's advantage.*

Exploitips: *At 101 minutes, this comedy promises to crackle along quicker than did Nowra's dramatic "Map of the Human Heart." To varying degrees of boxoffice success, predecessors like "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest," "The Dream Team" and "Crazy People" have taken serious and comic looks at asylum teamwork; based on its homeland success, "Cosi" might do for—or is that to—opera what "The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert" and "Muriel's Wedding" did for Abba. Bill this one as "Amadeus" meets "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest."*

The Eighth Day

See our Nov. '96 Holiday Highlights. (Gramercy, 2/21 NY/LA)

FEBRUARY 28

Volcano

The '90s home of crisis, Los Angeles—having suffered through the Rodney King riots, the O.J. trial, the Northridge earthquake and the usual Malibu fires—now faces trouble from below, as L.A. goes Vesuvial. Tommy Lee Jones, Anne Heche ("Walking and Talking"), Gaby Hoffmann ("Now and Then"), Don Cheadle ("Devil in a Blue Dress") and John Corbett star. Mick Jackson ("L.A. Story") directs; Billy Ray, Barbara Benedek and Jerome Armstrong script; Neal Moritz and Andrew Z. Davis produce. See photo, p. 22. (Fox, 2/28)

Exploitips: *Pompeii and circumstance: Universal's "Dante's Peak" inferno epic and this Fox 2000 effort have been competing since they were on the drawing boards, even to the point of the studios highly touting when they finished principal photography ("Volcano" on Oct. 17, "Dante's Peak" on Nov. 6). At press time, it looked like the projects would hit theatres with about that time spread, but one might expect "Dante's Peak" to move its 3/7 release to later in the year, to allow a little breathing room for audiences between the films. (Much like "Mars Attacks" went Christmas after "ID4" went summer.)*

Donnie Brasco

Adapted from the book by FBI agent and mob infiltrator Joe Pistone and Richard Woodley, this G-man vs. Mafia tale stars Al Pacino as the wiseguy who mentored Pistone (Johnny Depp), who used the alias Donnie Brasco during his three years underground. Michael Madsen ("Species"), Anne Heche ("Walking and Talking"; also in this month's "Volcano"), Bruno Kirby and James Russo co-star. Mike Newell ("An Awfully Big Adventure") directs; Paul Attanasio ("Quiz Show") scripts; Mark Johnson ("A Little Princess"), Barry Levinson, Louis DiGiaimo and Gail Mutrux produce for Mandalay. (TriStar, 2/28)

Exploitips: *Last holidays, Pacino's "Heat" did hot business despite its three hours, while Depp's "Nick of Time" misfired despite its short-fuse clock. This is territory distant from that associated with Newell ("Enchanted April," "Into the West," "Four Weddings and a Funeral"), but he's no stranger to the manhunt genre (1981's superb "Bad Blood"). Other names, notably Attanasio, Johnson and Levinson, promise at least a prestige production. The film had been slated for 12/27.*



KISS THE GIRLS

In this suspense thriller, Dr. Alex Cross, a Washington, D.C. police psychologist ("Seven's" Morgan Freeman), learns that his niece has disappeared from her North Carolina law school. Believing she's been abducted, and although he's operating out of his jurisdiction, Cross heads to Durham to join the investigation. Kate McTiernan ("Heat's" Ashley Judd), a young but strong-willed doctor, joins him in following a trail of clues that take them from the Deep South to the West Coast and back. Gary Fleder ("Things to Do in Denver When You're Dead") directs; David Klass scripts, adapting James Patterson's best seller; David Brown and Joe Wizan produce. (Paramount, 2/28)

Exploitips: *Although not a boxoffice hit, Fleder's "Things to Do in Denver When You're Dead" earned hefty huzzahs from critics. Although her c.v. isn't as deep as Freeman's, Judd is a match for him in pure talent, which—given Freeman's gifts—is saying something. And producers Brown and Wizan are among the industry's best-known and most respected producers. Those signs of success might calm concern about the narrative's one missing element—a young male hero—with which other similar genre efforts (like "Seven," with Brad Pitt) have profited.*

Booty Call

In this urban comedy, the romantic plans of Rushon (Tommy Davidson) go awry when his girlfriend (Tamala Jones) invites a Wall Street friend named Lysterine ("Set It Off's" Vivica A. Fox) along on their date; in reaction, Rushon asks a coarse, unpolished pal named Bunz (Jamie Foxx) to come along to "run interference." Lysterine and Bunz fall for each other, but complications ensue for both couples, leading Rushon and Bunz through the streets of Chinatown on a series of misadventures. Jeff Pollack directs; Takashi Bufford ("Set It Off") and J. Sanford Parker script; John Morrissey produces. (Columbia, 2/28)

Exploitips: *That Columbia's romance-minded "Booty Call" goes 2/28 and the studio's romance-minded "Fools Rush In" goes the broader-audience Valentine's weekend suggests this will play more strictly to the urban demo. Fox and Foxx are known names, and highlighting their presence and the hyjinkery genre could pay dividends.*

Love Jones

In this romantic comedy set among the "overeducated and underemployed" in downtown Chicago, the "love jones" between struggling photographer Nina ("Friday's" Nia Long) and struggling writer Darius ("Dead Presidents'" Larenz Tate) is immediate when the two meet at a poetry reading. Complications ensue: Nina's former boyfriend returns, Darius pretends indifference, Nina moves in with her old beau, and Darius finds a new gal. But Darius and Nina discover that one should never underestimate the power of the love jones. Lisa Carson ("Devil in a Blue Dress") and Isaiah Washington ("Girl 6") co-star for writer/director Theodore Witcher. Nick Wechsler ("The New Age") produces for Addis/Wechsler. (New Line, 2/28)

Exploitips: *As the weekend slate is currently penciled, New Line's "Love Jones"—an urban-set romantic comedy—is slated to go head-to-head against Columbia's "Booty Call"—a romantic-themed urban comedy. Although one of the titles is likely to move to a new date, that the clash exists is a sign that Hollywood—just a couple years ago pilloried for making only black movies that featured gangstas and guns—has expanded their genres. And the boxoffice till is ringing, as "Friday" and "Waiting to Exhale" showed. Though suburban youths might not feel the same pull for a black romantic comedy (as for the latest "Boyz N the Hood"), urban theatres that are these films' key playdates frankly won't fear attracting/inciting what might be called the "crips crowd." (Latest case in point: Violence at "Set It Off" screenings.)*

Hard Eight

See our Sept. '96 issue Trailers. (Goldwyn, 2/28 ltd)

FEBRUARY UNDATED

Love Letters

A meek, quiet girl named Hiroko remains in mourning for her fiance, Itsuki Fujii, who died in a mountain-climbing accident two years earlier. One day, she is shown Itsuki's high-school yearbook by his mother and on a whim decides to write him at his old address. He's dead, of course, and his old home has been destroyed—yet Hiroko still receives a reply, from an Itsuki Fujii, who turns out to be a female classmate of the other Itsuki. As is gradually revealed, she's a woman who shared much more than his name. Miho Nakayama, Etsushi Toyokaya and Katsuyuki Shinohara star. Shunji Iwai directs and scripts, Jiro Komaki, Tomoki Ikeda and Mashiiko Nagasawa produce the Japanese-language film. (Fine Line, NY/LA Feb. undated)

Exploitips: *Our Toronto-fest reviewer calls "Love Letters," already highly acclaimed overseas, "lovely and delicate," saying the film evokes the British drama "84 Charing Cross Road" but "goes beyond...to deeper concerns of memory, love, loss and indefinable mystery." The film's scope format will only accentuate Noboru Shinoda's "stunning cinematography" for art-house audiences.*

Lost Highway

A jazz musician ("ID4's" Bill Pullman), tortured by the belief his wife is being unfaithful, finds himself accused of her murder. Meanwhile, a young mechanic ("Where the Day Takes You's" Balthazar Getty) is drawn into a web of deceit by a temptress cheating on her gangster boyfriend. Both women—who could be the same person—are played by Patricia Arquette. As the story progresses, postmodern noir transforms into the illogic of dream. Robert Loggia and Robert Blake co-star for filmmaker David Lynch; Deepak Nayar, Tony Sternberg and Mary Sweeney produce. (October Films, Feb. undated)

Exploitips: *Despite the star wattage, the Lynch name is the real sell here, known to art-housers ("Blue Velvet") and TV watchers ("Twin Peaks") alike. The soundtrack (already in release via Nothing Records) includes songs by Nine Inch Nails, Smashing Pumpkins (recently voted MTV Europe's top rock act), David Bowie and Lou Reed, so explore cross-promotional opportunities with local radio stations and music stores.*

Touch

In this offbeat comedy, Juvenal is a sensitive young man who can heal people with his touch. When the press learns of his ability, Juvenal finds himself at the center of a media circus and must fend off opportunists eager to exploit him. The film features one of the month's most compelling casts: Bridget Fonda, Tom Arnold, Skeet Ulrich ("The Craft"), Christoper Walken, Janeane Garofolo, Gina Gershon ("Bound"), Paul Mazursky and Lolita Davidovich. The always Calvinist-themed Paul Schrader ("Light of Day") directs and scripts, adapting the book by Elmore Leonard; Lila Cazes ("Leaving Las Vegas") and Fida Attieh produce for Lumiere Films. (UA, Feb. undated)

Exploitips: *Schrader and comedy—that seems an unlikely pair. But the fact that the filmmaker was able to assemble such an intriguing actor corps suggests an equally intriguing project. Certain similarities to two earlier Travolta titles ("Phenomenon" and "Michael") could dilute audience interest in another paranormal project, but savvy exhibitors can counterbalance this via bookstore tie-ins to highlight the Leonard connection.*

The Designated Mourner

Told in direct address to the camera, this drama examines the lives of three characters whose lives are intimately intertwined. Jack (David de Keyser), an average student, suddenly discovers himself considered one of the cultural elite after he marries Judy ("Kansas City's" Miranda Richardson), whose father (Mike Nichols) is a poet revered by the intelligentsia but held in disfavor by an increasingly repressive regime. As the political and military situation deteriorates and violence spreads through his country's society, Jack realizes their ivory-tower life is a prison. David Hare ("Skylight") directs, as he did the stage version by scripter Wallace Shawn ("My Dinner With Andre"); Donna Gray and David Hare produce. (First Look, late Feb.)

Exploitips: *Among the literary/stage crowd, "The Designated Mourner" will be a presold item, thanks to a successful run at London's National Theatre. For more mainstream audiences willing to sample specialized fare, Shawn's "My Dinner With Andre" credit will tune them into these proceedings.*

Broken English

A young Croatian immigrant, Nina (Aleksandra Vujcic), lives with her refugee family in a poor Auckland migrant enclave. Her relationship with her domineering and racist father ("Before the Rain's" Rade Serbedzija) deteriorates when she begins an affair with a local Maori named Eddie (Julian Arahanga). A crisis ensues when Nina becomes pregnant.



Gregor Nicholas directs, and Nicholas scripts with Johanna Pigott and Jim Salter; Robin Scholes produces for Communicado/Village Roadshow. (Sony Classics, Feb. undated)

Exploitips: *Sony Classics debuted "Broken English" for exhibitors at Showeast, showing an appropriate level of confidence by the distributor. As we suggested in our Showeast coverage, "Broken English's" logline could be "Once Were Warriors" meets "Before the Rain," as it merges New Zealand and Serbian/Croat elements. Still, exhibitors might best highlight the romantic entanglement over that of the film's politics to expand the film's audience draw.*

Screwed

This Alexander Crawford ("Hated") documentary takes a look at the world of sex mogul Al Goldstein, who made his fame/infamy as the many-times-arrested publisher of Screw Magazine and producer of the cable-access show "Midnight Blue." (Cinema Village Features, February widening after January NY/LA opening)

Exploitips: *A suggested catchline: "For those who found 'The People Vs. Larry Flynt' too tame." New specialized distributor Cinema Village is run by Ed Arentz, who runs New York's art house of the same name and is following in the hallowed exhibitor-to-distributor tradition of Brattle/Janus, New Yorker, Strand and Roxie.*

Salut Cousin!

Alilo (Gad Elmaleh) arrives in Paris from Algiers to retrieve a suitcase he must deliver back home. While staying with his worldly cousin Mok (Mess Hattou), Alilo is amazed at and attracted by the West's freedoms, so different from his repressive homeland. Meanwhile, his cousin continually schemes to escape the poverty of his immigrant life. Merzak Allouache directs, and co-scripts with Caroline Thivel; Jacques Bidou produces. (Seventh Art, Feb. undated)

Exploitips: *Our reviewer (see Dec. '96) cites Elmaleh as an engaging performer and Hattou as an effective character contrast, and also notes that filmmaker Allouache, in exile from Morocco since he made "Bab el-Oued City" (1994), allows his experiences to "give a complexity" to "Salut Cousin!"*



Response No. 9

Major Sound Suppliers

A BOXOFFICE Directory

The following companies are manufacturers and distributors of specialized sound equipment and supplies. Listings have been organized by product category based on descriptions provided for inclusion in our 1997 BUYERS DIRECTORY. Companies appearing in more than one category are indexed according to their first survey appearance. Companies wishing to appear in future editions of this directory, or listees who would like to appear under additional product categories, are encouraged to contact BOXOFFICE via FAX at: 213-465-5049.

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FAX: 601-486-1278
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FAX: 714-754-6174
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FAX: 770-449-6728
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Andrea Nee, VP/Operations
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David Watts, VP/Mktg.
Bob Warren, Cinema Products

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Los Angeles, CA 90068
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FAX: 213-845-1890
David W. Gray, VP/L.A. Film Div.

NEW YORK:
1350 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10019
212-767-1700
FAX: 212-767-1705
Michael D. Cosimo, VP/N.Y. Film Div.

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United Kingdom
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FAX: (17)93842101
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Bill Mead, VP/Business Development, Intl.
Gemma Richardson, VP/Worldwide Marketing
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FAX: 616-695-1304
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FAX: (18)12075100
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Whitinsville, MA 01588
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Sandy McDonald, Rep.
Cinema speakers

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Buchanan, MI 49107
800-234-6831, 616-695-6831
FAX: 616-695-1304
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FAX: 214-369-1768
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David Bell, VP sales
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FAX: 613-382-7466
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Sam Helms, Vice Pres.

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708-654-4392, FAX: 708-654-4941
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(31)229212542,
FAX: (31)229211192
Contact: Claus Spreyer
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08018 Barcelona, SPAIN
(34)33004361,
FAX: (34)33000315
Contact: Lorenzo Garcia
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Milwaukee, WI 53212
414-964-5000, 800-USA-KOSS
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Belleville, NJ 07109
201-751-6833, FAX: 201-751-9741
George Zazzali, President
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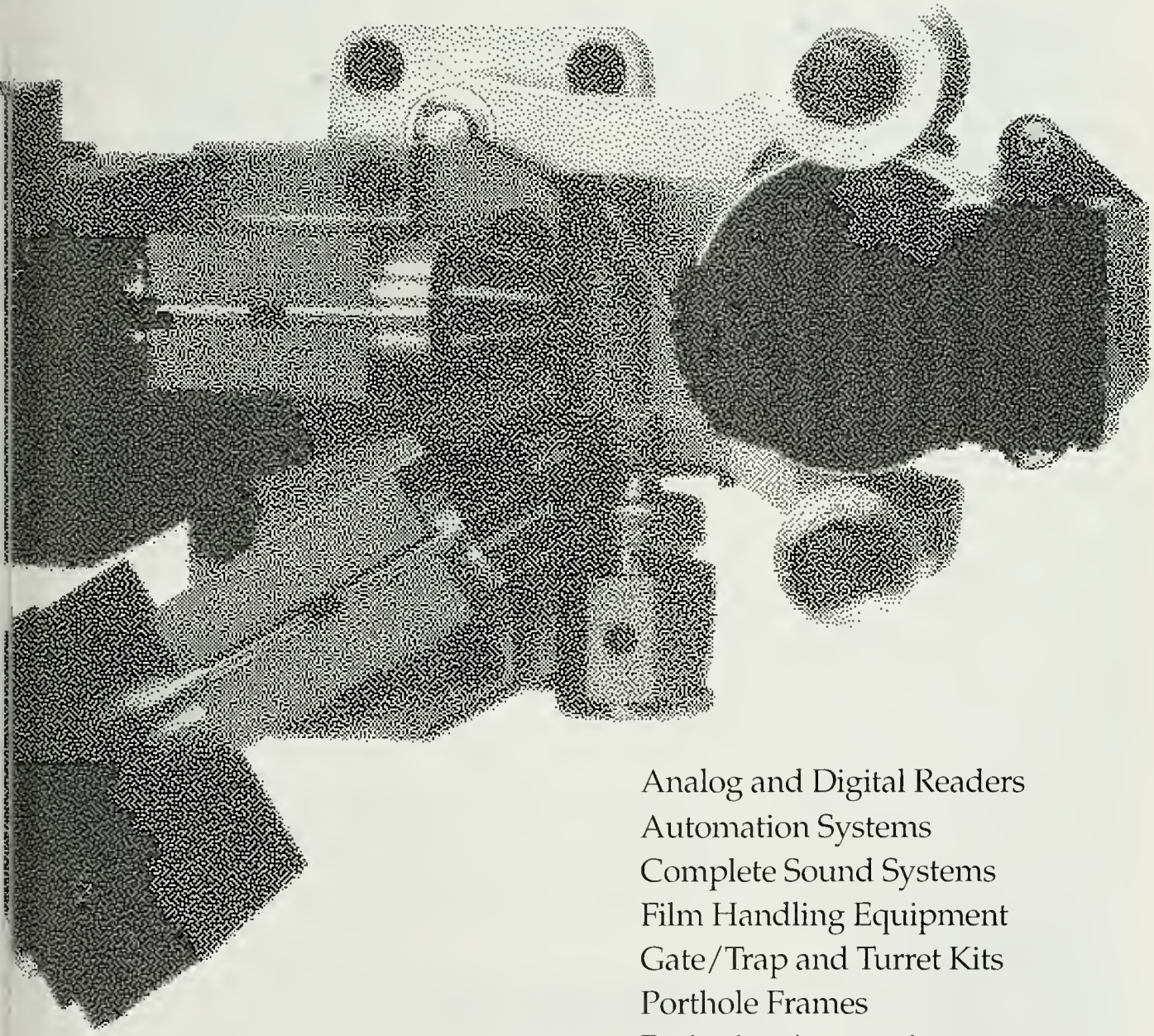
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Response No. 196

SOUND ADVICE

BOXOFFICE *Talks To 11 Sound Industry Leaders*

For this year's sound issue, we decided to do something different. The brief interviews below are meant to introduce you to some highly-qualified experts you might already be doing business with. We've asked 11 sound industry experts to tell us about themselves and the industry they serve so well.

IOAN ALLEN, VP, DOLBY LABORATORIES



Career Highlights: 100 percent of the professional multi-track tape recorders in Los Angeles, New York and London are equipped with Dolby Noise reduction by 1973. First Dolby stereo film, "Lisztomania," released in 1975. "Star Wars" and "Close Encounters" mark Dolby's increased market penetration in 1977. First Dolby Digital release, "Batman Returns," 1992. Dolby Digital receives Scientific and Engineering Achievement plaque from Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences, 1996.

Favorite Dolby Product: The CP-500, Dolby's latest digital audio processor. "It's revolutionary in the sense that it's the first unit that does virtually all the processing in the digital domain." Dolby has installed approximately 2,000 CP-500s.

Earliest Movie Memory: "Twelve O'Clock High." "I've seen it [again recently], and actually it is a very good war film."

Advice to Exhibitors: "Worry about the quality of picture and sound. The quality of what's projected in the cinema is what's going to make or break certain theatre chains."

JOHN ALLEN, FOUNDER & PRESIDENT, HIGH PERFORMANCE STEREO



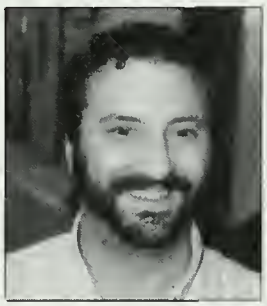
Career Highlights: Built sound system for Boston Pops Fourth of July 1976 Bicentennial concert—one of the largest stereo systems ever built in New England. Collaborated on first digital presentation of a motion picture in a movie theatre, "Fantasia," in February 1985. "That showed the potential of what digital sound could be, because it was all music, and the sound at times was at times concert hall quality."

Favorite High Performance Stereo Product: The HPS-4000-XL Sound System. "It's eight times as powerful as the next best sound system on the market, and has 90 percent less distortion."

Earliest Movie Memory: "Hans Christian Andersen" in the early '50s. "I remember the color, the ballet, Danny Kaye, and the charm of the picture."

Advice to Exhibitors: "Invest heavily in digital sound, and sound systems that can play back digital sound. Most people have no idea what they're missing."

KEN BERGER, PRESIDENT & CEO, EAW



Career Highlights: Founded EAW in 1978 at age 21. EAW now the number one supplier of loudspeaker systems to sports arenas and stadiums throughout the world, and number one supplier of packaged loudspeaker systems for touring sound, "from the Pope to Hootie and the Blowfish."

Favorite EAW Product: The K5850 one-box flying system. "That's the world standard for touring sound and is also extensively used in fixed installations."

Earliest Movie Memory: "The Blob" with Steve McQueen.

Advice to Exhibitors: "Be a leader in the ongoing digital revolution and look beyond the status quo."

MARCO D'AMBROSIO, SYSTEMS DESIGNER, LUCASFILM LTD./THX

Career Highlights: Background in both acoustics and music. Began working with THX in 1989. Active composer and producer of soundtrack music: "I just did an interactive CD-ROM for Tribeca, and I'm presently working on two animated films for video for



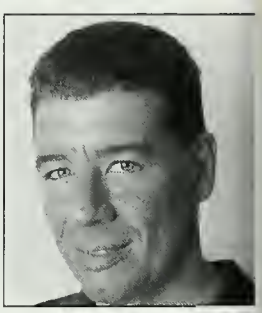
LucasFilm. Acoustic consultant on numerous facilities around the world.

Favorit THX Produc The MPTS-Sound Syste and the R Acoustica Measuremen System. MPTS 1: "A very high quality but compact soun system designed for professional mix room and high-end screening rooms." The R2: "A acoustical test system that has streamlined th way technicians make measurements an align a sound system."

Earliest Movie Memory: "As a kid in Italy my parents took me to see 'The Bicycle Thief' an Italian neo-realist film."

Advice to Exhibitors: "If you are trying t upgrade a theatre to accommodate digita soundtracks, it's important to consider the acous tics of the theatre as well."

BARRY FARRELL, CINEMA MARKET MANAGER, QSC



Career Highlights: Worked way through college as a projectionist. Worked for Strong Intl. for three years; six years ago came to QSC as an applications engineer. Became one of four QSC market managers in 1995. Member Board of Directors, International Theatre Equipment Association.

Favorite QSC Product: The MX 1500a "Our biggest seller—a 350-watt-per-channe stereo power amplifier featuring optiona built-in crossovers and subwoofer filters."

Earliest Movie Memory: "The thing tha made the most impact was seeing 'The Sound of Music' in 70mm 6-track when I was in the sixth grade."

Advice to Exhibitors: "The competition is heating up and the theatres with the best sound are the ones that are going to get the business."

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Theater Management System

A division of MovieFone, Inc.

RICK GENTRY, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING, HAFLER PROFESSIONAL



Career Highlights: Played as a solo guitarist in Phoenix, Ariz. as a youth. Made indie records; played guitar on studio recordings and movie soundtracks. Moved to San Francisco in early '80s and took a job at NADY Systems as a sales manager, learning the ropes from Pete Kalman who now heads QSC. Following that, was a manufacturers rep in Northern California. Returned to Arizona in late '80s and took a position with Hafler as regional salesperson. Three years ago was named to his current position.

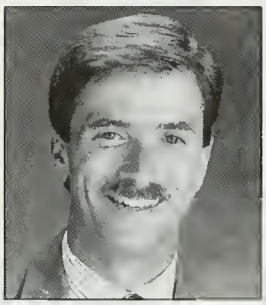
Favorite Hafler Product: The TransNova 9505 DIABLO. "It's a high-end reference power amplifier."

Earliest Movie Memory: "A Cinerama screen presentation of 'The Brothers Grimm' in our new red-and-white Oldsmobile, which caught on fire and burned up on the way home."

Advice to Exhibitors: "Don't kid yourselves or sell the public short. Sound quality and picture quality matter more than you think. Don't cut corners in any of those areas."

MARK MAYFIELD, DIRECTOR OF CINEMA MARKETING, JBL

Career Highlights: Has a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and an MBA in Marketing. Being a guitarist and singer/songwriter led him into audio business. After college, worked as a recording engineer for five years in Indianapolis, Ind.; Albany, N.Y. and Boston, Mass. He then went back to business school for his MBA. Worked for Bose Corp.'s Professional Products group as marketing manager, product manager and communications manager. Started to learn about cinema business, then joined JBL as market manager in 1994. Now focus is solely on cinema market.



Favorite JBL Product: The 3000 series, which was launched last year, and the next series, "which everyone will have to stay tuned for. It's a full product line that will set a new standard in the industry."

Earliest Movie Memory: "'Mary Poppins,' 'The Sound of Music'—big musicals of the '60s in the grand old movie palaces."

Advice to Exhibitors: "We're in the middle of a huge market boom driven by technology. Make sure that your theatres are up to presenting the great product that is being offered in the way that it deserves. Don't be afraid of the new technology, because it's going to help everybody in the long run."

BILL NEIGHBORS, PRESIDENT & COO, DIGITAL THEATER SYSTEMS LP

Career Highlights: Degree is in Finance and Economics. Was general manager of RTS Systems in Burbank, which built intercom systems for live TV broadcast and TV production. Has 14 years experience in marketing and manufacturing audio and related electronic products. Has experience in mergers, acquisitions and international business development. Was the first employee hired at DTS when it was formed in January 1993.

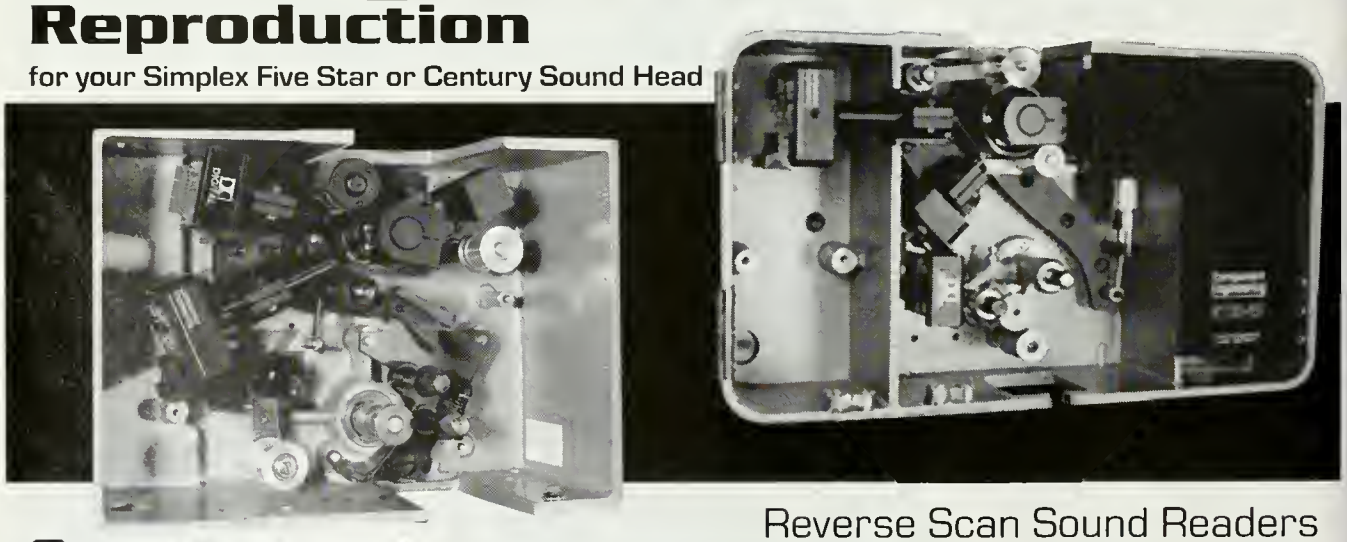
Favorite DTS Product: The DTS-6E Digital Playback Unit. "That is the world's leading provider of high-quality multi-channel digital sound for motion pictures."



Earliest Movie Memory: "The Love Bug" in 1969.

Advice to Exhibitors: "Keep up the commitment to quality presentations. It's much appreciated by the audiences."

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GEMMA RICHARDSON, VP, WORLDWIDE MARKETING, SONY



Career Highlights: Came from England's "very small, male-dominated film industry to America, where there's so many more opportunities and funding. If you're determined enough to do something, it can be done in America." SDDS launch in '94 was "very historical, and I was there to witness that."

Favorite Sony Product: "The best thing I like about the [SDDS] technology is the eight-channel capability. Because [with the extra channels] they can pump even more things like violins, drums, trumpets, anything into those channels, and they can be isolated and separate from everything else, so it's cleaner."

Earliest Movie Memory: "'Doctor Zhivago.' Omar Sharif's eyes [laughs]. I really remember that because David Lean was my father's idol. So 'Lawrence of Arabia' and 'Doctor Zhivago' were Sunday afternoon viewing."

Advice to Exhibitors: "Recognize that home theatre, home entertainment systems are becoming so advanced that the public has alternatives to see movies. And it's exhibitors'] responsibility to make sure that the moviegoing experience is of premium value to the audience. And in order to achieve that, they have to make the cinema the best place that these people could ever see a film. And that includes sound, picture, seats, concessions, everything. The whole experience when you go into a theatre should be exciting."

NORM SCHNEIDER, PRESIDENT, SMART



Career Highlights: Was regional manager for JBL for 16 years. SMART received Teddy Award in 1995 for Outstanding Manufacturer from the International Theatre Equipment Association.

Favorite SMART Product: DSP—Digital Signal Processing. "It's an entirely new technology than what's been used in the past. We're the second manufacturer to offer this besides Dolby."

Earliest Movie Memory: "Gone With the Wind."

Advice to Exhibitors: "I would suggest to exhibitors that they do everything they can to put on the best presentation, in that you have competition from home video and other areas that are trying to get the attention from consumers. Theatres need to put on the best presentation they can or they'll lose it."

MONTE WISE, NATIONAL SALES MANAGER, MARK IV CINEMA SYSTEMS



Career Highlights: Owned sound company, Earational Audio, for five years. For past 25 years has done mixing work at a few large churches nationwide, and owned a large maintenance company "which provided the cash." Put together sound systems, worked as a promoter in St. Louis. Moved to Madison, Wis., in 1993, got a job as director of contracting at Full Compass, a pro audio dealer. Joined Milam Audio in 1994 in the same capacity. Joined Mark IV last January as national sales manager.

Favorite Mark IV Product: The TL880D, a dual 18-inch subwoofer that uses the EVX-180A. "We think it's the best low-frequency driver there is."

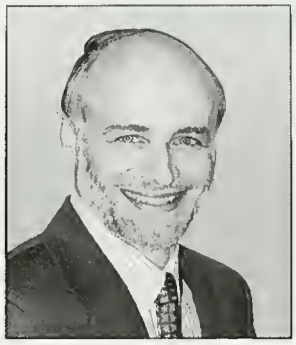
Earliest Movie Memory: "The Concert for Bangladesh."

Advice to Exhibitors: "I'd encourage them to pay more attention to the audio in comparison to other aspects of the theatre. With the changes in stadium seating and soundtrack being more dynamic, they need to pay more attention to the quality of components."



THE EIGHT-CHANNEL ADVANTAGE

By John F. Allen



Sony Dynamic Digital Sound is the only digital eight-channel motion picture sound release format currently being offered to exhibition, bringing back and expanding a widely heralded stereo format with five full-range speakers behind the screen. BOXOFFICE contributing writer John F. Allen provides some insights into eight-channel stereo and the considerable history behind it.

October, 1984. It was a moment I had long awaited: my first opportunity to hear a 70mm six-track motion picture, recorded and played with five full-range channels behind the screen. When all was at last ready, I signaled the projectionist to bring down the lights and roll the film. For years I had heard how wonderful this format had been, how much better than the others using only three screen channels. But really, I had thought, how good could it be? Weren't the three-channel systems I was so used to as satisfying as they could be? Now was the moment of truth. I was finally going to be able to decide for myself.

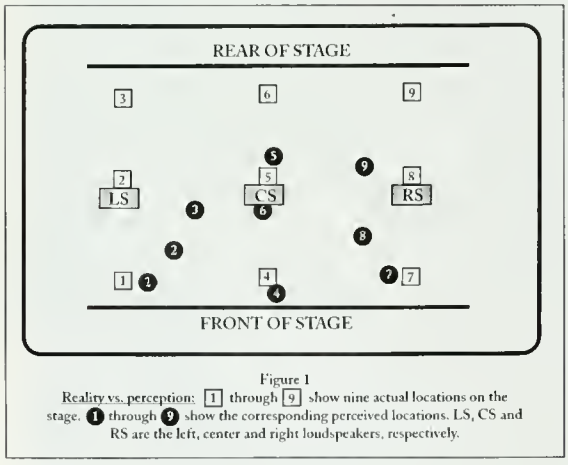


Figure 1
Reality vs. perception: 1 through 9 show nine actual locations on the stage. ❶ through ❾ show the corresponding perceived locations. LS, CS and RS are the left, center and right loudspeakers, respectively.

The film began. Frankly, I couldn't believe my ears. As a music and sound lover, I was truly wowed. Never had I heard anything like it in a movie theatre before. As I sat there in amazement, I began to question how I had been able to tolerate listening to sound systems with only three screen channels for so long. The experience I had so anticipated suddenly became a moment of both happy discovery and intense self-doubt.

For almost the past 20 years, stereo motion picture soundtracks have employed just three main loudspeakers behind the screen. Yet, clearly, five channels add a quality and dimension unattainable by these smaller systems. And yet, today, Sony's eight-channel SDDS is the only digital release format offering this advantage. Where did this superior format come from? Where is it now? Why is it better? Why has this presentation and marketing advantage been left dormant for so long?

BOXOFFICE CINEMA SOUND 1997

THE BASICS

The answers to these questions go back more than 60 years. In 1933, engineers from Bell Laboratories, under the auspices of the National Academy of Sciences, performed what is believed to be the first large-scale demonstration of stereophonic sound reproduction. The goal was to perform a live concert of the Philadelphia Orchestra in their home, the Philadelphia Academy of Music, and reproduce it live, over loudspeakers, in Washington, D.C.'s Constitution Hall, 141.6 miles away. Many of the most basic principles and practices employed by audio engineers today can be traced back to this fundamental and pioneering work.

In this early attempt at stereophonic sound, it was realized that mere recreation of the sound of the Philadelphia Orchestra was not enough. The orchestra had to be reproduced in full auditory perspective as well. Not only should the instruments be heard in Constitution Hall as they sounded in the Academy of Music, but also they should appear to be located in the same positions within the orchestra: left to right and front to back.

The most basic hurdle to overcome was determining the number of independent channels required. The first thought that comes to mind is what audio pioneer W.B. Snow referred to as a "curtain" of small microphones placed in front of the orchestra in Philadelphia, and a corresponding "curtain" of loudspeakers placed on the stage in Washington D.C. The idea, of course, is that, if one is to capture the curtain (or wall) of sound produced by an orchestra, one "simply" needs as many channels as possible.

After much (now legendary) experimentation, it was discovered that a satisfactory illusion of auditory perspective could be created using only three discrete channels of microphones and speaker systems. Three channels also provided the most economical means to demonstrate the fundamentals of stereo. Thus, full-scale stereophonic sound reproduction was born as a three-channel medium. Since the 1930s, much has occurred to modify this approach, some good and some not so good.

For the purists, perhaps one of the least welcome evolutions was the development of the two-channel phonographic long playing record (LP). Although the stereophonic LP did indeed bring stereo to the "masses," it also seemed to fix everyone's mind on stereo as a two-channel (left and right) medium.

If one examines the papers that came out of the 1933 Bell Labs experiments, one sees that, although a good left-to-right perspective was attained with the three-channel system, nearly half of the virtual depth of the stage was lost. (See Figure 1 on the previous page.) In other words, the front-to-back perspective was only about one-half of what it should have been.

Clearly, five channels add a quality and dimension unattainable by smaller systems.

Another phenomenon one observes is the tendency of the sound sources to be grouped around the three speakers. Rather than creating a "curtain" of sound, the three-channel system had a tendency to become three spot sources that the sound came from. Although the test conditions may have exaggerated this effect, listening to three-channel systems today confirms its existence.

Another 20 years would pass before the next major advance in stereophonic sound.

MOTION PICTURES LEAD THE WAY

The earliest predecessor of the Sony eight-channel format first appeared in U.S. movie theatres more than 40 years ago. In the early 1950s, television began to affect filmgoing attendance; many theatres were closed. The motion picture industry responded with several new widescreen film formats. The two largest of these formats were Cinerama, a three-projector process, and Todd-AO, a 70-mm single-projector system. Both of these 35mm formats included discrete multichannel stereophonic sound and were easily capable of projecting very large pictures indeed. Screens of 60 or more feet in width were not uncommon.

In developing these formats, engineers quickly realized that, even with the largest loudspeakers, three channels of sound behind the screen were not enough. The "holes" in the spaces between the speakers were far more than just noticeable. This was due to the fact that the speakers would be even farther apart than had been the case in the Bell Labs work two decades earlier. Something had to be done.

It was also recognized that motion picture sound is in motion, literally moving around from scene to scene, often within a scene—something sound from a symphony orchestra never does. If a sound was required to be panned across a screen with only three channels, it appeared to virtually jump from speaker to speaker, rather than moving smoothly from one point to another. Clearly, something had to be done.

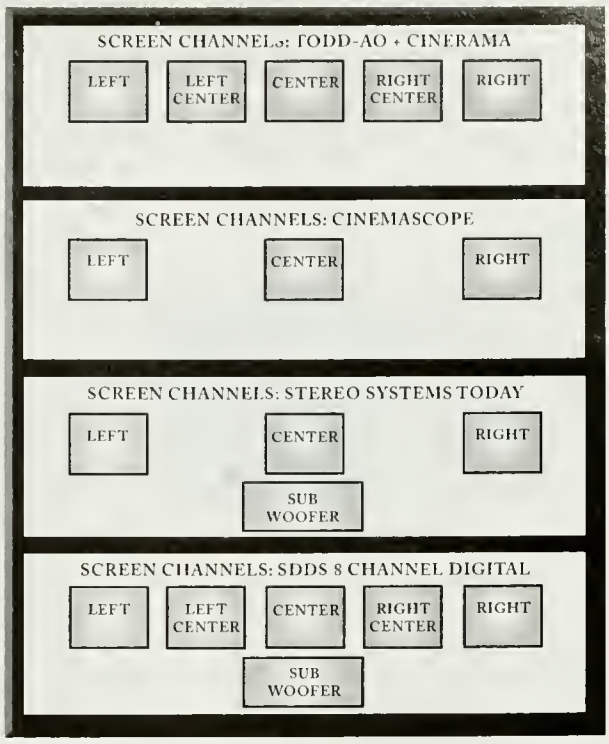


Figure 2
Screen channel configurations

Of course, adding more than the minimum three channels to the Bell Labs system would have been a difficult decision due to the costly 141.6-mile transmission link. But this problem does not present itself in movie theatres. As such, a sound format for motion pictures can easily provide the opportunity to employ enough channels for the finest possible sound.

For the sound engineers of the 1950s, the solution became obvious. To maintain the continuous wall of sound that stereo is supposed to be, to increase the virtual depth of the stage, or scene, and to eliminate the "holes" between the speakers, more than three channels were needed. After considerable research, it was found that, with two additional channels increasing both the number of directional cues as well as the total radiating area of the loudspeakers by 66 percent, five full-range channels behind the screen added a significant and seamless dimension to stereophonic sound.

With the addition of the surround channel, 70mm Todd-AO was introduced with a discrete six-track format on October 10, 1955. The soundtrack was recorded on the now familiar magnetic stripping placed on either side of the film's perforations. This became the release print format of choice for major motion pictures for the next 40 years.

Todd-AO was not alone. The engineers at Cinerama, and others overseas as well, had themselves reached the same conclusion and also used five channels behind the screen. However, in 1977 there was a major change in the way the screen channels were allocated. The left-center and right-center channels were eliminated in favor of a separate subwoofer channel. For the first time since its introduction, the 70mm sound format was, in the opinion of some, downgraded. Though the subwoofer channel was a welcome addition, the 70mm format now offered only three channels behind the screen, the same as 35mm stereo films. For the next 17 years, motion picture sound remained a three (screen) channel format. (See Figure 2 above.)

STEREO QUALITY VS. NUMBER OF SCREEN CHANNELS

Sound and cinema engineers in Russia were also studying stereophonic film sound. In his book "Wide-Screen Cinema and Stereophonic Sound,"

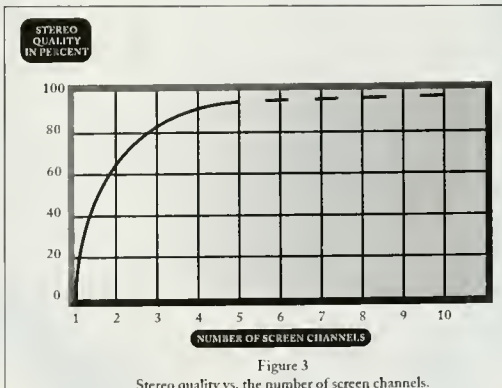


Figure 3
Stereo quality vs. the number of screen channels.
Previously published

Michael Wysotsky published a most interesting graph comparing the quality of stereophonic reproduction to the number of screen channels employed. (See Figure 3 above.)

This graph assumes a stereo quality rating of 100 percent to be perfect and natural sound, indistinguishable from the original. Note that with one channel there is no stereo; therefore, the stereo quality is zero. With three channels, the stereo quality is around 85 percent. With five channels, the stereo quality increases to about 95 percent—

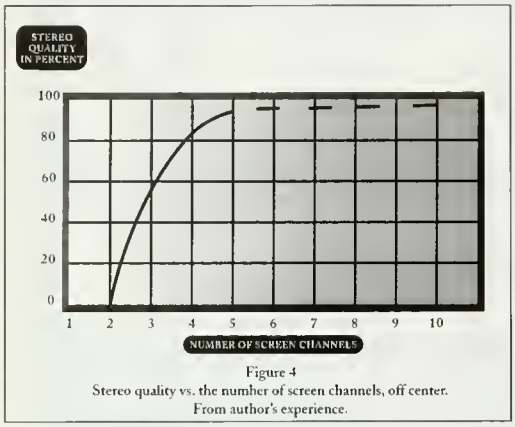


Figure 4
Stereo quality vs. the number of screen channels, off center.
From author's experience.

roughly a 10 percent improvement over results when using three screen channels.

In my own experience, Wysotsky's chart seems conservative, perhaps significantly underestimating the advantage of five screen channels. This would seem especially true if one considers those seated off to one side of a theatre. Figure 4 above shows my own experience and factors in those sitting off center, which is most of the audience.

Consider that we have all had the experience of hearing only the speaker we are closest to, when we sit off center with a two-channel home stereo. As we move off center, the sound becomes mono—actually less than mono, because all the information isn't there. This explains my zero percent stereo quality rating for a two-channel system, *when sitting off center.*

When sitting off to one side (say the left) in a cinema with three channels behind the screen, the stereo image collapses to the left and center speakers, not strictly to the left. Three channels, after all, are better than two. But when five screen channels are used, virtually filling the entire width of the screen with sound, the stereo image is better maintained throughout the theatre. This makes sense intuitively, as there is no such "image collapse" in a concert hall.

SDDS

From its earliest inception, the engineers at Sony felt that, if they were going to offer a deluxe digital motion picture soundtrack, it had to be all inclusive. It had to be a sound-on-film format. It had to provide all digital processing right up to the outputs to the power amplifiers. It had to meet a long list of Sony digital specifications.

But, most of all, the system had to return the advantage of five full-range screen channels to the film industry. With the subwoofer and stereo surround channels included, the SDDS system was introduced in 1993 as the industry's first discrete eight-channel genera release digital sound format.

Today's SDDS eight-channel motion pic ture mixes often make full use of this advar tage by typically recording their orchestra with five main microphones, one for each c the five screen speakers. The result is the clos est possible replication of an orchestra as we as a huge increase in stereo quality and aud ence involvement with the film.

Rerecording mixer Chris Carpenter ("Inde pendence Day," "Immortal Beloved") note that mixing in eight channels provides a greate clarity and openness than is possible with th conventional six channels. The bigger the mix the greater the advantage. Although musi derives the most benefits, Carpenter points ou that effects are also improved and that pannin opportunities are enhanced.

With five channels behind the screen there is less "competition" among tracks. I other words, in an intense scene the left-cer ter and right-center might carry some lou effects while the center remains clear fo dialogue. The added discreteness helps th audience keep everything separated an hear the dialogue more easily and clearly.

EIGHT-CHANNEL INSTALLATIONS

Some might be surprised to learn the actua number of eight-channel theatres. As of thi writing, Sony reports that there are well ove 500 eight-channel installations worldwid Ninety percent of these are in North America

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his might be an especially surprising total hen one considers that it exceeds the number 70mm Todd-AO installations by some 200 ditoriums. In addition, nearly 50 films have en mixed in this powerful format.

In addition to their technical advantages, ese eight-channel theatres can boast a nuine marketing advantage as well. aserdiscs already provide discrete six .1) digital soundtracks for home viewing. ese can sometimes be superior to the undtracks played in theatres. As the new gital video disc (DVD) gains acceptance, -channel stereo will become increasgly relegated to little more than a fairly mmon home format. Movie theatres uipped to present films in eight full chanls can build and maintain a greater marting edge over home theatres.

Of course, the SDDS processors are uipped to fold-down eight-channel undtracks for playback in conventional six 1) channel and even four-channel theatres. is ability ensures that all the sound is reproced even with the smaller systems. Hower, eight channels should not be considered t for the larger screens.

SCREEN SIZE DOESN'T MATTER

I used to subscribe to the general notion that, screen widths up to 40 feet, there was little no advantage in employing five backstage eakers over three.

As it turns out, this is not so.

Rerecording mixer Chris Carpenter ("Independence Day," "Immortal Beloved") notes that mixing in eight channels provides a greater clarity and openness than is possible with the conventional six channels.

Nothing could drive this point home more than an experience I recently had in a Sony screening room with a mere 12-foot-wide screen. The film I was listening to included a fairly equal amount of both original music recorded for five screen channels, and licensed popular music played through only the three left, center and right speakers.

The difference in stereo quality between the original and licensed music was startling. The original music had more depth, more fullness and a far more natural quality. With such a sound as a comparison, listening to the three-channel licensed music became an annoying and distracting disappointment, even with a 12-foot screen. Obviously my earlier notion had been mistaken. The SDDS eight-channel advantage will work in any theatre.

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John F. Allen is the founder and president of High Performance Stereo in Newton, Mass. He is also the inventor of the HPS-4000 cinema sound system and in 1984 was the first to bring digital sound to the cinema.

Allen wishes to thank rerecording mixer Chris Carpenter, sound historian Ted Uzzle and representatives of Sony Cinema Products Corp. for their valuable assistance in preparing this article.

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Three Keys to Successful Digital Acoustics

Digital sound in a theatre is great. That same digital sound seeping into the auditorium next door isn't. Three acoustic elements can make or break a digital sound environment.

By Marco d'Ambrosio

One day this past summer, I went to see "The Postman." I was very excited about viewing this poetic film, as it had recently won the Academy Award for best score. Much to my disappointment, I wound up watching this quiet art film while listening to most of "Independence Day," which was playing its multichannel discrete digital soundtrack in an adjacent auditorium. Although I was also looking forward to seeing "Independence Day," this was not my idea of a "two for one" screening pass.

Whether onscreen or behind the screen, the latest development in sound technology—digital sound—does sell tickets. What are often neglected, however, are the acoustics of the space in which this technology is to perform and its interrelation to the surrounding spaces.

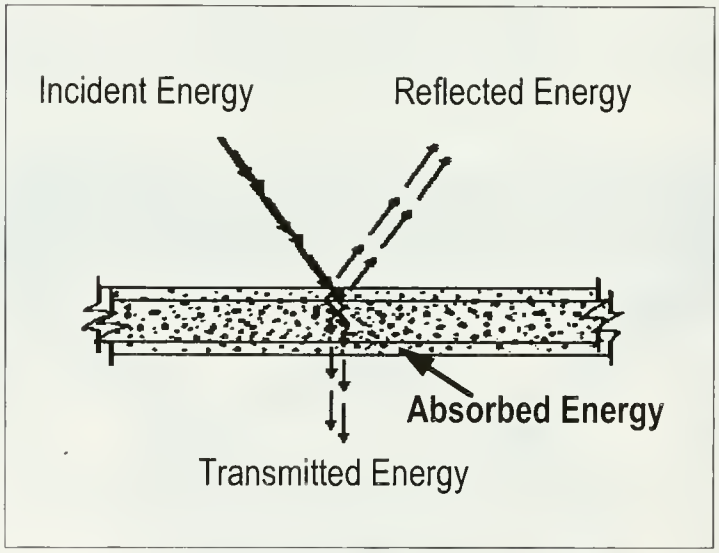


Figure 1. Sound energy can be reflected, absorbed or transmitted.

As we've all experienced, digital technology has significantly improved the sound quality of films over that of previous 35mm analog optical formats. Some of the digital capabilities include discrete channels, extended low-frequency response in the subwoofer and surround channels, improved dynamic range, and virtually unmeasurable noise, wow and flutter. Many of these audio features approach (and some exceed) features previously available only with 70mm SR release prints.

Such A-Chain features combined with a B-Chain system designed to handle these capabilities bring the general audience much closer to hearing the film the way the director heard it in the mix room. But, in most cases, simply making the A-Chain digi tal and installing more powerfu loudspeakers and amplifier won't make a theatre "digita ready." Most mix rooms hav been designed with a great degre of consideration given to the acoustics—specifically, in hov the various surfaces in the roor absorb and reflect sound, hov well the room is isolated fror other rooms, and how much am bient noise is allowed into th room. It is these three interrelate acoustic factors (absorption, isc lation, and background noise that need to be addressed mor critically in the construction c theatres in this digital age.

First, it's important to under stand the different ways soun can be transmitted. One way is fc sound to create alternating waves of pressur in the air, as occurs with speech during conversation or with music through a soun system. This is called *airborne* transmissior and it's the most common way people perceiv sound. Another way is for a vibrating object t be connected, or acoustically coupled, to ar other object that in turn picks up the vibratio and transmits it along to other objects that ar also coupled. This is called *structure-born* transmission.

If we are touching anything in this path, w can sense the vibrations. Also, at some or man points along the path, the air around the objec is also excited, and we perceive this as airborr noise. In general, structure-borne noise issue tend to be more difficult to deal with than thos that are solely airborne in nature.

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ABSORPTION

This is a complex physical property, which all surface materials in a theatre possess. In basic terms, absorption is the amount of airborne sound energy a material absorbs when that energy strikes the material. That trapped sound energy is actually dissipated within the material as heat. What isn't absorbed either reflects back into the theatre or passes completely through the material until it reaches another surface, as shown in Figure 1 on the previous page. That figure also exhibits how absorption and isolation are interrelated.

It is also important to note that a material's absorptive qualities actually vary with frequency, meaning that it could be a good absorber of high frequencies and a poor absorber of low frequencies (or vice versa). Thus, a material's absorptive qualities are measured across a wide frequency range (typically in octave bands) and listed as a table of coefficients of absorption, or ∂s.

∂ is actually the mathematical relationship between sound energy that strikes the material and that which is reflected back; therefore, a material completely absorptive at a given frequency would have a ∂ of 1 at that frequency, and a completely reflective material would have a ∂ of 0.

How a material is mounted will also affect its absorptive properties. In general, spacing a material away from its mounting surface or increasing its thickness will make it a better absorber at low frequencies. Placing a perforated or slotted facing in front of an absorptive panel will decrease absorption at higher frequencies, leaving absorption at lower frequencies unaffected. Also, under the careful design of an acoustical consultant, tuned resonators or slot absorbers can be designed to absorb very specific frequency bands. See Figure 2, below.

In relatively nontechnical terms, absorption is important in a theatre because it helps control reverberation (the overall decay of sound) and audible slap echoes either from sidewall to sidewall or from the screen to the projection wall. This is particularly important in theatres with digital playback systems, as pristine dialogue, exact stereo imaging of music and sound effects, and careful placement of stereo surround effects can be easily smeared by a theatre with inadequate absorption. Absorption within the theatre will also help reduce how much sound is transmitted to adjacent spaces. Although that isn't the primary purpose of absorption within a room, every little bit counts, especially when an exhibitor can have in excess of 113 decibels of subwoofer thumping away.

Other important issues to consider when fitting a theatre with absorptive treatment, besides how much treatment, are where and how thick. A common contempo-

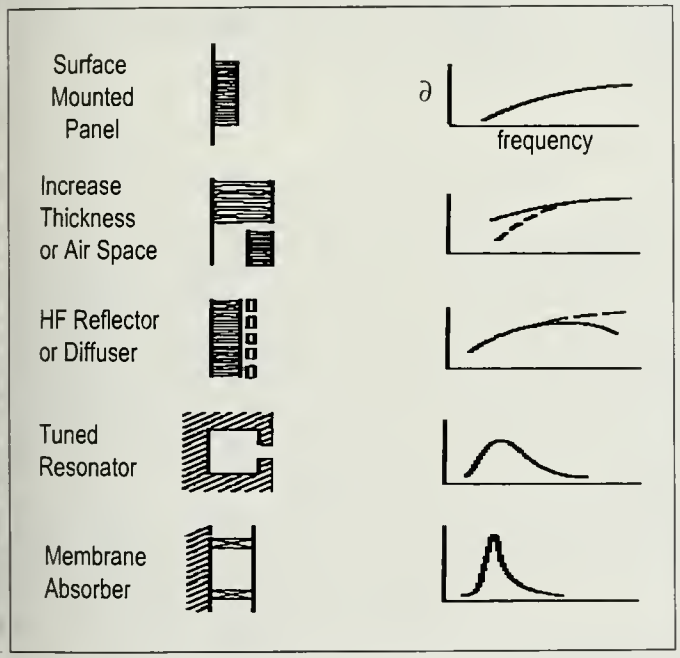


Figure 2: A material's absorptive qualities vary with frequency. (∂ is the relationship between sound and its reflection.)

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rary practice is to overtreat a digital theatre with thin acoustical panels. But this absorbs too much high-frequency energy, creating an unnatural feel while leaving too much bass hanging around in the room. As a general rule, an auditorium doesn't need to be treated completely with acoustical panels. Although the projection wall should be entirely treated to absorb sound hitting it directly from the screen channels across the room, the sidewalls in most cases can be covered between 50 percent and 75 percent.

What's more important with sidewalls is that the absorptive treatment be brought down to below seated ear height—as close to the finished floor as possible. Also, the projection wall treatment should be thicker than the sidewall's, in order to better absorb the low frequencies that build up at a theatre's rear. If possible, parallel or curved reflective surfaces should be eliminated. Lastly, if the auditorium has an acoustical tile ceiling with a large air plenum above it, one can take advantage of this by turning it into a low-frequency absorber; this can be done by placing fiberglass directly on top of the ceiling tile.

ISOLATION

Audiences the past couple of years have enjoyed the tremendous power a digital soundtrack can have if played back at calibrated levels through a properly designed, installed and aligned sound system. It's because of this that acoustic isolation has become one of the most critical issues in theatre construction today—especially for those modern multiplexes and megaplexes that boast many adjacent digital houses.

Acoustic isolation is the control of outside noise entering an auditorium as well as the control of sound from that theatre to the outside. Another important fact: Such intrusive noises can be airborne and/or structure-borne in nature. Therefore, the quality of construction of the floor, ceiling, screen wall, projection wall and sidewalls is equally important. As they do with absorption, such partitions provide varying levels of isolation at different frequencies. At lower frequencies, it's the mass and stiffness of the materials used that affects isolation performance; in the middle to higher ranges, isolation is dominated by the kind of composite construction employed, along with how well everything is built.

The term used to describe acoustic isolation at any given frequency is called Transmission Loss, or TL. The higher the TL, the better the isolation at that frequency. By plotting all the TL values on a graph and using a curve-fitting method, a single value called Sound Transmission Class, or STC, is derived to describe the overall performance of a partition. Notably, STC values apply primarily to airborne transmission. Another measurement and rating system called Impact Insulation Class, or IIC, is used to determine the performance of structures (typically ceiling/floor systems) against impulsive structure-borne noises.

Although true STC values can be calculated only in a laboratory, field measurements (such as Field STC, or FSTC) can be done to evaluate real-world constructions. Published STC ratings, however, are used when recommending a wall design. After much research and field measurement, my company's studies show that the design goal for wall constructions between two digital theatres should be STC 75. Between a digital theatre and a non-critical listening space, lobby, projection room or similar area, a minimum STC 65 is acceptable. The wall types that fall into these categories typically consist of double studs with multiple layers of drywall or a composite construction of masonry block or concrete with gypsum board on each side. The use of large air cavities between studs also increases low-frequency performance. In many cases, the design of shared corridors around digital theatres can reduce the wall constructions to STC 65.

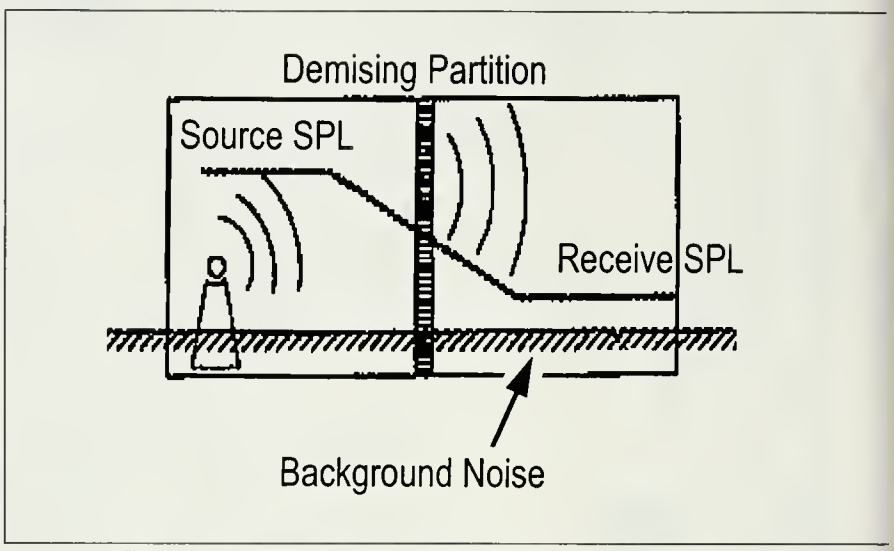


Figure 4: The ultimate goal in soundwall separation is to decrease the sound so that it's below (not above, as here) the background noise.

One of the most essential factors to remember when building an isolation wall is that the quality of construction must be constantly monitored. Theatre walls must extend to the roof deck, and there should be no defects or holes between theatres. Acoustical sealant should be applied between layers and at the wall perimeters.

Figure 3, below left, shows the dramatic difference in STC ratings between a wall that is sealed at the roof deck and one that is not. The use of solid entry/exit doors with perimeter sound seals is also important, as is a double-layer glass projection port.

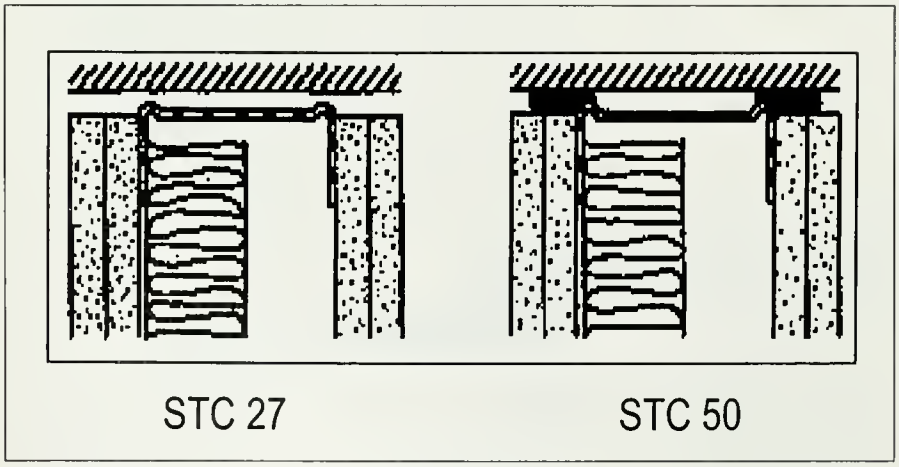


Figure 3: There's a sizable STC gain when a soundwall is sealed at the roofdeck (right).

BACKGROUND NOISE

Background noise in movie theatres is defined as the steady-state ambient and impulsive noise that invades the entire space. It is typically generated by air conditioning, electrical equipment and exterior noises such as road, rail or air traffic. Although generally not desirable, such background noise can be used to an advantage.

Whereas too much background noise will mask the low-level signals than can now be recorded and reproduced on a digital soundtrack, too little background noise can reveal the limitations of an auditorium's acoustic isolation. The sonic ideal is somewhere in between—a background noise level that masks sound coming from adjacent spaces while remaining below the digital soundtrack's dynamic range. Figure 4, above, illustrates this relationship.

Measurement of background oise in the field is normally done octave or third octave frequency ands. Those measurements are

In summation, there are close relationships among absorption, isolation and background noise and their effects on the optimum

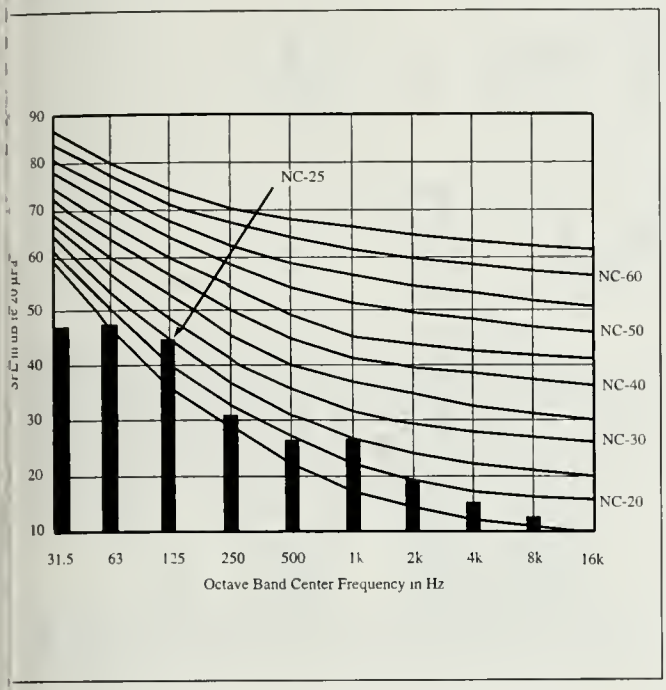


Figure 5: Noise Criteria curves (sound pressure level vs. frequency) with data indicating NC-25.

lotted against Noise Criteria, or C, curves; such curves are re- ted to listeners' subjective re- ponses to loudness. A noise easurement is assigned a single C rating, which is based on the equency band reaching the high- st NC curve.

Because the dynamic range nd signal-to-noise ratio of digi- l soundtracks are the same in a heatre as in a mix room, back- round noise levels should also e the same—around NC 25. Al- wing the background noise in theatre to reach NC 30 will help ask some intrusive noise with- t critically impeding the digi- l soundtrack. Figure 5 above ows a background noise mea- rement of NC 25.

Background noise in the higher equencies tends to be airborne— pically airflow noise, fans, ghting equipment, and ise leakage through doors. hose are relatively easy to x. Low-frequency back- round noise is usually ructure-borne and can be ore difficult to eliminate, ecause that requires finding e offending piece of equip- ent and acoustically de- upling it from the ructure. Poorly isolated oftop units, compressors d chiller pumps are often the orst culprits.

theatre playback of digital soundtracks. Because the correct balancing of these intertwined acoustic factors is such a complex proposition, it's often wise to engage the services of an acoustical consultant familiar with contemporary cinema design.

Designing a theatre with digital soundtracks in mind allows exhibitors to greatly reduce or eliminate the higher costs necessary to do future retrofits after the fact, as well as stop patron complaints about being able to hear the movie one hall over. After all, when "The Postman" knocks twice, he shouldn't be answered by an explosion from next door.

Marco d'Ambrosio is a systems designer at the THX Division of Lucasfilm Ltd., headquartered in San Rafael, Calif.



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SOUNDS OF SILENCE

How to Soundproof Your Theatres

You've booked a big-bang action flick in theatre #1, but a quiet romance is playing in theatre #2. How can you keep explosions from drowning out the pillow talk? Digital-age soundwalls are one way to go.

By Bill Bergiadis with Janis Hunt Johnson

You're a theatre owner, and "Star Trek: First Contact" is premiering tonight. It's really packed them in. Your sound system is equipped to handle the spectacular digital soundtrack the movie ads have promised and, when the alien Borg blast away, the audience feels it in the pits of their stomachs. They sit in awe at the technology of today's movie experience. Afterward, as they exit, you hear remarks of excitement and praise for your theatre's sound system.

But there's a problem. The folks exiting from the auditorium next door are complaining about how the romantic scenes in "The Mirror Has Two Faces" were ruined by sound leaking through from "First Contact."

For the contemporary exhibitor, this can be an all-too-common occurrence. Digital sound has brought a richer movie experience, but it's also brought new problems. Most multiplex theatre structures existing today weren't built to withstand digital's expanded dynamic range, so sound often "bleeds" between halls, drastically decreasing the enjoyment of the moviegoer's experience.

So what's an owner to do? You have to keep up with the latest in sound technology to remain competitive. (If you're running "Mars Attacks" with an analog sound system, and the theatre down the road offers that film in digital sound with THX, people will drive those extra miles for the earthshaking sound.) Still, you can't afford to hinder the movie experience of customers in neighboring screening rooms.

Tomlinson Holman, best known for developing the THX criteria for cinema sound, describes the predicament this way: "When sound systems went over to digital sources, the theory was that they were merely copying the capability of 70mm film. In reality, the maximum level of the subwoofers went up 7 or 8 decibels [dB]. This was first noticed on "Batman," when the Batmobile roared to life. Suddenly, instead of topping out at roughly 105 dB, they were topping out at around 113 dB."

Holman says filmmakers, exhilarated with the new extra-low frequency capabilities of their soundtracks, overused it at the outset. Quite a few theatre loudspeakers were blown before owners discovered what was happening. In most cases, installing improved subwoofers to handle the extreme low frequencies or using limiters solved the problem. But upgrading sound systems so they can reproduce the expanded spectrum is only the first part of the solution.



Controlling bleed between screening rooms is just as important. Older theatre facilities originally designed for a 60 dB dynamic range are now routinely exposed to increases of up to 30 dB. Decibel levels increase like the Richter scale, so an increase of 10 dB is 10 times as loud, an increase of 20 dB is 100 times as loud, etc., leaving patrons next door to these sonic exhibitions angered over the interruption of their movie's quiet moments.

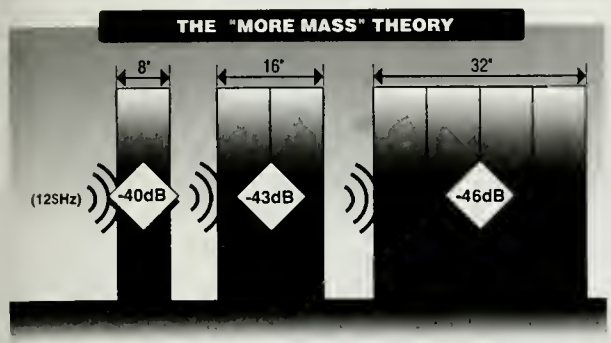
The solution to these sound quandaries is Typically, the simple solution would be to build thicker and heavier concrete walls. But the old adage that "more mass" is all that matters is an outdated concept, according to sound control experts Jim Barath and Felic Doggett. Mass can't solve today's noise reduction problems, they say, because digital's overwhelming increase in dynamic range makes it impractical. (See Figure 1, next page.)

For instance, doubling the thickness of an 8-inch wall to 16 inches alleviates only an additional 3 dB (at 125 Hz) and doubling it again to 32 inches stops only another 6 dB. That means all those spectacular explosions and rumbles will still bleed right through, in both directions, unabated. Perhaps more important is the fact that exhibitors need to maintain profitability, and thicker walls mean less seating space, fewer tickets sold, and ultimately lower profits.

Barath, an acoustics consultant with Denver-based Omnivest Technologies, specializes in acoustic design and engineering for large-format cinemas. Space is a big consideration for most theatre owners, Barath says, so the

ndustry has used more creative designs in the past few years that employ "mass-air-mass" combinations to achieve higher performance with a lighter-weight wall with decreased dimensions.

"I think that [space] is first and foremost," Barath says, "because obviously that means real estate we're giving up, and it means seats that we're giving up, if we have very thick, massive walls. What one does now is have walls that are tailored specifically for the use of digital soundtracks—walls that will give us an acceptable amount of Transmission Loss [TL] and enough attenuation between auditoriums to meet a desirable standard for this industry."



The typical solution for solving sound leakage between screening rooms has been to utilize the "more mass" theory. Although it is effective, the wall width necessary to stop today's digital sound range decreases seating space so dramatically that it is impractical for modern theater owners.

FIGURE 1: "No mas" for the more-mass theory.

Doggett, owner of Philadelphia-based Metropolitan Acoustics, specializes in providing sound solutions. Like Barath, she emphasizes looking at TL values when constructing walls. Doggett suggests that an exhibitor begin with three goals in mind:

- Decide what level of sound isolation (the TL factor) will be the acceptable standard between individual theaters;
- Accept only an extremely low reverberation time inside each theatre; and
- Select a mechanical system (heating and cooling) with very low background noise.

Doggett says that a combination of materials with air space is the solution, as that can stop low frequency noise as well as a more massive concrete wall. "It's best to use some air space so there's not a connection between the two sides of the wall. When the sound does come through one side, then it's not a total connection to the other side."

Both Barath and Doggett suggest, in addition to using air space to help minimize sound leakage, using combinations of building materials, such as furred-out drywall, stud walls with resilient clips, gypsum board, insulation, and composite materials. All elements depend on the sound control standards desired and the specific needs of the facility. "Using layers of materials will also help attenuate resonant frequencies," Doggett says. "Each material has a frequency that sound comes through best. So, if you use different materials, you're catching a lot of those resonant frequencies."

Barath suggests also using a Noise Criterion (NC) value to determine the efficiency of an auditorium. The NC rating can be determined by an acoustics/engineering designer to decide how best to mitigate internal ambient noise and external intrusive noise. Considering TL, NC and Sound Transmission Class (STC) values is certainly essential, but every structure is unique. The final answer, Holman says, depends on the locale. Building material prices can vary widely, and local weather and altitude considerations will also affect the design, as will county, state and national building regulations.

Of course, a certain amount of sound leakage might be acceptable, depending upon how stringent an exhibitor wants to be. To achieve the best answers for each specific situation, it is important that a theatre owner communicate with the architect, acoustician, design engineer and construction firm and make sure they are all working together to arrive at the best sound solutions.

The bottom line is this: The high quality the public has come to expect will determine what's acceptable and what's not. Today, their sound systems at home, and even in their cars, are of extremely high quality. Exhibitors seeking profitability must demand a new standard that is, Barath says, "at least commensurate or better than what the majority of these moviegoers would experience in their own environments."

With a dozen years of construction industry experience (the last two spent in Troy Walls' research and development area), Bill Bergiadis developed the design used in Troy Sound Wall Systems, which consist of super-efficient wall materials that allow maximum sound dampening (an STC rating of 68, exceeding even THX criteria) with minimal space usage. By condensing standard wall mass, incorporating limp mass within the design, Troy walls provide the highest transmission loss values with minimum dimensions. Based in Commerce, Calif, Troy can be reached at 800-987-3306 or 213-838-3676. Janis Hunt Johnson is Managing Editor of Ask Janis Editorial & Rewrite Services. The authors wish to thank Jim Barath, Michelle Branton Koks, V. Wade Contreras, Felicia Doggett, Tom Holman, David C. Johnson and Cal Leuning for their expert assistance in this article's preparation.



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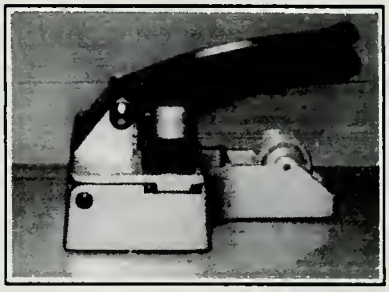
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DIGITAL SOUND: OVER THERE

DTS, Dolby SR-D and SDDS Do the (Inter)Continental

By Jon Matsumoto

From Geneva to Jakarta, new theatre screens are popping up like wildflowers. A 13 percent increase in the total number of screens worldwide is forecast between now and the year 2005. And, in many cases, exhibitors are looking to adopt some form of digital sound to further enhance their patrons' movie-going experience.



ONE FOR ALL: AMC's Canal City 13 in Fukuoka, Japan, went exclusively with SDDS in all its auditoriums.

"There's a general trend [overseas] that mirrors what's happening in the U.S.," says Jon Kirchner, vice president of international business development for Digital Theatre Systems (DTS), which is partly owned by Universal Studios parent MCA. "Exhibitors want to present a film in its best possible format. That includes building better screens, providing more comfortable seats and offering digital sound."

Currently, three companies are battling it out in the expanding digital sound marketplace. Of these competitors, San Francisco-based Dolby Laboratories was the first to go public with the technology when it emerged with Dolby SR-D in 1992. A year later, Westlake Village, Calif.-based DTS came out with its DTS-6D digital system. In 1994, Sony Cinema Products Corp., housed on Sony's Culver City, Calif., studio lot, joined the digital party with its launch of the Sony Dynamic Digital Sound (SDDS) format.

Dolby is leading the field in terms of the number of non-North American theatres it has equipped with digital sound. Its quick ascension in this area was aided by both its early start and its long-time presence as an internationally known and respected cinema sound company. Dolby has more than 4,800 digital sound units in theatres outside of the United States and Canada. Meanwhile, DTS has more than 3,100 units in these areas, and Sony—despite its later entrance—already has more than 530 units in overseas territories.

"We have a significant [numerical] lead over our competitors in the rest of the world," contends Kurt Schwenk, Dolby's vice president of film applications. "For 10 or 15 years, we've had dubbing consultants throughout the world who deal with all the major studios and who are [overseas] to advise and technically assist in doing foreign language versions [of films] to match the U.S. originals. Our sound consultants were out in the field and were quite well known" when Dolby SR-D was launched.

BOXOFFICE

CINEMA SOUND 1997

But the battle for theatrical supremacy in t international digital sound market is ju getting started. Which company holds t largest share of this market in the long run w depend largely on which does the best job co vincing exhibitors, consumers and filmmake that its system is the most desirable.

DTS is significantly different from its com petitors in design and might appear to l strongly geared toward the internation sphere. Both Dolby and SDDS soundtracks a encoded directly onto the film; DTS stores i six-channel soundtrack onto a CD-ROM th is synched to a time code on the film. Thus, t DTS system allows for easier multi-languag capability, because an array of languag soundtracks can be matched to any print en ploying the DTS format.

"Not only are we dealing with differe languages, but in some cases we're dealin with different dialects," says DTS' Kirchne "There are some cou tries that have multip dialects, like India an China. DTS has an ad vantage because w can cater to differe audiences [at the sam theatre] in the sam day. It offers cost sav ings and flexibility," i good part becaus there's no need for mu tiple prints. Kirchne also says that DTS CD-ROM format of fers sound that doesn degrade over time. "It's going to sound as goo the 10,000th time as it did the first."

Dolby's Schwenk counters that the CD ROM digital sound system carries added cost such as more expensive shipping fees. Th six-channel SR-D system boasts a unique, sin gle-inventory distribution system in which single print can serve digital, analog or mon

theatres. It's the most cost-efficient system, insists Schwenk: "For example, if Warner Bros. runs 4,000 prints of 'Batman Forever,' which [the studio] did, all 4,000 can be done on a single print run. You don't have to stop and do 300 prints with a different [analog or mono] track."

SDDS, already equipped in more than 2,600 screens in North America, could offer the most attractive digital system for the audiophile. It features a cross-redundancy format in which the same digital information is contained on each side of the film. If one side is damaged, the backup digital track takes its place. More significantly, the eight-channel SDDS boasts two additional channels of sound. (However, the system is also capable of presenting films in six channels.)

Both Dolby's Schwenk and DTS' Kirchner contend that the eight-channel advantage is not one at all, because the vast majority of screens and theatres in existence overseas aren't big enough to take advantage of an eight-channel system. As more multiplexes and megaplexes appear on foreign soils, however, Sony is betting that a big future lies ahead for larger theatres built to house even more dazzling digital sound.

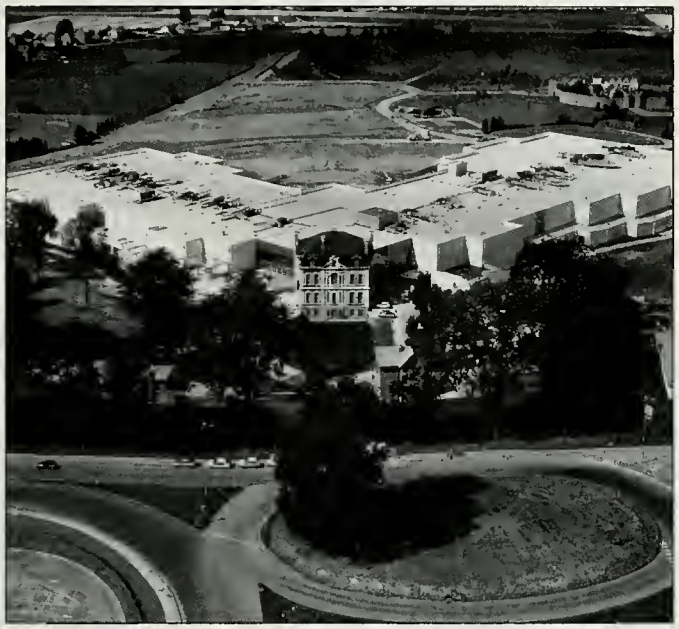
"[You're seeing more] gigantic megaplexes and more stadium seating [worldwide], which is going to lead to larger screens on different angles," says John A. Scarcella, president and CEO of Sony Cinema Products. "Eight-channel capability is going to be even more important as the screen size gets larger. Also, with the advances that home theatre systems have made, the theatre owner is going to have to recognize that he's going to have to do something differently to get the person out of the living room. Until you've listened to eight-channel and compared it to something else, you don't know how good it is."

All three companies agree that an audience thirst is growing in foreign markets for films with digital sound. Not surprisingly, given their top 10 status in the world's movie markets, France and Germany are viewed as countries with particularly great appreciations for this format.

"France is the most advanced country in Europe for sound and the moviegoing experience in general," says Gemma Richardson, vice president of worldwide marketing for Sony Cinema Products. "They enjoy new, exciting ways to see movies. In Paris and other major cities, they have laser shows before a movie starts that will play to some famous sound score like 'Star Wars.'"

"Germany is probably our top country," Dolby's Schwenk adds. "The Germans want to hear everything, and they're one of the largest filmgoing audiences in Europe."

India, Southeast Asia and Latin America are other areas cited as having potential for great growth in terms of digital theatre sound systems. Schwenk believes a country's willingness to embrace digital sound has less to do with its overall economic wealth and more to do with how important it views movies as a cultural value. Kirchner says DTS is doing "extremely well" in India, for example; although it's a relatively underdeveloped country, India is known for its great love of movies. Schwenk notes that more films are produced in India than in Hollywood.



ALL FOR ONE: The Kinepolis Group's new Le Chateau du Cinema outside Lille, France, boasts DTS, Dolby SR-D and SDDS installations.

China represents another potentially lucrative market for those involved in producing digital theatre sound systems. In a proposition that mirrors the wishes of many exhibitors stateside and their fellows abroad for a single industry format, the Chinese government plans to choose just one digital sound system to implement in its theatres.

Kirchner says that in countries like Thailand a new thirst for a more high-tech moviegoing experience has led many theatres to move from primitive mono sound directly to the digital format. Digital might seem particularly well suited to areas like Latin America and some countries in Asia, where elaborately produced action-adventure movies—the very genre that most boldly exhibits digital's ability to handle "big-bang" sound—are the rage.

Of course, there are new theatres in foreign markets that are opting for analog sound systems. But Kirchner states that many of these theatres are being built so that a digital system can be implemented at a later date.

SDDS' Richardson says doing business in most foreign markets is "surprisingly easy." She points out that the theatre exhibition and sonics segments of the international film industry are relatively small in terms of the number of key business players involved. Richardson adds that many of the overseas dealers with which Sony interacts speak very good English.

One exception on the foreign scene, however, is Latin America countries, where conducting business can be problematic at times. Sony has SDDS screens in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Mexico City, Mexico, and in Colombia, Brazil and Ecuador.

"It's pretty hard doing business [in Latin America]," Richardson says, due to the states of certain local economies. "You think you're getting somewhere, but it's really all talk. You always encounter some major problem with legalities with shipping, or some horrible tax that you have to pay.... [But] I wouldn't say it's dishonest.

"The standard of living is tough there, and money is short," she says. "If you take into consideration the devaluation of the peso since digital sound has been around, [digital] has come in at a very unstable time in Latin America."

Because each film print can be tailored to one, two or all of the digital sound systems, securing the rights to top-flight movies is a key component to the success of each digital sound company. DTS jumped off to a fast start in North America when it debuted with the blockbuster Universal release "Jurassic Park," and the company continues to lead the U.S. market in terms of the number of digitally equipped screens in operation. DTS also has exclusive deals to present all MGM-United Artists films and all Universal titles in its digital format.

Sony Cinema Products handles Sony movies (released via the studio's Columbia, TriStar, Triumph and Sony Classics labels) in SDDS and recently signed a deal to provide the digital sound for all Buena Vista productions. Dolby Digital does not yet have any exclusive film company deals, but that's hardly stopped it from handling the digital sound duties for a plethora of major and independent films.

The digital sound marketplace is such a complex one that it's unlikely any one format will triumph anytime soon. DTS' Kirchner, for example, believes the campaign to make digital sound the accepted standard for theatres around the globe is going to be a long one for DTS, Dolby and Sony.

"We still have a fair amount of work to do to make DTS a household word in each of these countries," he says. "They've been accustomed to listening to analog or mono sound. Part of [converting them to digital] involves having post-production equipment available in each of these countries so they can choose our [digital system]. We've actually made a substantial amount of headway in this area.

"It's going to take some years for the entire world to get there," Kirchner says. "But things are going to go digital. No question about it."

ON A *ROLL*

Tootsie Roll Industries: Celebrating 100 Years and Still Going Strong

By Pat Kramer



Melvin Gordon, chairman and chief executive officer of Tootsie Roll Industries, and Ellen Gordon, president and chief operating officer, are suckers for Tootsie Roll's Tootsie Pop.

When a year ends and a new one begins, there's always some unfinished business to attend to. **BOXOFFICE** ***couldn't let 1996 depart without making sure we noted the centennial anniversary of one of the most unique and perennial confectionery items to ever grace a moviehouse concession stand or stick to the bottom of a theatre seat. And so, as our readers look back on the year just passed, we send 1996 out and welcome 1997 in with a little something extra to chew on. Enjoy!—Ed.***

In 1896, when Austrian immigrant Leo Hirshfield first started producing the chocolatey-chewy candy known as Tootsie Roll, he couldn't have foreseen the popularity and longevity his original candy recipe would have. Named after his five-year-old daughter who was nicknamed "Tootsie," the company has grown over the decades from a small store in New York City to a major corporation. With net annual sales in excess of $313 million, Tootsie Roll Industries Inc. has come a long way from the days when Tootsie Roll was hand-rolled and delivered to customers via horse-drawn carriage. The company now operates manufacturing plants in Massachusetts, New York, Tennessee, Chicago and Mexico and is a world leader in candy sales, producing more than 49 million Tootsie Rolls and 16 million lollipops per days.



It's a select circle of confections that have what it takes to become a candy classic. While there are many factors that have contributed to the Tootsie Roll's survival, Tootsie Roll Industries President and COO Ellen Gordon points not to marketing strategies or packaging but the candy itself. "The chocolatey chew is a very appealing taste," she points out.

The Tootsie Roll is now available in many different forms. The penny-candy "midgie" and the three-inch version are favorites, with six-inch and footlong sizes also popular on the market. And the Tootsie Pop, with its hard candy outside and Tootsie Roll center, is the world's best-selling lollipop.

Another key element in Tootsie Roll's century-long history was the candy's role in World War II. Selected as part of the standard-issue rations for its ability to withstand severe weather conditions and provide an instant energy boost, the Tootsie Roll became a mainstay for soldiers fighting in the trenches from 1942-1945. By the end of the war, everyone was familiar with the candy and production soared with renewed growth beyond pre-war levels.

As the company's distribution increased, movie theatres started stocking Tootsie Rolls as a regular concession item in the 1950s. When Melvin Gordon joined the company as chairman and chief executive officer in 1962, the company name was changed to Tootsie Roll Industries Inc. Soon, a new plant was opened in the Midwest and by the end of the decade, operations expanded to Mexico, Canada and the Far East.

The '70s started a new era for the company with the acquisition of other successful candy companies that were already well-known to the exhibition trade. In 1972, the Mason Division of Candy Corporation of America joined Tootsie Roll Industries, adding the ever-popular Mason Dots and Crows to the product line. With Ellen R. Gordon named

Tootsie Roll's president and chief operating officer in 1978, further growth followed. In 1985, another candy manufacturer that got its start in the late 1800s, Cellas Confections Inc., was acquired, contributing their premiere chocolate covered cherries to the company and adding a new diversity in theatre concessions. Three years later, in 1988, the Charms Company, known for their bubblegum-filled lollipops, came under the company umbrella, which, when coupled with the Tootsie Pop, made Tootsie Roll Industries the global leader in lollipop production.

Major growth has continued in the '90s, with the company acquiring the caramel and chocolate brands of Warner-Lambert Company in 1993. This acquisition added Junior Mints to Tootsie Roll's line, another top-selling exhibition concession. Says Ellen Gordon of that acquisition, "Junior Mints was a very natural companion to our Mason Dots—they

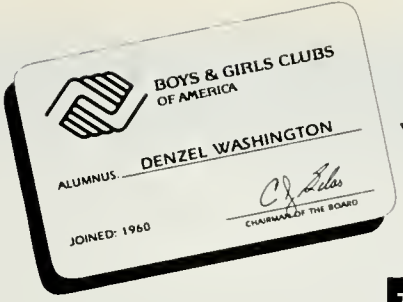


A Tootsie Roll employee circa 1940

go hand in hand. Since we acquired them, they've been going strong in theatres." Other candies Warner-Lambert's purchase provided include Sugar Daddy, Sugar Babies and Charleston Chew candies.

While acquisitions of other candy companies have built Tootsie Roll's product line, the development of new candies continues to be a major focus from within. The latest candy to satisfy those with a sweet tooth, says Melvin Gordon, is the Tootsie Caramel Apple pop which has proven to be a big hit. Adds Ellen Gordon, "We are presently planning some new products—specially designed for movie theatres—which we think they will be good companions to Junior Mints and Mason Dots."

While new products continue to generate public interest, Ellen Gordon says one aspect of their company which can't be overlooked is the familiarity they've built over generations of consumers. From their sponsorship of popular children's TV shows "Howdy Doody," "Rin Tin Tin," "Bozo," "The Pinky Lee Show" and "Rocky and Bullwinkle," children growing up in the '50s remember Tootsie Rolls as part of their childhood. "People really enjoy passing on candies to their children—candy which they enjoyed when they were children. And it keeps going on from generation to generation."



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Response No. 150

REVIEWS

★★★★★ OUTSTANDING
★★★★ VERY GOOD
★★★ GOOD
★★ FAIR
★ POOR
(no stars) BOMB

KAMA SUTRA ★★

Starring Sarita Choudhury, Indira Varma and Naveen Andrews. Directed by Mira Nair. Written by Helena Kriel and Mira Nair. Produced by Lydia Dean Pilcher. A Trimark release. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 115 min. Screened at the Toronto fest. Opens 2/14 ltd.

The great Indian book on the art of love-making is center stage in "Kama Sutra," but the movie, though full of nudity and sex, is strangely chaste. In 16th-century India, Princess Tara ("Mississippi Masala's" Sarita Choudhury) and servant girl Maya (newcomer Indira Varma) are inseparable companions. As they mature, the sexually precocious Maya begins to blossom while the sexually repressed Tara retreats into her shell. When Tara's betrothed, the king Raj Singh ("The English Patient's" Naveen Andrews), takes a long look at the sensuous Maya, the stage is set for a rift between the two women. And that's where "Kama Sutra" quickly fails. Maya and Tara part, and their combative drama disappears, too.

The history of the time is fascinating, and filmmaker Mira Nair's previous films ("Saalam Bombay," "Mississippi Masala" and "The Perez Family") enticingly mixed history with provocative tales of outcasts. But Nair's latest merely bores, playing like a Harlequin Romance, with lots of beautiful bodies—ravishingly shot by ace cinematographer Declan Quinn ("Vanya on 42nd Street")—and exclamatory, breathless emotions. (Stereotypically, it's the lower-class woman who knows how to have more fun.)

It doesn't help that the film is an English-language production. What would no doubt sound authentic in Hindi is too colloquial and contemporary in English. There's even an unlikely reference to Raj's undressing women with his eyes. Also, the film's treatment of intercourse, while reasonably explicit given the source material, isn't all that passionate.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

FOREVER MOZART ★★★★

Starring Ingrid Rubio, Carlos Fuentes and Agata Lys. Directed and written by Jean-Luc Godard. Produced by Alain Sarde and Ruth Waldenburger. A New Yorker release. Drama. French-language; English subtitles. Unrated. Running time: 85 min. Screened at the Toronto fest. Opens 2/14.

This feature from veteran iconoclast Jean-Luc Godard is as dense and complex as the rest of his later films, but it's more focused, perhaps due to its subject matter. Although Godard is not to everyone's taste, "Forever Mozart" should delight the filmmaker's loyal following.

The film has four distinct storylines, and in each an elderly director is trying to cast and shoot a movie about recent events in Bosnia. As is usual with Godard, there is no conventional plot or memorable character. Rather, Godard ruminates on the relationship between art and politics and on the role cinema plays in this exchange. Not surprisingly, "Forever Mozart" tackles ideas with intellectual rigor while retaining a suggestive and poetic air. But the highlight—thanks in part to exquisite cinematography by Christophe Pollock—is Godard's mastery of beautiful images.—*Craig Vickers*

SUBURBIA ★★

Starring Giovanni Ribisi, Steve Zahn, Amie Carey, Nicky Katt, Jayce Bartok and Parker Posey. Directed by Richard Linklater. Written by Eric Bogosian. Produced by Anne Walker-McBay. A Sony Classics release. Comedy/drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 120 min. Screened at the New York fest. Opens 2/7.

Director Richard Linklater has an obsession with philosophizing slouchers, and it's getting old. Helmer of 1991's "Slacker," 1993's "Dazed and Confused" and 1995's "Before Sunrise," Linklater seems unable to proceed beyond telling the story of pontificating teens and twentysomethings mired in inaction. The musing losers this time are particularly abhorrent: the all-id Buff (Steve Zahn of "That Thing You Do!"); racist/boozer/dropout Tim (Nicky Katt); untalented performance artist Sooze (Amie Carey); teen alkie Bee-Bee (Dina Spybey); and tripe-writing rock star Pony (Jayce Bartok).

Jeff (Giovanni Ribissi) sees the hopelessness for what it is but proves incapable of extricating himself, instead hanging with his wretched pals behind the Circle A (symbolizing an anarchy they're too lazy to enact). Although the actors do a good job portraying these parts, it's unclear what it is the characters possess that would make the audience care enough about them to invest two hours of their (hopefully more fulfiling) lives watching them.—*Christine James*

RIPE ★

Starring Monica Keena, Daisy Eagan and Gordon Currie. Directed and written by Mo Ogrodnik. Produced by Suzy Landa and Tom Razzano. A Trimark release. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 93 min. Screened at the Toronto fest. Opens January undated.

Bonding between females is a hot movie topic, and "Ripe" buys into the false motifs of such dramas, in which the men are usually bad and the women are their victims. Here, the two protagonists are 15-year-old fraternal twins, first seen as young children being terrorized by their abusive father. Years later, the parents are killed in a car crash, and the two girls decide to flee the accident and head out on their own. The events that follow are among the most absurd in any recent American movie. Tomboyish Rosie (Daisy Eagan) and innocent but seductive Violet (Monica Keena) stumble onto and freely roam an army base with the most lax discipline this side of Beetle Bailey, where they hook up with Pete (Gordon Currie), the base's longhaired handyman. Trouble follows.

Nothing in "Ripe" rings true. The movie is sometimes coy—Pete takes them to the base's annual dance—but other times it's graphic, as when Violet nearly gets raped. Writer/director Mo Ogrodnik seems to want to condemn a world that stunts the sexuality of young women, but the two actresses as leads are so inexpressive, and their situtations so unsubtle, that "Ripe" says nothing. This half-baked film never earns its title.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

THE CRUCIBLE ★★★★1/2

Starring Daniel Day-Lewis, Winona Ryder, Paul Scofield and Joan Allen. Directed by Nicholas Hytner. Written by Arthur Miller. Produced by Robert A. Miller and David V. Picker. A Fox release. Drama. Rated PG-13 for intense depiction of the Salem witch trials. Running time: 115 min. Adds NY 12/11; exp 12/20.

It is both unbelievable and unbelievably fortunate that Arthur Miller's 1953 play "The Crucible" was never adapted for the English-language screen until Miller and director Nicholas Hytner got around to it in 1996. Unbelievable because "The Crucible" is both Miller's most enduring work (in the sense that it is by far his most oft-produced play) and because "The Crucible" has always seemed too "epic" (i.e., too

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Showmandiser Promotion of the Month

SHIFTING "TIDE"

UATC/Microsoft Venture Takes Showmanship High-Tech

By Ann Kwinn

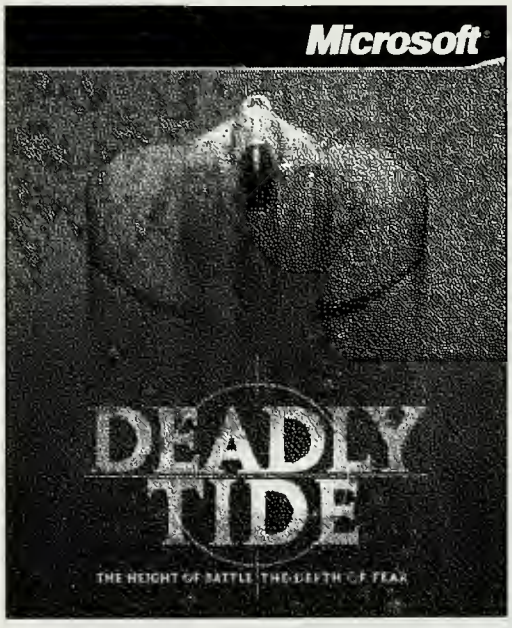
Audio: They come from another world to destroy us. And as the battle to rule the earth wages, not in our skies but in our seas, only one person can save us from drowning.

Text: THAT PERSON IS YOU. Deadly Tide. Surfacing on a PC near you.

So goes a minute-long trailer with a difference, the linchpin of a movie-style promotion campaign for the hot new Microsoft CD-ROM "Deadly Tide." The simple act of creating a movie trailer for a CD-ROM makes an implicit comparison between the computer game and a feature film, thereby conferring on Microsoft's product a perceived level of greater quality. This fall, Microsoft partnered with the United Artists Theatre Circuit to show its "Deadly Tide" trailer on over 600 screens in eight major cities across the U.S. before action movies such as "Independence Day," "Mission: Impossible," "The Crow: City of Angels," "Chain Reaction" and "Escape from L.A." The trailer (which was also shown on monitors in UATC lobbies) was also supported by onscreen slide ads.

One of the more unique components of the entire campaign was a joint Microsoft/UATC event called "Stay and Play," in which "Deadly Tide" was projected on a UATC moviescreen, allowing theatregoers to play the game in real time in front of other members of the audience. No retrofitting was required, since a number of UATC theatres are outfitted with Proteus video projection equipment for teleconferencing, according to Chris DiCesare, Product Manager of Action Games at Microsoft Corporation. "I was concerned that it would be 'pixelated,'" says DiCesare, "that its quality wouldn't be as good as on the computer. But everyone I know was surprised."

Radio stations in the various cities gave away "twofer" tickets to the "Deadly Tide" event and to a sneak preview of "Extreme Measures," the Sony feature starring Gene Hackman and Hugh Grant, which preceded it. Attendees were handed raffle tickets upon entering the theatre. After the movie ended, a disc jockey serving as emcee called out three ticket numbers. The ticket holders became contestants for the game. Each "Deadly Tide" event lasted about a half hour to 45 minutes.



"I was concerned that it would be 'pixelated,' that its quality wouldn't be as good as on the computer. But everyone I know was surprised. ...People were transfixed by the screen."

"The involvement was different based on the market," says DiCesare. "In Minneapolis, people were transfixed by the screen. Some people didn't stay for the whole event, although they found it unique and alluring."

Microsoft also gave out movie-style posters, and contestants were eligible to win Microsoft gift-packs of six new holiday titles, or a truly grand Grand Prize: 500 United Artists theatre tickets, awarded to a single person.

DiCesare says that the whole idea started when the developers themselves, who had individually worked on such notable projects as "Robocop," "Total Recall," and the "Star Trek: The Next Generation" TV show, created a movie trailer for the product. DiCesare decided to re-work the trailer and take it on the road after investigating the high correlation between PC usage and movie attendance.

The game's target audience—males 18 to 30 years of age—was also a good match for action moviegoers.

DiCesare describes the game as having a "cinematic quality," which was a key reason why Microsoft saw the UATC promotion as a perfect fit. "It is 'high end,' even for the [very technologically-based] games business. Previously, I had promoted our 'Mortal Kombat' and 'NBA Jam' titles. This is a more visceral experience. The line I use is that it is a 'movie in a box.'"

"Cinematic" may seem like a somewhat curious description for a game that has no live action footage and no human actors. All of the visuals are CGI (computer generated imagery). "Think Toy Story," says a Microsoft rep.

Asked whether or not such an ambitious promotion was especially expensive, DiCesare says, "Both UA and Microsoft wanted it to be a success. They were trying it out. It was not so costly, especially to set it up. They are using the [video projection] equipment more and more for entertainment. These events differentiate them from the other chains."

So would DiCesare use a movie tie-in to promote a Microsoft title again? "It has a lot to do with having the right product. I really enjoyed working with UA. I would like to do something with them in the future."

filmic in scope) for the regional and community playhouses that have kept it alive over the years. And unbelievably fortunate because it is only now, after the passage of four decades and the end of the Cold War, that it's possible to view "The Crucible" as a work in its own right, without undue reference to the events in Miller's own personal and professional life that gave rise to it.

"The Crucible's" one previous filmic incarnation (financed in part by sources in then-communist East Germany) offers an instructive comparison. In 1956, a group of radical French intellectuals, including existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre and actors Yves Montand and Simone Signoret, adapted "The Crucible" for the French screen. What was it that drew Sartre, Montand and Signoret to Miller's text? The milieu? It could hardly have been that, because "The Crucible" is set in colonial Massachusetts and deals with the infamous Salem Witch Trials, a uniquely American moment of madness. Miller's use of language? Unlikely, given the fact that Sartre rewrote Miller into French. So why would a gaggle of French Communists settle on a mainstream play by a world-famous American author as a project to rally around? Simple. Because in those days "The Crucible," which dramatizes events that had become the American Left's primary metaphor for describing the political "witch-hunts" of the anti-communist McCarthy era, was viewed predominantly as a masterpiece of propaganda—a thinly veiled allegory of the suffering of Miller and his friends during the time of the American blacklist.

Structured as it is on the moral and judicial dilemma of naming names to an illegitimate kangaroo court, "The Crucible" does in fact bear the mark of Miller's political trials and those of his comrades in the '50s. But it's far too narrow a view of any work of art to say that it is only the sum of its influences; when a work is a true piece o literature, there is a qualitative differenc between the thing itself and that from whic it sprung, which is why we still read (an make movies from) Shakespeare's histor plays like "Richard III," while Holinshed' Chronicles, the history text from whic Shakespeare drew much of his event struc ture, is a title few can name and even fewe have read. The strange necromancy of th creative process transmutes the things i absorbs into something different and hope fully better; although it's useful to know that Miller wrote "The Crucible" in part a a direct response to seeing friends and pro fessional collaborators like director Eli Kazan name names to the House Un American Activities Committee in order t save their careers at the expense of others to view "The Crucible" solely from tha perspective is to deprive it of life.

The adaptation by Englishman Hytne ("The Madness of King George"), create in close collaboration with the 81-year-ol Miller himself, illustrates the point b largely ignoring any political undercurrent present in the original play and instead fo cusing on the moral struggles faced b Miller's based-on-fact creations. "The Cru cible" is everything Roland Joffe's "Th Scarlet Letter" could have been but wasn't where the Joffe film felt obliged to modif Nathaniel Hawthorne's original with mod ern asides about feminism and justice fo Native Americans, Hytner and Miller in habit the world of 17th-century Americ with an almost frightening exactness.

The result is a layered examination o mob hysteria and of the Puritan mindset o which America was founded and whic still dictates so much of our belief syste in this era of "family values" rhetoric Watching the madness of officially sanc tioned murder take hold of seemingly san and moral Salem, it's hard not to reflect o how easily even a carefully controlled so cial structure can break down when dis course devolves into the demonizing of "them" by an "us." The American McCar thy era was certainly one such period, bu "Tailgunner Joe" hardly had a monopol on the rhetoric of hate. It survives to thi day, in Zaire, Bosnia, the West Bank; i flares to life every time another arsonis burns down an American church.

Half a decade after the Cold War's end Miller, Hytner and their impeccable cas have made it possible to find in "Th Crucible" something far richer and mor rewarding than the simple political po lemic it has previously been taken for Simultaneously more epic and more inti mate than the play that gave rise to it, thi "Crucible" steers clear of using character as mouthpieces for politics, instead tellin its tragic tale in the starkest and most com pelling of human and dramatic terms. I there's any justice when Oscar time come around, "The Crucible" (which takes it name from the ancient alchemist's mixin tool) will perform an alchemy of its own turning movie footage into richly deserve Academy gold.—*Ray Greene*

DAY AND DATE: JAN. 31 WIDE

EVERYONE SAYS I LOVE YOU ★★★1/2

Starring Woody Allen, Goldie Hawn, Alan Alda and Julia Roberts. Directed and written by Woody Allen. Produced by Robert Greenhut. A Miramax release. Musical comedy. Rated R for one use of strong language. Running time: 100 min. Earlier opens 12/6 NY/LA.

An odd yet fulfilling musical comedy as only Woody Allen could conceive, "Everyone Says I Love You" combines affectionate nostalgia with modern neuroses to create his most purely enjoyable movie since 1987's "Radio Days." Not quite a traditional musical yet adhering to certain musical traditions, it's a strangely delightful hybrid of Allen's usual personal concerns and deeply felt tributes to early 20th-century popular songs.



Miramax's "Everyone Says I Love You."

The story might be similar to most "Woodys," in that couples separate, become involved with others, and separate again, but it's without the bitter bile of "Husbands and Wives" or the self-righteous preaching of "Crimes and Misdemeanors." Allen has more fun with family relationships here, yet an underlying seriousness prevents triviality from intruding. When the characters sing standards like "I'm Through With Love" and "All My Life," it's to express romantic desire and frustration that words alone couldn't properly convey.

The cast works magic as the most lilting ensemble of any Allen film. Though not trained singers, except for a radiant Goldie Hawn and charming Alan Alda, they deliver a touching sincerity and purity that make the numbers register. Most roles lack strong individuality or dimensions, but that's in keeping with the movie's lighter, buoyant spirit.

A deft mix of fantasy and reality, the bright colors create just the right stylized setting as the camera slowly glides in long shot through the musical numbers. Perhaps his style is too consciously daring to achieve a great film, but its delectable nuttiness makes the film irresistible.

As his characters search for elusive perfection, Allen's wit proves as razor sharp as ever, infusing his latest effort with a substantial amount of human insight and sensitivity that once again places him in the upper pantheon of moviemakers.—***Dale Winogura***

REVIEWS

SPACE JAM ★★★1/2

Starring Michael Jordan, Bill Murray, Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck. Directed by Joe Pytka. Written by Leo Benvenuti & Steve Rudnick and Timothy Harris & Herschel Weingrod. Produced by Joe Medjuck and Daniel Goldberg. A Warner release. Animation/live-action fantasy/comedy. Rated PG for some mild cartoon language. Running time: 88 min.

TV commercial director Joe Pytka has spent so much time promoting products and condensing ideas into 30-second nuggets that he's forgotten that feature films both offer and require a lot more breathing time. Hence, "Space Jam," playful and funny as it is, leaves a moviegoer feeling like he's just watched a two-hour high-pressure sales pitch. What's more, the product it's pushing (NBA star Michael Jordan, done in Madison Avenue shorthand—slo-mo, slam-dunk sequences that echo every Nike ad made) isn't what people want to see. The central draws (pun intended) here are Warner's classic Looney Tune characters, whose overheated action makes Jordan's athletic artistry look downright dull.

Despite four writers ("The Santa Clause's" Steve Rudnick & Leo Benvenuti, and "Twins'" Timothy Harris & Herschel Weingrod), the plot doesn't do much, and the cel-painted story they create seems like a low-rent "Who Framed Roger Rabbit" adventure. But they provide Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck et al. with plenty of occasions to crack wise and pull pranks, and those antics are a hoot despite their distracting 3-D rendering.—*Thomas Quinn*

THE MIRROR HAS TWO FACES ★★1/2

Starring Barbra Streisand, Jeff Bridges, Pierce Brosnan, George Segal and Lauren Bacall. Directed by Barbra Streisand. Written by Richard LaGravenese. Produced by Barbra Streisand and Arnon Milchan. A TriStar release. Romantic comedy. Rated PG-13 for language, sensuality and some mature thematic material. Running time: 126 min.

The obligatory scene in every Barbra Streisand movie is an astonished male hunk gasping words to the effect of "God, you're beautiful." That moment in "The Mirror Has Two Faces" is the raison d'etre of the entire film, which casts Streisand as a frumpy professor transformed into a knockout babe. In her third outing as director, Streisand has gone for broadly crowd-pleasing comedy and romance, playing off her own persona in a self-consciously congratulatory manner that will gratify her many diehard fans but will leave other viewers feeling shortchanged.

The rewrite by Richard LaGravenese ("A Little Princess") of the French film "Le Miroir a Deux Faces" tends to skate blithely along the shallow surface of the tale, seldom reaching for deeper emotion. Streisand's empathy with the loveless life of Columbia University romance literature prof Rose Morgan carries some conviction, especially in scenes with her aging but still glamorous mother (a superbly stylish Lauren Bacall) habitually denigrating her daughter's appearance. But, as any Streisand fan knows from the start, this second-hand Rose isn't really an ugly duckling; she's only dressed as one. After fitness training, she emerges, unsurprisingly, as a dead ringer for a certain glamorous Hollywood actress/singer/director.

The single novelty here is the grating partner with whom Streisand's character is saddled: fellow professor Gregory Larkin (Jeff Bridges), a dullish sort who's been burned by passion and wants only the refuge of a platonic marriage. Rose's desperate efforts to stir his libido become terribly demeaning, giving this "fine romance, with no kisses" a strangely retro aura of sexist humiliation. It takes all of Bridges' considerable charm to make his creepy embodiment of 1990s male sexual anxieties marginally bearable. Marvin Hamlisch's gushy score (which, as the press notes insist, "adapts the 'Love Theme' composed by Barbra Streisand") is even more of a turnoff.—*Joseph McBride*

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Response No. 57

THE ENGLISH PATIENT ★★1/2

Starring Ralph Fiennes, Juliette Binoche, Willem Dafoe, Kristin Scott Thomas and Colin Firth. Directed and written by Anthony Minghella. Produced by Saul Zaentz. A Miramax release. Romance. Rated R for sexuality, some violence and language. Running time: 159 min. Expands wide 12/25.

"I am a bit of toast, my friend," an Allied interrogator is told by Count Laszlo de Almasy (Ralph Fiennes), a Hungarian explorer who has been reduced by flames—of a Saharan plane crash's fires and a desert romance's disastrous fervors—to a dying creature referred to as the English patient. The time is World War II; the place is Italy. Suspected of being a German collaborator, Almasy claims he can remember nothing, including his name. As a French-Canadian nurse, Hana (an underused Juliette Binoche), ministers to him in an abandoned Tuscan monastery, reading to her patient from a book of Herodotus he clutches, his tale—beginning in prewar North Africa, among a cartographic expedition by England's Royal Geographic Society—gradually pours forth.

Four people are involved: Almasy; an aristocratic English couple, Geoffrey and Katharine Clifton (Colin Firth and Kristin Scott Thomas) who apprentice themselves to this self-dubbed International Sand Club; and, in Cairo, a Canadian thief named Caravaggio (Willem Dafoe) spying for the English as war with Germany nears. Through a crisscross of events, involving Almasy and the married couple in a web of adultery and Almasy and Caravaggio on opposite ends of intrigue, all four come to death or dismemberment.

In its long, $33 million telling, what "The English Patient" (based on Michael Ondaatje's Booker Prize-winning novel) becomes is both more and less than a bodice buster. More, because there's a veneer of culture, intelligence and symbolism; less, in that the central romance is so subdued there's no bodice busting. Without the exoticism of era and locale, the tale would be quite ordinary.—*Kim Williamson*

RANSOM ★★★

Starring Mel Gibson, Rene Russo, Gary Sinise, Delroy Lindo, Lili Taylor and Brawley Nolte. Directed by Ron Howard. Written by Richard Price and Alexander Ignon. Produced by Scott Rudin, Brian Grazer and B. Kipling Hagopian. A Buena Vista release. Thriller. Rated R for graphic bloody violence and strong language. Running time: 121 min.

In this thriller, Mel Gibson stars as rich airline mogul Tom Mullen, who with his wife (Rene Russo) lives in the limelight. But, when kidnappers looking for a big payday abduct their young son, Sean (Brawley Nolte, actor Nick's son), they would trade all their wealth for his safe

FLASHBACK: *JUNE 6, 1977*
What BOXOFFICE *said about...*
STAR WARS

[George Lucas is readying a 20th-anniversary, digitally updated re-release of his famed sci-fi trilogy. "Star Wars," which launched the series in May 1977, makes its bow on Jan. 31, 1997. Here's what BOXOFFICE *had to say about it two decades ago.]*



The spirit of Buck Rogers lives on as writer/director George Lucas continues to pay homage to that gentleman of the 25th century in a wow of a sci-fi film. Using 70mm Panavision, with Technicolor prints by DeLuxe and ear-splitting Dolby sound, the Lucasfilm Ltd. production is one of the most entertaining films of its type yet done. The special effects, conjured by an army of experts, are nonstop, and the action is first rate. Few fantasies have been made with such a sense of humor, and the script contains virtually every cliche to be uttered in a war film or adventure epic.

The actors—especially Harrison Ford in a Chevy Chase-like performance—add to the fun by delivering their lines in an offhanded way. The pace rarely lets up, because the Gary Kurtz production moves as quickly as the serials from which it was patterned. Credit for the success of the film must begin with Lucas and continue down the lengthy participant list to DePatie-Freleng for master film effects. Alec Guinness, Peter Cushing, Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher, Anthony Daniels and David Prowse star. The film was shot in Tunisia, Guatemala, Death Valley (Calif.) and EMI Elstree Studios in Borehamwood, England. A symphonic score is provided by John Williams. "Star Wars" should be a very big success.

EXPLOITIPS

The special effects are superb and can be the biggest draw. But don't overlook the other elements. The soundtrack is available from 20th Century Records and Tapes.

CATCHLINES

A Long Time Ago In A Galaxy Far, Far Away....

REVIEWS

return. Yet, when Tom realizes that paying the ransom might in fact expedite his son's murder, he takes a different tack and goes on the offensive, annoucing the demanded $2 million instead will be a bounty on the abductors' heads. This panics his wife, and FBI agent Lonnie Hawkins (Delroy Lindo) also tries to convince Tom that he's made a fatal mistake. But the audience—privy to the kidnappers' scheme—knows he's done the right thing.

Lili Taylor, Liev Schreiber, Donnie Wahlberg and Evan Handler make an unlikely kidnapping crew for ingenious copgone-bad Jimmy Shaker (Gary Sinise), but the eclectic characters do provide dark entertainment value. Meanwhile, Shaker's unstable malevolence provides tension.

Although not quite edge-of-your-seat caliber, this two-hour thriller is well-paced and well-acted, with superior, powerfully tense performances by Gibson and Sinise. An otherwise climactic ending trails off, but overall "Ransom" is a satisfying mix of suspense, human drama, character study and the ever-popular vigilante-style comeuppance.—*Christine James*

MAD DOG TIME ★★★

Starring Jeff Goldblum, Richard Dreyfuss, Gabriel Byrne, Ellen Barkin and Larry Bishop. Directed and written by Larry Bishop. Produced by Judith Rutherford James. A UA release. Comedy. Rated R for violence, language and sexuality. Running time: 93 min.

The actor credit scroll for this UA pickup could really have been prefaced "in order of disappearance." Key characters are killed off so fast in "Mad Dog Time" that an audience can be forgiven for wondering who (if anyone) is going to be left by the end.

Offbeat humor spliced with full-face shots and slow motion coupled with a high-caliber cast make Larry Bishop's writing/directing debut a worthy one. The film also pays effective homage to the original Rat Pack (of which Bishop's father, Joey Bishop, was a member), in part by including jazzy tunes on the soundtrack from Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and Sammy Davis Jr.

Bishop succeeds in creating a timeless period movie; the audience is transported to a place and time that bear resemblances to the prohibition era, but the accents are those of contemporary technology. Patrons might be confused by some elements—"Mad Dog Time" straddles the borderlines of the art-house and mainstream—but suspense, tension and cunning humor hold it together.—*Dwayne E. Leslie*

HYPE ★★1/2

Featuring Soundgarden, Pearl Jam, Nirvana and Mudhoney. Directed by Doug Pray. Produced by Steve Helvey. A CFP release. Documentary. Unrated. Running time: 84 min.

Born in Seattle in the mid-'8s and popularized by bands like Nirvana, Alice in Chains and Green River, "grunge" music's garage band sound has metamorphosized into a multibillion-dollar industry. Featured prominently in this film are grunge "founding fathers" Bruce Pavitt and Jonathan Poneman of Seattle independent label Sub Pop Records, which introduced the music to the rest of the world through creative marketing strategy that spurred the flannel-shirted fashion statement and eventual ascension of the music/art form to MTV, Vogue and Wall Street.

Through numerous interviews with musicians, fans, music promoters, footage of live performances, sound recordings and still photos, "Hype" shows the cheesy, ludicrous, dark and decadent sides of grunge as well as the intense attraction and influence it has on its fans. Filmmaker Doug Pray adopts a tongue-in-cheek approach in his modest but effective documentary.—*Pat Kramer*

SET IT OFF ★★★

Starring Jada Pinkett, Queen Latifah, Vivica A. Fox and Kimberly Elise. Directed by F. Gary Gray. Written by Kate Lanier and Takashi Bufford. Produced by Dale Pollock and Oren Koules. A New Line release. Action/drama. Rated R for strong graphic violence, pervasive language, some sex and drug use. Running time: 121 min.

Set in the Los Angeles projects, this film follows sensible Stony ("The Nutty Professor's" Jada Pinkett), trying to raise enough money to send her brother to UCLA; lesbian Cleo (rap artist Queen Latifah), who wants to turn her car into a hotrod; single mother Tisean (Kimberly Elise), who can't afford daycare; and Frankie (Vivica A. Fox of "Independence Day"), just fired from her bank-teller job. Tired of being victims of circumstance, the girls decide to knock off a few banks.

Shootouts, car chases, fast getaways: "Set It Off" is a typical action film. Yet Director F. Gary Gray ("Friday") and screenwriters Kate Lanier ("What's Love Got to Do With It") and Takashi Bufford ("House Party 3") don't glorify the brutal violence or turn their criminals into heroines. The tense, fast-paced film also depicts the tough problems women face without male-bashing or pity.—*Lea Russo*

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S ROMEO + JULIET ★★★

Starring Leonardo DiCaprio, Claire Danes, Brian Dennehy, John Leguizamo, Pete Postlethwaite, Paul Sorvino and Diane Venora. Directed by Baz Luhrmann. Written by Craig Pearce & Baz Luhrmann. Produced by Gabriella Martinelli and Baz Luhrmann. A Fox release. Drama. Rated PG-13 for scenes of contemporary violence and some sensuality. Running time: 120 min.

It seems that every generation feels the need to recast "Romeo and Juliet" in its own image and likeness. In the 1950s, when "juvenile delinquency" was postwar America's hot-button issue, Jerome Robbins and Leonard Bernstein crossed the rudiments of Shakespeare's plot with the attitudes and language of "Rebel Without a Cause" and called it "West Side Story." In the '60s, reputed Shakespearean purist Franco Zeffirelli cast dewy-eyed teenagers Olivia Hussey and Leonard Whiting in his more conventional production, then marketed it to the flower-power set as a mod rendering of eternal teenage torment and the "generation gap."

Now comes "Strictly Ballroom" director Baz Luhrmann's '90s rendering of what he calls "William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet," a gun-crazy, up-to-the-minute cine-collage with art direction that crosses "Reservoir Dogs" and "Mad Max," camerawork and editing blending Hong Kong action ace John Woo with Jean-Luc Godard, and a grafted-on recasting of Shakespeare's event structure by way of urban-themed '70s-era TV shows like "Baretta" and "Starsky and Hutch." Postmodernism and the odd inflection borrowed from MTV struggle for mastery here, creating a visual pastiche of a very high order—a gleeful pictorial souffle comprised of contemporary movie violence and Elizabethan melodrama that succeeds quite nicely as long as Luhrmann sticks to his (very large) guns.

What's for the most part missing, though, from this trigger-happy take on one of literature's great romances is something pretty fundamental: romance. Luhrmann is so preoccupied with the brute exhilaration of style and decor that he can scarcely be bothered with the more measured, poetic cadences of his source material.

Nowhere is this more obvious than in the work of his two leads. The youthful gorgeousness of Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes as Romeo and Juliet makes them visually perfect, which unfortunately seems to be almost all that has been asked of them. When it comes to hip wardrobes, cool lighting and intricate staging, Luhrmann has spared no effort to make his leads look good. But, when it comes to the rich, dense and lyrical pentameters of their lines, he leaves them to fend for themselves—a dangerous tactic even with experienced Shakespearean actors, and an all but fatal one for iambic novices like DiCaprio and Danes. The visual inventiveness of Luhrmann's staging is so ravishing that the at times tin-eared line readings of his principals seem like an annoying distraction, which is a fairly remarkable achievement of sorts, given the fact that they are reciting some of the most beautiful romantic poetry ever written.

Ah, well. Luhrmann's "Romeo + Juliet" may be full of sound and fury, but it doesn't signify nothing. As perhaps the most extreme movie modernization of a Shakespearean work, Luhrmann's effort will very likely linger as an enduring curio in moviedom's Shakespearean canon.

As a virtual who's who of nascent and emerging film stars, this "Romeo + Juliet" will also almost certainly be looked back on as a stepping stone in some soon-to-be-hot movie careers. And, as perhaps the most kinetic and visually daring major studio film of the year, "Romeo + Juliet" is almost sure to be remembered as the turning point for a brazen new cinematic talent: Luhrmann's.—*Ray Greene*

DEAR GOD ★★★

Starring Greg Kinnear, Laurie Metcalf, Maria Pitillo and Tim Conway. Directed by Garry Marshall. Written by Warren Leight and Ed Kaplan. Produced by Steve Tisch. A Paramount release. Comedy. Rated PG for language and mild thematic elements. Running time: 111 min.

Though well-intentioned and generally likable, "Dear God" could have been more than its fluffy final edit. In this comedy, charismatic con man Tom Turner (Greg Kinnear) reluctantly agrees to get a job (to avoid going to jail). Working in the U.S. postal service's Dead Letter Office (final home of missives to Santa, Elvis, the Easter Bunny and God), Tom sets about purloining goodies; nearly caught by his mysterious supervisor (Hector Elizondo), he pretends he's merely returning the items and sends them off to a random addressee—as it turns out, an impoverished mother (Ellen Cleghorne) who'd written to the Lord about her plight. A fellow co-worker (Laurie Metcalf) witnesses Tom's actions; believing he's on a mission to do good work, the entire ragtag misfit team of DLO employees soon join in, reading letters addressed to God and trying to aid those in need. Meanwhile, Tom is more interested in beautiful single mom Gloria (Maria Pitillo). But she sees through him, and her honest nature catalyzes him to make a change.

Unfortunately, what weakens the strong premise of this film is the lack of realistic characters. The love-interest plot is empty, and certainly incapable of inciting a 180-degree personality change. The postal workers are mostly cartoons, and the recipients of assistance aren't that sympathetic. Scenarios that could stir emotion are cut short by wackiness, probably the film's main flaw. "Dear God" could have been a powerfully affecting movie had it been a drama with comedic elements.—*Christine James*

BAD MOON ★★

Starring Mariel Hemingway, Michael Pare and Mason Gamble. Directed and written by Eric Red. Produced by James G. Robinson. A Warner release. Horror. Rated R for horror violence and gore, brief language, and a scene of sexuality. Running time: 79 min.

A standard, predictable fright flick, "Bad Moon" comes to life in the last two reels with a fair number of assured scares and jolts. Though hokum is kept to a minimum by writer/director Eric Red (adapting Wayne Smith's novel "Thor"), a lack of stereotypes doesn't make up for unimaginative plotting and limited-dimension characters.

A gory jungle prologue has photojournalist Ted Harrison ("Children of the Damned's" Michael Pare) mauled by a werewolf. Back home in the Pacific North-

RETROVIEWS

Welcome to a new-for-1997 review feature that reflects BOXOFFICE's continuing commitment to bring you movie reviews as early as possible. During the past year, we've already covered the following December and January releases; to help you locate those critiques, the alphabetical list below notes the issue of BOXOFFICE in which the review appeared and provides distributor and release date info.

"Albino Alligator": Miramax, 12/13 Oscar run, 1/17 exp; see **Nov. 1996.**
"Angel Baby": CFP, 1/10 NY/LA/Seattle; see **April 1996.**
"Citizen Ruth": Miramax, 12/13 NY/LA/Omaha, 12/25 exp; see **Nov. 1996.**
"Farmer & Chase": Arrow, 1/10 NY/SF; see **Dec. 1996.**
"Flipping": Dove, January undated; see **Nov. 1996.**
"I'm Not Rappaport": 12/26 NY/LA, 1/24 exp; see **Nov. 1996.**
"johns": First Look, 1/31 NY/LA; see **April 1996.**
"Kolya": Miramax, 1/24 NY/LA; see **Dec. 1996.**
"La Ceremonie": New Yorker, 12/20 NY/LA; see **Nov. 1995.**
"Les Voleurs" ("Thieves"): Sony Classics, 12/25 NY; see **July 1996.**
"Mother": Paramount, 12/25 NY/LA, 1/10 exp; see **Nov. 1996.**
"Nothing Personal": Trimark, January undated; see **July 1996.**
"The Portrait of a Lady": Gramercy, 12/27 ltd, 1/17 exp; see **Nov. 1996.**
"Ridicule": Miramax, 12/20 & 12/25 exp; see **Aug. 1996.**
"Shine": Fine Line, 12/25 & 1/17 exp; see **April 1996.**
"Sling Blade": Miramax, 12/13 exp; see **Nov. 1996.**
"Some Mother's Son": Columbia, 12/26 ltd; see **Aug. 1996.**
"The Substance of Fire": Miramax, 12/6 NY/LA, 1/10 exp; see **Nov. 1996.**
"The Whole Wide World": Sony Classics, 12/25 NY; see **Nov. 1996.**

Review Digest

Story-type key: (Ac) Action; (Ad) Adventure; (An) Animated; (C) Comedy; (D) Drama; (Doc) Documentary; (F) Fantasy; (Hor) Horror; (M) Musical; (My) Mystery; (R) Romance; (Sat) Satire; (SF) Science Fiction; (Sus) Suspense; (Th) Thriller; (W) Western.

TITLE/MPAA DISTRIBUTOR 5 Excellent 4 Very Good 3 Good 2 Fair 1 Poor	RUN TIME	GENRE	REVIEWED IN ISSUE	BOXOFFICE	VARIETY	H. REPORTER	L.A. TIMES	N.Y. TIMES	USA TODAY	AVERAGE	TOTAL BOXOFFICE $*
The Associate **PG-13** (BV)	*114*	C	12-96	3	3	2	3	2	2	2.5	11.9
Big Night (Gol)	*110*	D	9-96	3			4	3		3.4	9.2
Bound **R** (Gra)	*111*	Th	4-96	3	4	4	4	3	4	3.6	3.4
The Chamber **R** (Uni)	*111*	D Th	12-96	3	3	2	2	3	3	2.7	14.1
D3: Mighty Ducks **PG** (BV)	*104*	C	12-96	2	3	3		3		2.8	20.8
Dear God **PG** (Par)	*111*	C	1-97	3	3	3	2	2	1	2.3	6.5
Emma (Mir)	*111*	R C	8-96	4	4	3	3	3	5	3.7	22.1
The English Patient **R** (Mir)	*159*	R	1-97	3	3	4	4		4	3.6	0.3
Extreme Measures **R** (Col)	*110*	Th	11-96	2	3	2	2	3		2.4	17.4
First Kid **PG** (BV)	*101*	C	11-96	3	3	3	2	3	2	2.7	24.9
First Wives Club **PG** (Par)	*105*	C	11-96	3	3	4	2	3	3	3.0	99.4
Fly Away Home **PG** (Col)		D	10-96	3	4	4	4	4		3.8	23.4
The Funeral **R** (Oct)	*96*	D	10-96	2	3	4	3	4		3.2	0.4
Get On the Bus **R** (Col)	*121*	D	11-96	4	4	3	3	3		3.4	5.7
The Ghost & The Darkness **R** (Par)	*117*	AcAd	12-96	3	3	3	2	4	2	2.8	36.2
The Glimmer Man **R** (WB)	*91*	Ac	12-96	3	2	3	2	2		2.4	19.8
High School High **PG-13** (TS)	*86*	C	12-96	3	2	2	2	3	2	2.8	19.1
Hunchback **G** (BV)	*88*	Ani	8-96	3	3	3	3	2	5	3.2	98.8
ID4 **PG-13** (Fox)	*143*	AcSF	9-96	2	3	4	3	4		3.2	304.7
Jack **PG-13** (BV)	*111*	CD	10-96	2	2	2	2	2	2	2.0	57.2
Jude **R** (Gra)	*123*	D	8-96	3	3	4	3	2	2	2.8	0.3
Larger Than Life **PG** (UA)	*94*	C	12-96	3	2	2		2	2	2.2	7.9
Lone Star **R** (SPC)	*134*	D	7-96	4	4		4	5	3	4.0	12.7
Long Kiss Goodnight **R** (NL)	*120*	Ac	12-96	3	3	3	3	3	2	2.8	31.4
Looking for Richard **PG-13** (Fox)	*113*	Doc	7-96	4		2	2	4	3	3.0	0.9
Mad Dog Time **R** (UA)	*93*	C	1-97	3	1	2	3			2.3	
Matilda **PG** (Tri)	*100*	C F	10-96	4	4	4	2	3	3	3.3	32.9
Michael Collins **R** (WB)	*132*	D	10-96	4	3	4	4	3	2	3.3	9.5
Microcosmos (Mir)	*74*	Doc	10-96	3	4	3	4			3.5	0.4
The Mirror Has Two Faces **PG-13** (TS)	*126*	R C	1-97	2	2	4	2		3	2.6	12.2
Mother Night **R** (FL)	*114*	D	12-96*	4			3	3		3.3	0.2
The Nutty Professor **PG-13** (Uni)	*96*	C	9-96	3	4	4	3	3	4	3.5	128.6
Phenomenon **PG** (BV)	*117*	D	9-96	4	2	4	2	2		2.8	103.8
Ransom **R** (BV)	*121*	Th	1-97	3	4	4	3	4	3	3.5	67.1
Romeo + Juliet **PG-13** (Fox)	*120*	D	1-97	3	3	3	3	2	3	2.8	31.4
Secrets and Lies **R** (Oct)	*142*	D	7-96	4	4	4	4	4		4.0	4.0
Set It Off **R** (NL)	*121*	Ac D	1-97	3	3	2	3	2		2.6	20.8
Sleepers **R** (WB)	*146*	D	12-96	3	4	2	2	2	3	2.7	47.1
Space Jam **PG** (WB)	*88*	F C	1-97	3	3	3			3	3.0	27.5
Surviving Picasso **R** (WB)	*124*	D	11-96	3	4	2	3	3		3.0	1.8
Swingers **R** (Mir)	*96*	C	11-96	3	3	4	3	3	3	3.2	1.6
That Thing You Do! **PG** (Fox)	*105*	D	11-96	3	4	3	3	3	3	3.2	23.9
Thinner **R** (Par)	*92*	Hor	1-97	1	2	2	3	3		2.2	14.2
A Time to Kill **R** (WB)	*142*	D	9-96	2	4	4	2	3		3.0	108.6
Tin Cup **R** (WB1)	*134*	R C	10-96	2	3	3	2	3	3	2.8	53.8
To Gillian... **R** (Tri)	*105*	D	10-96	2	2	3	2	2	2	2.2	4.0
Trainspotting **R** (Mir)	*93*	D	7-96	4	4	3	4	3		3.6	16.2
Trees Lounge **R** (Ori)	*89*	D	10-96	2	3	3		4		3.0	0.6
Twelfth Night **PG** (FL)	*125*	C	11-96	3	2	3	2	3	3	2.7	0.3
2 Days.. Valley **R** (MGM)	*105*	C D	11-96	2	3	2	3	3		2.6	11.0
Unhook the Stars **R** (Mir)	*105*	D	12-96	3	4	4	3	2	3	3.2	

** **Total boxoffice, in millions, as of Nov. 19, 1996***

REVIEWS

west mountains, Harrison moves next door to his sister Janet (Mariel Hemingway), her son Brett ("Dennis the Menace's" Mason Gamble) and Thor, their pet German Shepherd (a dog named Primo). When several neighbors are discovered killed in brutal fashion, police suspicion falls on the pooch, but only the smart canine (and the audience) knows the culprit.

There are few surprises here, but Red's direction at least has solid technical acumen and some polish, taking advantage (with the aid of cinematographer Jan Kiesser) of British Columbia locations in atmospheric Panavision. Red's visual style provides tense moments, notably when Pare and the dog eye each other with fear and daring.

Pare eventually brings credible animalistic shadings as his character becomes more threatening. But Hemingway is just awkward and uncomfortable, and Gamble can't do much with a thankless part. But Primo must be the most expressive German Shepherd since Rin Tin Tin, splendidly embodying a loyal, intelligent canine. That makes the film a better tribute to animal courage than a "B" movie.—*Dale Winogura*

STEPHEN KING'S THINNER ★

Starring Robert John Burke, Joe Mantegna and Lucinda Jenney. Directed by Tom Holland. Written by Michael McDowell and Tom Holland. Produced by Richard P. Rubinstein and Mitchell Galin. A Paramount release. Horror. Rated R for horror violence and gore, language and sexuality. Running time: 92 min.

Scarcely a moment of terror or suspense infiltrates this cheap and inept potboiler, which fails to achieve any of Stephen King's offbeat sensitivity to character and situation. Though director/cowriter Tom Holland closely follows the 1985 novella (published under King's "dark half" pseudonym, Richard Bachman), roles here are reduced to venal stereotypes, allowing the story to become even more skeletal than it was on paper.

Displaying the absence of taste and talent he did in t so-called horror classi "Fright Night" and "Chil Play," Holland confus forced hysterics with nigl marish frenzy. His pedestri cinematic technique a slack pacing could be ov looked if he had any imagin tion, but his exaggerat melodramatics and ugly se sibilities mangle this tale surely as he did on TV wi King's superior novella, "T Langoliers." The one creati touch that Holland adds is sweet-revenge climax, b it's too little, too late in a st pid and hateful slab of revo ing diversion that ranks wi "Christine" and "Firestarte as the worst King adapt tions.—*Dale Winogura*

NORMAL LIFE ★

Starring Luke Perry a Ashley Judd. Directed John McNaughton. Writte by Peg Haller and Bo Schneider. Produced Richard Maynard. A Fi Line release. Drama. Rated for scenes of violence, sex ality, drug use and languag Running time: 100 min.

A story of how one youn couple—a policeman (" Seconds'" Luke Perry) an his beautiful bride ("Heat's Ashley Judd)—turn to arme robbery to afford a split-lev suburban life would see promising as a more seriou retake on "Fun With Dick an Jane." But "Normal Life lacks even the most rudimen tary sense of drama.

Hitchcock once likened h films to "real life, but with a the dull bits snipped out." N only have director John Mc Naughton ("Mad Dog an Glory") and writers Pe Haller and Bob Schneider le the dull bits in aplenty, b they've also failed to lend an critical distance, motivation credibility or narrative coher ence to the events.

Other than the most basi aspect of the story—Co Turns Criminal—there's n dramatic movement. Charac terization is even more iner Judd's Pam could be an inter esting mess but, once the ru diments of her character ar established early on, it's al ways more of the same, wit subsequent scenes revealin nothing new.—*Alex Albanes*

NATIONAL NEWS

DORAN AND MANCUSO: RE-UNITED

MGM/UA chairman and CEO Frank Mancuso continued to put his stamp on the studio's executive roster with the hiring of Lindsay Doran to replace John Calley as president of United Artists.

Doran and Mancuso go back to Mancuso's days running Paramount in the late 1980s, during which time Mancuso was studio chairman and Doran was a production executive. After leaving Paramount, Doran joined Sydney Pollack's Mirage Entertainment in 1989 and served as Mirage's president for seven years before exiting her post in October of 1996. Industry speculation had been rife with rumors that Doran was a top contender for the UA post, with Disney-based Caravan Pictures head Roger Birnbaum the other noteworthy candidate. The UA presidency was far from Doran's only post-Mirage job opportunity; Sony, DreamWorks and Paramount are all known to have been vying for her services.

Doran's producing resume includes the hits "Dead Again" and "The Firm" at Mirage, as well as work during her days as a Paramount executive on such titles as "Pretty in Pink," "Planes, Trains & Automobiles" and "Ghost." In 1996, Doran received a Golden Globe award for producing the Emma Thompson-starring "Sense and Sensibility," which later won an Oscar for best adapted screenplay.

In an ironic twist, Doran's assumption of the UA presidency will unite her professionally with her former Mirage partner's daughter Rebecca Pollack, who serves currently as UA's VP of production.

DREAMWORKS: RUDE AWAKENINGS?

The announced plans for the building of a new, state-of-the-art studio production facility at Playa Vista, Calif. by the DreamWorks SKG "dream team" may undergo radical alteration including a possible relocation of the facility owing to a combination of factors including growing unrest among development company Maguire Thomas Partners and DreamWorks' outside strategic partners, and slowdowns brought about by environmentalist protests and legal actions.

Such high-profile participants in the original Playa Vista plan as IBM and James Cameron's Digital Domain effects house have already opted not to take space in Playa Vista according to some reports. At issue are a variety of scheduling and financial uncertainties, including rental pricing for space on the property; the date of availability for rental space; and the restructuring of debt incurred on the Playa Vista site back in the late 1980s and early 1990s, before DreamWorks became involved with developing the location.

A major source of frustration for the DreamWorks principals, Maguire Thomas, and other proposed participants has been the failure of Maguire Thomas to meet its originally projected construction deadlines. When plans for the Playa Vista location were announced last December with much fanfare, the groundbreaking for the site was to occur in June of 1996. Recent statements from Maguire Thomas now indicate that this schedule may have been over-optimistic by approximately almost a full year, with groundbreaking expected to occur no earlier than May 1997 if the Playa Vista development partnership holds together.

Maguire Thomas stated publicly that the delays were primarily based on the complexity of the overall Playa Vista development blueprint, which includes plans for an integrated, fiber-optically connected "community of the future" designed to exploit state of the art developments on the Internet. Among the rumors that were flying at press time was one that DreamWorks was reconsidering creating its production facility on a site located in the San Fernando Valley, which such other studios as Warner Bros., the Walt Disney Co. and Universal already call home.

NEW LINE VS. BOTTOM LINE

1996 proved a troublesome year for New Line Cinema, with the company's worst-ever financial performance and continuing uncertainty over ownership issues related to Ted Turner's alliance with Time Warner.

Though the break-out success of the female gangsta flick "Set It Off" in late fall provided some light at the end of 1996's fiscal tunnel, 1996 was expected to be the first year in the last 30 that New Line actually lost money. In large part, the rocky year is attributable to New Line's recent embrace of high-profile, mega-budget, talent-driven projects—the exact opposite of the low-risk, niche-marketing philosophies that proved so successful for New Line before the Turner buyout in 1993. Leading the list of budget-fueled boxoffice failures was director Renny Harlin's Geena Davis-starring action pic "The Long Kiss Goodnight," which cost almost $100 million to produce and market, according to published reports, and which was expected at press time to gross less than $35 million domestically. Other pricey studio misses in '96 included "The Island of Dr. Moreau," which grossed less than $30 million on a $50 million production budget, and Walter Hill's "Last Man Standing," for which Bruce Willis was paid a reported $16 million to star in a film that took in $18 million at the U.S. boxoffice.

Adding to New Line's worries was the question of who would end up owning the company in the wake of Ted Turner's successful closing of his deal to sell New Line parent Turner Entertainment to Time-Warner. Though technically a part of Time-Warner/Turner at press time, it was a foregone conclusion that New Line would either be sold off or required to find a deep-pocket financial partner as it moves out of the Time/Turner fold. New Line's depressed earnings in 1996 were expected to make the urgent task of seeking a compatible buyer that much more difficult.

Still, New Line's long history of profitability and the formidable marketing and producing track record of its principal executives had most industry observers betting the company would regroup and rebound from its year of substantial but not insurmountable reversals. The surprisingly strong opening of "Set It Off" proved that New Line still knows how to develop and create a niche-market winner when it puts its mind to the task.

LATE FALL B.O.: HELD TO "RANSOM"

Late fall boxoffice shot into the stratosphere in mid-November with the stunning $34 million opening weekend for Buena Vista's Mel Gibson starrer "Ransom." The Ron Howard-directed thriller became the highest-grossing live-action opener in Disney's history, with only the studio's animated champ "The Lion King" pulling bigger first weekend numbers for Buena Vista. A savvy, risk-taking marketing campaign initiated by production chief Joe Roth (who had Buena Vista begin running ads as far back as last summer) was credited with the breakout success, along with a carefully orchestrated publicity blitz by Gibson, and the drawing power of the Gibson and Howard names.

"Ransom" entered a marketplace that had already been picking up steam as it headed toward the holiday season, thanks to the surprise Fox hit "Romeo and Juliet" and robust early returns for Barry Levinson's Warner drama "Sleepers." The real sleeper of the late fall, though, was New Line's "Set It Off," a $10 million production that grabbed $11.1 million in its first five days of release, and which has spawned a hit soundtrack album to boot.

The successes of the first half of November had exhibitors crossing their fingers that the upcoming Thanksgiving to Christmas release frame would put 1996 back on track. October of 1996 was an abysmal month, with U.S. domestic performance coming in at just under $340 million, a five-year low. But hope springs eternal for plucky U.S. exhibitors; with eagerly-awaited holiday titles still in the offing, conventional wisdom was that 1996 might offer-up a green (meaning greenbacks) Christmas after all.

INTERNATIONAL BLOC BUSTERS

Meanwhile, mega-budget U.S. product continued to find extremely lucrative favor with overseas audiences in 1996, making for what U.S. distribution execs were terming an amazing international year. As it did in the U.S., "Independence Day" set the global pace, invading moviehouses to the tune of some US$366 million in overseas receipts during its first 12 weeks of international release. "Mission: Impossible" was closing on the equivalent of US$250 million after 17 weeks; "Twister" had churned up US$226.8 million after 14 weeks; "The Rock" was rock-solid at US$185 million after 16 weeks; and "Eraser," the Arnold Schwarzenegger action hit, had US$132 million stamped indelibly on its ledgers during 11 weeks of play.

The growing importance of the international market is demonstrated by the fact that virtually every one of the above named blockbusters had already outperformed its 1996 U.S. domestic gross via overseas bookings at press time, with cash registers still ringing for each film worldwide.

EXHIBITION BRIEFINGS

NATIONAL AMUSEMENTS ADDS 74 SCREENS IN FOUR COUNTRIES

National Amusements has opened six new theatres with a total of 74 screens in four countries on three continents. In October, the 14-screen Farmingdale Multiplex Cinemas opened in Long Island, N.Y.; in November, North Attleborough, Mass.' 12-screen Showcase Cinemas opened its doors; following that was the 12-plex Showcase Cinemas Reading in England and a 14-plex in Scotland named the Showcase Cinemas Glasgow East. In December, a Showcase Cinemas 10-plex opened in Santiago, Chile, as well as a 12-plex in Cincinnati, Ohio. The new sites are part of National Amusements' long-term expansion plan. The Scotland and Chile sites are National Amusements' first forays into those markets.

GCC PROMOTES NEW CHICAGOLAND THEATRES WITH TV INFOMERCIAL

General Cinema Theatres took an innovative tack in promoting the openings of the Northbrook Court 14 in Northbrook, Ill. and the Randhurst 16 in Prospect, Ill., by entering the realm of the infomercial, an advertising medium no longer restricted to hair products and exercise equipment. Featuring holiday movie previews, a behind-the-scenes look at how GCC designs, builds and operates its theatres, and a sneak preview of the two megaplexes, the half-hour informercial, produced by MarkeTVision Direct Inc. and titled "General Cinemas' Coming Attractions," aired four times in November on Chicago's CBS affiliate WBBM TV-2. The Northbrook Court 14 and Randhurst 16 both opened in late November. Each auditorium in both plexes has both stadium and theatre-style seating, the front half being gently sloped, and the back half stadium-style. All the theatres also have an average of 10 "love seats" (39-inch-wide chairs as opposed to the traditional 20 to 22 inches). The concession operation includes Starbucks coffee and pastries, Pizzeria Uno pizza, and self-service centers for popcorn, soft drink and mixed-candy purchases. The Northbrook Court 14 also has a full-service cafe with seating.

OH, BOISE: CINEPLEX BUILDS 16-PLEX IN IDAHO

Cineplex Odeon will build a new 16-plex in Boise, Idaho's 8th Street Marketplace, a mixed-use entertainment hub in the process of being redeveloped and expanded. The 60,000-square-foot, all-stadium seating theatre will feature 3,000 high-back seats, large curved screens, and a 1,500-square-foot Cinescape multimedia family entertainment center offering the latest in interactive game technology. The theatre will replace Cineplex's nearby existing twin, which will close upon the opening of the 16-plex.

SOUNDS GOOD: NEWS FROM DTS, DOLBY

DTS SIGNS DEAL WITH MGM/UA; ANNOUNCES DTS 6AD PROCESSOR

Digital Theater Systems (DTS) has signed a three-year contract with MGM/UA, under which all MGM and United Artists productions will be released in the DTS Digital Sound Format. The pact takes effect Jan. 1, 1997, expanding an earlier agreement that called for 50 percent of all MGM/UA films to be released in DTS.

DTS has also announced that the DTS 6AD Digital Cinema Processor will be available in the first quarter of 1997. The product will feature optical, non-sync and digital inputs, DTS digital audio, a built-in monitor, automation accessory, crossovers, and room equalization.Launched June 11, 1993, with the release of Universal's "Jurassic Park," Westlake Village, Calif.-based DTS now ha nearly 8,000 installations worldwide.

DOLBY REPORTS RECORD CINEMA PROCESSOR SALES

During August and September, Dolby Laboratories report they took orders for ove 1,300 Dolby Digital film sound processors Over the last year, more than 3,500 Dolby Digital units have been installed, bringing the total number of screens equipped fo Dobly Digital to over 6,700.

Dolby Laboratories is based in San Fran cisco, with film division offices in New York and Los Angeles, and European headquarters in England.

MAGIC MULTIPLIES IN PA., N.J.

New Jersey-based Magic Cinemas recently opened the Northampton Crossings 11, a 2,500-seat complex in Easton, Pa. that features stadium seating, plush rocking chair seats, state-of-the art projection and all three digital sound formats. Video monitors screen trailers in the lobby, which is accented by fiber optic and neon lighting. A multi-station concession stand offers self-service bulk candy. The Northampton Crossings 11 offers free refills on drinks and large popcorn, and the grand opening included giveaways of flashlights, T-shirts and 2,500 bottles of Pepsi.

Magic Cinemas has also announced a massive expansion of its circuit over the next two years to 200 screens, with commitments in place to open theatres in East Windsor, N.J.; North Bergen, N.J.; Phillipsburg, N.J.; and Quakertown, Pa. Magic Cinemas currently operates 48 screens.

MUVICO ACQUIRES HIALEAH'S "GENERAL" ADMISSIONS

Muvico Theaters, headquartered in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., has acquired General Cinema's eight-plex in Hialeah, Fla. It will be operated under Muvico's newly-formed discount theatre division, Favorite Cinemas, which will feature $1.50 admissions for all shows at all times. "Typically, discount theatres have been twin and three-screen theatres," says Muvico president Hamid Hashemi. "However, offering movies at a modern multiplex with state-of-the-art sound and projection is well-received throughout the country." Favorite Cinemas will be upgrading all sound systems and projectors in the theatre with digital sound.

LOEK-ING GOOD WITH 20-PLEX

Jack Loeks Theatres Inc. is adding eight screens to the existing Cinema 12 Theatre in Muskegon, Mich., making it a 20-screen megaplex. All new auditoriums will offer giant wall-to-wall screens, stereo and digital sound, and state-of-the-art projection. The Cinema Carousel 20 will also be the first theatre to introduce West Michigan patrons to stadium-style seating. And true to its name, the Carousel will now feature a full-sized, carnival-type carousel, with 30 horses ar two chariots. The chain is also building 3,000-seat, 58,000-square-foot 15-plex Benton Harbor/St. Joseph, Mich., which slated for a May 1997 opening.

DICKINSON ROCKS NORTHROCK

Wichita, Kansas will be the site of Dicki son Theatres' NorthRock 20, a destinatic entertainment facility that will encompa 72,000 square feet at the ground level, ar will also feature a 3,000-square-foot fami recreational mezzanine. The theatre will be major renovation and expansion Dickinson's existing NorthRock 6. "All th stops have been pulled out," says Wood Dick inson, who added that Dickinson's custo seating, UltraComfort, will make its U. debut at the NorthRock 20.

CROWNING ACHIEVEMENTS IN CONNECTICUT

Crown Theatres' kingdom will soon have majestic new addition—construction recent began on the Crown Majestic in downtow Stamford, Conn. The theatre, which will hav between six to eight screens, will feature high back rocking chair seating with cupholde armrests; advanced purchase ticketing; and state-of-the art concession stand. Eac auditorium will be Dolby Stereo equipped with Dolby, DTS and SDDS Digital soun system capabilities.

Crown has also completed a major renova tion of its Greenwich Plaza 3 in Fairfiel County, Conn. The recently reopened theati now boasts a spacious new concession stan redesigned decor and new washrooms.

LYONS ROARS ABOUT ENTERTAINMENT CENTER

Showboat of Lyons, L.L.C. has announce plans for a family entertainment center i Lyons Township outside Lake Geneva, Wis The center will include an eight-screen movi theatre with stadium seating and digita sound, a 360-car drive-in movie theatre wit FM stereo sound, a food court, high-tec video game room, an ice rink and a nine-hol par three gold course. The project i scheduled for completion in April 1997.

REGAL'S EXPANDING KINGDOM

Rapidly-growing Regal Cinemas has added even more screens to its realm. Most recently, the chain opened the Countryside Cinema 14 in Sterling, Va. The theatre's highlights include giant wall-to-wall screens with Dolby surround sound; DTS, Dolby and Sony Dynamic Digital Sound; stadium-style seating; rocking chairs, love seats and cupholder armrests; computerized ticking stations with advance ticketing; a continuous loop lobby projection screen playing coming attractions; a video game room; and a space station-themed lobby. Activity rooms are also available for birthday parties and other special events.

Regal has also opened the WestGate Mall Cinema 8 in Spartanburg, S.C., which offers DTS and Dolby digital sound; love seats and cupholder armrests; computerized ticketing; hearing-impaired listening devices and wheel- chair-accessible seating; a neon-enhanced lobby; and two large concession stands. Opening festivities at both cinemas, which involved advance previews of the theatres, movie screenings, free video game play and 50-cent popcorn and sodas, took place late October, and benefitted the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation and the Family Care Council for the prevention of child abuse.

LIFE'S A BEACH FOR PACIFIC THEATRES

Pacific Theatres has opened the 16-screen Beach Cities Cinema in El Segundo, Calif., the first of four megaplexes the circuit plans to build in Southern California over the next year. The 3,500-seat Beach Cities Cinema offers state-of-the-art projection; Sony SDDS, DTS and Dolby Digital sound systems; THX-certified auditoriums; stadium seating; and a "peace-of-mind" service which offers parents the opportunity to borrow complimentary silent, vibrating pagers so that they can be contacted by their child's caregiver during a film without disturbing other patrons.

STRAWVOTE PREDICTED PRESIDENT

For the eighth consecutive presidential election, General Cinema's StrawVote poll accurately predicted the victorious candidate by polling moviegoers in its 192 theatres nationwide. From Sept. 6 through Nov. 4, a total of 2,018,254 moviegoers cast their "vote" for president by selecting a Democrat, Republican or Reform party straw with their drink. While GCC's results had Bill Clinton winning with 46 percent of the vote, Bob Dole with 38 percent and Ross Perot with 16 percent, the actual results were Clinton with 49 percent, Dole with 41 percent and Perot with eight percent.

TEA HOLDS SEMINAR SERIES

The International Theatre Equipment Association will hold its fifth annual seminar series Jan. 13, 14 and 15 at the Universal Hilton in Los Angeles. For more information call 212-246-6460.

Q&A: HAIL MARY: GRASSO PROMOTED TO NATO VP

Mary Ann Grasso, longtime executive director of the National Association of Theatre Owners, has recently been elected to the post of NATO's vice president. Born in New York and raised in California, Grasso graduated Phi Beta Kappa with a bachelor's degree in art history from the University of California and a masters degree in library science from the University of Oregon. She fell into exhibition after a divergent career that included an 11-year position as director of the Warner Research Collection (a specialized service designed to assist writers, directors, producers, scenic artists and designers with production research), followed by three years with the CBS television network as a manager in its docudrama department. In 1988, she joined NATO as executive director. Now, eight years into her NATO tenure, Grasso still exudes an obvious enthusiasm for the exhibition industry, speaking excitedly about projects in the works, particularly the upcoming NATO/Hollywood Online joint venture, which will provide NATO members with their own websites, unifying and strengthening exhibition's presence on the Internet.



BOXOFFICE: How did you get into the exhibition industry?

MARY ANN GRASSO: I was just lucky! [laughs] And I mean that in all sincerity. I started off as a researcher in production and film research, and I found that I liked being involved in the film business, but I didn't particularly enjoy the production end of it. I really liked the business end of it. An opportunity was made available when the executive director at NATO retired, and I was recruited for the job. And it's been the best experience I've ever had.

BOXOFFICE: What new duties does the office of VP hold?

GRASSO: This promotion really reflects an expansion of the duties in the last couple of years. The organization has grown immensely, and my position now incorporates a great deal of going out to the membership, public speaking, and meeting with the state and regional units. [Additionally], the responsibilities will include our vision for international [endeavors]. NATO is looking at an outreach to the international exhibition community, expanding our services and our focus there.

BOXOFFICE: Will this be competing with the international equivalents of NATO?

GRASSO: No, we will be sister organizations. We cannot offer international members what their trade associations can offer them. We don't have the expertise in legal areas or government or the trade opportunities and policies in different countries. We would primarily be providing information about technology and American films. It's a sort of a sharing that a lot of trade associations do. We learn how exhibitors work in their countries; they learn how we work in our country, and we take the best of both. It's a method of sharing information and making us both smarter and stronger as a result of that.

BOXOFFICE: Are there any changes or new programs you'd like to initiate?

GRASSO: We will be working on an expanded membership program. We have, over the last few years, been very fortunate to be attracting new members based almost exclusively on word of mouth from our members, and from some of the work that we do through the conventions. But we've never made a real concerted effort to go out to exhibitors across the country and say 'We would like you to join with us and we would like you to be a part of our organization.' So we will probably be spending a great deal of time on that.

BOXOFFICE: What are some of the predominant issues NATO's currently dealing with?

GRASSO: Right now, of course, we are very excited about [NATO's partnership with] Hollywood Online and the Internet. We're very excited about providing this opportunity to our members because every person will have a website—they'll have their own home page where they can talk about their theatre. Not only is it going to be good for exhibition and for our members, but it's also a wonderful way to communicate our excitement about movies and going to the movies. So it's going to serve the public as well as to serve our industry.

We've [also] really put a great deal of focus and energy and attention into technology over the last couple of years. NATO has developed a Blue Ribbon technical committee that comprises the best and the brightest of exhibition and distribution to tackle technology issues that improve the moviegoing experience.

BOXOFFICE: What is it about this industry that compels you?

GRASSO: It's fascinating to me to see how business operates in a creative environment. This is showmanship at its best. I'm sure it's fun for the filmmaker to make the film, and it's certainly fun for me as the consumer to enjoy it, but it's wonderful to see what happens in the movie theatre. That's the best part. My members get such a thrill about bringing the movie to the public, and finding new and interesting ways to make that film fun for people. For example, I love serving on these committees where you judge [theatre] marketing ideas. It's so fun to me to see how creative our young people are, and how innovative they are, and what ideas they have to bring people in. It's that old sort of ballyhoo thing from the '30s and '40s. That's very appealing to me. It really is showmanship on the first level. That is what I like. [My job is] creative, it's different every day, we deal with different issues every day. But it really is bringing the show to the people. And I know that sounds corny, but it's true.

EUROVIEWS

European News Notes *by Melissa Morrison*

LEAD STORY: CINECITTA PRIVATIZES

ROME—Italy's mammoth, state-owned Cinecitta production facility is being partially sold in an attempt to resuscitate the legendary studio's fortunes. The deal is symptomatic of the current state of the Italian film industry, which has been in decline since the days of Fellini and pre-expatriate Dino De Laurentiis.

A 49-percent share of Cinecitta Servizi, the company that runs the studio, was opened in October to European bidders with an estimated value of $3.3 million. A deal was expected to be concluded by the end of 1996. Suitors include France's Compagnie General des Eaux and Britian's Carlton TV, as well as mogul Vittorio Cecchi Gori. Americans, however, need not apply—unless they are willing to commit to making movies in Italy, or to invest heavily in the planned Cinecitta multiplex.

The sale, which will give the buyer a not-quite-controlling interest in Cinecitta, is aimed at attracting ready cash and more interest from European filmmakers. The ultimate goal is to restore the studio's reputation as an international presence. Italian filmmaking bigwigs such as producer De Laurentiis and Cecchi Gori have blamed Italian tax and film-production laws for excluding foreigners from using Italian facilities, thus starving the domestic industry of cash and, in some cases, artistic prestige.

Italy's new Communist-led coalition government, is, surprisingly, behind the proposed sale, and also plans to pass laws making Italy a more attractive site for foreign filmmakers.

AU REVOIR, LES TAX BREAKS

PARIS—Film funding may suffer as France scales back its budget deficit and increases taxes in order to get its fianancial house in order for the impending European monetary union. In immediate danger is the country's Sofica tax-break system, which, until recently, allowed private companies and individuals to shelter up to 25 percent of their grosses from taxes. Parliament voted in October to slash the deductible to a flat US$10,000.

The change is expected to dramatically impact French film-funding, of which 10 percent is paid for with Sofica funds. Last year, the amount totaled almost US$30 million for features. Many large production companies, including Gaumont (currently making "Les Visiteurs II" with Jean Reno) and MK2 (making "Rien Na Vas Plus" with Isabelle Huppert), help fund their films through their own established Sofica companies.

Independent production companies are expected the feel the cut the deepest: They count on obtaining almost one-third of their funding from four Sofica funds. But there is little hope of a reprieve from the parliamentary action, which is part of a broader shift in spending policies necessitated by the strict fiscal rules of the European union.

STUDIO CITIES

SWEDEN, GREAT BRITAIN, RUSSIA—Two new European film-production sites are in the works, along with two new cutting-edge post-production facilities.

Sweden's Memfis production company and Zentropa, co-founded by director Lars von Trier, are building a full-scale studio at Trollhaettan on the Swedish coast, beginning with a $1 million post-production facility, to be completed next year. Memfis director Lars Joensson hopes the new studio will provide a new platform for Swedish filmmaking away from the capital of Stockholm. Joensson also has plans to start a production-investment company to finance films in the area. Other Scandinavian production companies may yet join the venture.

While the proposed Swedish studio wi be built out of converted airplane hang a British studio site may be carved out an abandoned warehouse in Hertfordsh Producers of the latest James Bond seq have had trouble booking space in U facilities—including Leavesden Stud which Eon Productions had built in 19 to make "GoldenEye."

Rather than force the filmmak abroad, local officials are negotiatin create a new space to accommodate $48 million production, which again st Pierce Brosnan.

Meanwhile in Moscow, the state- the-art Mosfilm Fantasy post-productio studio is scheduled to open in the n year. It will house a $6 million comput controlled studio for special effects a other services for film and television. T project is a joint venture between the sta owned Mosfilm Studios and B S Graphi which is Russia's largest post-productio concern.

GERMAN JOLT

FRANKFURT—The German film industry is getting a boo from two well-known industry players, one a German compa making tentative forays into America, the other an Americ company making deeper forays into Germany.

The German television group ProSieben is jumping into t feature-film business with plans to invest in cinemas, distribu films and back co-productions. ProSieben's plan is to conquer percent of the German exhibition industry by buying major stakes in existing theatres for a total of 200 screens. That cou make its new distribution project all the more successful—Pr Sieben wants to distribute eight to 10 titles annually. And it h begun to sponsor international co-productions, beginning wi "Detour," which got underway in the United States this fall.

Meanwhile, the local branch of U.S.-based Buena Vista Inter national, which was already established in Germany as a distribut will back domestic projects with its new production arm, Bue Vista Productions. BVP plans to produce four to six pictures 1997 with local partners. Films on the BVP include Katja v Garnier's "Bandits," Vivian Naefe's "Never Trust A Woman," a Michael Juncker's "Frauen Luegen Nicht."

The latest Buena Vista venture is only the latest in a string major American companies supporting local co-productio Disney's German representative last spring partnered wi Germany's Mr. Brown Entertainment to produce "Knocking Heaven's Door." Warner Bros. has also collaborated on loc productions, while Fox and Columbia are reportedly scanning f similar opportunities.

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Q&A: JACK VALENTI: AN AMERICAN IN PRAGUE



Jack Valenti, the peripatetic president of the Motion Picture Association of America, is a familiar face to everyone in the film industry. His globe-trotting on behalf of U.S. film interests is legendary, as is his charm, energy and the political clout he wields as perhaps the most powerful representative of movie industry interests ever to bend ears and press the flesh in Washington.

BOXOFFICE MAGAZINE'S *European correspondent Melissa Morrison had a rare recent opportunity to witness Mr. Valenti in overseas action during his recent 12-day goodwill visit to Europe, where he met heads of state and film-industry representatives in the United Kingdom, France, Hungary and the Czech Republic. Mr. Valenti was on hand to promote dialogue between American and European filmmakers, and to allay European fears of American cultural hegemony—never an easy task. An excerpt from that conversation:*

BOXOFFICE: In your discussions with European filmmakers, how did you defend Hollywood against the charge that its movies dominate European cinemas at the expense of domestic releases?

JACK VALENTI: I said, "The cinema business is very simple. If you make movies that a lot of people want to see, you will do well. If you make movies people do not want to see, you will not do well. Period." It has nothing to do with some American invasion. We make a lot of movies that fail. So when somebody said, "You're killing our business," I said, "Why? I don't have an army of the 101st Airborne with bayonets forcing people [to see American movies]."

When I speak to film students in Europe, they think I'm Satan. I'm respectful of a film's need for an audience. Many of these young film students disdain audiences. I had one tell me, "Audience? I don't want to make movies that please the audience, I want to make movies that please me!" I said, "I have no problem with that. Fine. But if you're going to ask somebody to put up $2-3 million to make a movie, where's the expectation they might get the money back?"

"When somebody said, 'You're killing our business,' I said, 'Why? I don't have an army of the 101st Airborne with bayonets forcing people [to see American movies].'"

BOXOFFICE: But don't Hollywood movies have the audience advantage because they're accompanied by huge promotional budgets, whereas most European movies aren't?

VALENTI: What a huge promotional budget can do is get 'em in that first two days. After that, when the critics and the audiences get ahold of [the film], all the money in the world won't save that picture. There's nothing to prevent, by the way, the European companies from doing the same thing we do: forming a distribution company, putting in big money for marketing and advertising. You've got wealthy, wealthy people, wealthy, wealthy companies. Why couldn't they form a consortium and have a pan-European distribution set-up? Nothing to prevent it. Why isn't it done? Most bankers in Europe say, "No, no, no, it's risky. I'll put it in motorcars, I'll put it in pharmaceuticals, but movies are too risky."

BOXOFFICE: What do you think about Europe's efforts to boost popularity of its own movies? The French, for example, are notoriously protectionist about their culture.

VALENTI: Well, France is different. France has stern views that collide with the Germans. The Germans, the British, the Swedes, the Danes, the Dutch, the Finns think differently than the French. The old-fashioned way of building a wall around your country might have worked in the days of just over-the-air television and movies. But now you've got cable, you've got satellite to hurl things down at the speed of light. You've got optic-fiber, where every fiber that's no bigger than a thread can make 1,500 programs available instantaneously. Now, how do you build walls around that? Satellites don't know anything about borders. They're 23,000 feet in the atmosphere, and when they beam down, they don't go, "Longitude, latitude, I can't go here." It goes. So the old-fashioned methods are out-of-date.

BOXOFFICE: How can Europe attract Hollywood productions? Here in Prague in spring 1995, the "Mission: Impossible" production team and Tom Cruise were very vocal about their troubles with the Czech bureaucracy.

VALENTI: Hollywood production goes where it's hospitably treated. Now ["Evita" producer] Andy Vajna said in Budapest he was delighted with what he received. Whatever he wanted, they gave him. If he wanted to close off a street—which you can't do in America without everybody going crazy—they closed the street. In this part of the world, where you have everything—you've got ancient buildings near modern areas, you've got marvelous landscapes—you can shoot almost any picture here. I think you could shoot a Wild West picture here if you got out into the forest and the plains.

BOXOFFICE: How can Europe make Hollywood production companies feel more welcome?

VALENTI: Tax incentives. Say, "Come here and you can save 15-20 percent on your budget. We have somebody from our ministry of culture who's going to see anything you want is done. If you want to shoot, we've got a file of photographs of just about every kind of landscape you want to see. Come to Prague, we'll fly you in a government airplane north, west, east and south so you can see some of these places yourself." So you begin with the tax incentives, saying, "I can make this picture cheaper. Now can I make it better?"

Another thing I've found in the Czech Republic and Hungary is that most of the people speak English. It's a big advantage. Go to Russia sometime, or China to make a film. Getting your words across, the translation, will double your work time. And that costs money.

NORTHERN EXPOSURE

Canadian News Notes *by Shlomo Schwartzberg*

LEAD STORY: CINEPLEX LOCKS OUT PROJECTIONISTS

Failed contract negotiations have led Cineplex Odeon Corp. to lock out its projectionists in 38 Ontario theatres. The company wants to cut their shifts and their wages, which can run over C$20 (US$15.27) an hour, arguing that the new automated technology in theatres makes projectionists less indispensable than before.

The projectionists, who had been working without a contract since Dec. 31, 1995, face wage cuts of at least 50 percent. Cineplex also wants them to work reduced hours, restricting them to the popular discount Tuesday nights and weekends. Cineplex would have cinema managers run projection booths the rest of the week.

"The issue is what is a fair wage for a job done," insists Howard Lichtman, Cineplex's executive vice-president of marketing and communications. "We don't need separate projectionists, [but] the union continues to ignore that."

Lichtman points out that Cineplex went three months without projectionists in Chicago in a similar situation and that many Cineplex theatres, in key markets such as Quebec, San Francisco, Houston and Los Angeles, currently utilize part-time projectionists or have theatre managers do the job. He also expects similar issues to pop up in other provinces and states as contracts continue to expire. As for reports of projection problems at local theatres since the lockout, Lichtman says there aren't any more than the norm. The lockout, he says, will continue "until they [the union] come back with a reasonable compromise."

FLYER FLAP: FILMMAKER GREYSON ARRESTED

Cineplex Odeon found itself at the center of another controversy when filmmaker John Greyson was arrested at a Cineplex theatre after he refused to stop handing out leaflets protesting provincial government policies.

Greyson was invited to the Cineplex Carlton multiplex to say a few words before the Friday evening show of his film "Lilies," which opened that day. He did so but also urged audience members—and later theatregoers outside the cinema—to attend the anti-government Days of Actions march, taking place the next day in Toronto. Greyson was protesting the government's gutting of the Ontario Film Development Corporation, which had helped fund "Lilies." Cineplex told him to desist and when he demurred, the police were called in, eventually resulting in Greyon's arrest.

"We share Mr. Greyson's concerns about the funding of Canadian films," says Cineplex's Howard Lichtman. "[But] he didn't obtain prior approval [to hand out the leaflets]. We have to maintain our policy [that leaflets] can't be disseminated in our theatre without prior approval."

Cineplex has since apologized to Greyson, and is trying to get the charges dropped. Greyson told Toronto paper "The Globe & Mail" he's waiting for a formal written apology. "When I receive the apology and the charges are dropped, I look forward to working together again with Cineplex Odeon," he said.

FAMOUS PLAYERS' UPTOWN THEATRE DISABLED BY LACK OF WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBILITY

Meanwhile, Famous Players Inc., Canada's other major theatre chain, incurred some negative publicity of its own after a disabled patron at Toronto's downtown Uptown theatre was told not to return to the cinema as it was not wheelchair accessible. A similar incident occurred at Winnipeg's Northstar cinema where another disabled patron was given similar advice.

Roger Harris, Famous Player's vice president of marketing, doesn't deny those incidents but points out that of all Famous Players theatres, "90 percent are wheelchair accessible." The patron at the Uptown was let into the theatre by a doorman by mistake, he adds, and the Northstar is the only one of the 17 screens in Winnipeg that is not wheelchair accessible. "We recently spent $335,000 [US$255,045] on the Cumberland [fourplex] to improve the [accessibility] situation," says Harris. "It's not as if we're sitting back and not doing anything."

The Uptown and Northstar theatres are among Famous' older building and "it's very difficult to get them up to snuff, says Harris. "The Uptown is a complicated structure to improve on," he explains. Famous will do what it can to make all their theatres accessible to the disabled, he says. "Nine out of 10 times, we welcome them want them to come regularly."

ASTRAL PROJECTIONS: C$18.5M

Montreal-based Astral Communications has decided to sell off its distribution arm, Astral Distribution, and its program development branch, Astral Programming Enterprises, to another Montreal company, Coscient Group. Coscient, which owns Allegro Films and Allegro Films Distribution, will merge those two companies with the Astral acquisitions under a new banner, Astral/Coscient. Yves Moquin, chairman and CEO of Coscient Group, says the Astral companies will add C$18.5 million (US$14.1 million) to his company. Coscient expects to generate revenues of C$81 million (US$61.7 million) this year.

"CRASH" AND BURN: RELEASE DELAY WILL HARM FILM'S BOXOFFICE PROSPECTS, SAYS CRONENBERG

Rumors that New Line owner Ted Turner has kiboshed the October 1996 release of David Cronenberg's "Crash" are apparently true—at least according to the Toronto director.

In November, Cronenberg told "Maclean's," Canada's newsweekly magazine, that a New Line executive had confirmed that Turner was morally offended by the film (which deals with a group of people who are fetishistically attracted by bloody car collisions), and felt that it could lead impressionable youths to copy scenes. In fact, Cronenberg doubts that Turner would allow "Crash's" scheduled March release to happen, either. "I'm still worried that it will not be released. And the delay has already done hideous damage to the film," Cronenberg said. "We've lost the momentum we'd built up from Cannes." ("Crash" won a special award for its "audacity" at the French festival.)

But Ruth Vitale, president of New Line subsidiary Fine Line which is to release "Crash," was quoted in the Maclean's article as promising the film would be released in the U.S. in March. "The movie is outrageous and wonderful," she said. "It deserves time." To which Cronenberg replied, "I'm still not convinced." (Turner was unavailable for comment.)

The United States is not the only place where "Crash" has had censorship problems. A British MP called for its ban after its premiere at the London Film Festival, and Norway's largest theatre chain has indicated that it will not book the film.

DO YOU HAVE AN EXHIBITION-RELATED NEWS ITEM ABOUT THE CANADIAN MARKET? CONTACT SHLOMO SCHWARTZBERG IN CARE OF OUR CANADIAN NEWS BUREAU AT: 416-638-640

Boxoffice Magazine presents



MovieFone's Moviegoer Activity Report

For the Month of October 1996

MovieFone® (777-FILM®) and its sister service, MovieLink® Online, are now the single largest source of movie showtime information in the country, providing information to over 12 million moviegoers each month. The following information represents the most requested theatres and exhibitors on MovieFone.

Top 10 Exhibitors & Theatres

Most Requested Exhibitors

Rank	Exhibitor	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
1	United Artists	424,759	1
2	Cineplex Odeon	424,469	2
3	Sony	395,228	4
4	AMC	372,198	3
5	General Cinemas	222,511	5
6	Century	114,201	6
7	Mann	88,139	9
8	Cinemark	84,797	7
9	National Amusements	83,330	8
10	Famous Players	68,856	14

Most Requested Theatres

Rank	Market	Theatre	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
1	NY	Sony Lincoln Square	49,526	1
2	LA	AMC Century 14	31,001	3
3	NY	Sony Orpheum	23,853	5
4	BO	Sony Cheri	23,506	7
5	NY	CO Chelsea	23,151	4
6	NY	CO Worldwide	22,965	2
7	NY	Sony Village 7	22,487	6
8	NY	Sony 19th St. East	18,362	13
9	NY	CO Ziegfeld	18,294	716
10	PH	UA Riverview Plaza	16,506	9

Most Requested Theatres Per Screen

Total Requests	Rank	Theatre (# screens)	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
New York	1	CO Ziegfeld (1)	18,294	46
812,611	2	Sony Paris (1)	7,848	2
	3	CO Beekman (1)	6,686	6
Los Angeles	1	Mann National (1)	4,087	1
412,642	2	Mann Bruin (1)	4,002	19
	3	CO Century Plaza (4)	11,327	3
Dallas	1	AMC Highland Pk. (4)	5,272	6
307,390	2	GCC Irving Mall (3)	2,907	14
	3	AMC Forum (6)	5,661	7
San Francisco	1	UA Coronet (1)	3,072	5
196,587	2	Blm Regency II (1)	3,077	1
	3	Blm Regency I (1)	2,922	2
Miami	1	GCC Riviera (4)	4,332	6
191,144	2	Cobb Kendall (9)	9,468	3
	3	AMC Mall of Americas (14)	14,366	4
Philadelphia	1	UA Sameric (4)	10,679	1
168,253	2	Devon Theatre (1)	2,023	2
	3	Cinemagic 3 at Penn (3)	5,322	4
Boston	1	Sony Cheri (4)	23,506	1
160,712	2	NA Circle Cinema (7)	14,788	3
	3	Sony Nickelodeon (5)	8,999	2
Chicago	1	Village North Theatre (1)	1,936	1
142,886	2	CO Biograph (3)	4,836	2
	3	Sony Esquire (6)	6,292	5
Toronto	1	Famous Uptown (3)	7,735	9
112,072	2	Famous Eglinton (1)	2,188	1
	3	Famous Plaza (2)	2,848	3
Phoenix	1	Hark Cine Capri (1)	1,558	1
91,356	2	Hark Christown (5)	3,719	5
	3	Century Glendale D-I (9)	6,336	2
Houston	1	Landmk River Oaks (3)	2,185	1
84,005	2	CO River Oaks Plaza (12)	8,339	3
	3	CO Spectrum (9)	5,874	5
San Diego	1	Mann Cinema 21 (1)	790	1
82,615	2	Pacific Cinerama (6)	2,714	10
	3	Mann Sport Arena (6)	2,332	7

Total Requests	Rank	Theatre (# screens)	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
Atlanta	1	AMC Galleria (8)	2,513	3
56,120	2	UA Tara (4)	1,223	1
	3	AMC Phipps Plaza (14)	4,225	2
Seattle	1	CO Cinerama (1)	844	1
53,490	2	Landmk Seven Gables (1)	842	20
	3	CO Southcenter (1)	772	4
Kansas City	1	Dksn Glenwood (4)	2,507	1
51,298	2	Dksn Antioch Twin (2)	1,037	2
	3	Dksn Westglen (12)	5,901	3
Minneapolis	1	CO Edina (4)	1,633	7
43,672	2	Mann MN Suburban World (1)	394	6
	3	UA St. Anthony Main (5)	1,912	3
Cleveland	1	Sony Cedar (2)	1,138	3
41,806	2	GCC Parmatown (5)	2,399	1
	3	GCC Ridgepark Square (8)	3,257	6
Denver	1	UA Continental (1)	1,793	1
37,152	2	Landmk Esquire (2)	591	2
	3	Mann Cherry Creek (8)	2,270	3
Las Vegas	1	Century Cinedome (12)	5,816	1
36,391	2	Century Rancho (16)	6,936	2
	3	UA Green Valley (5)	2,096	6
Detroit	1	Star Lincoln Park (8)	1,705	2
28,553	2	Star Taylor (10)	2,067	3
	3	AMC Southland (4)	697	1
Sacramento	1	Century Century 21 (2)	1,695	1
27,130	2	Century Capitol (4)	2,111	5
	3	Century Cinedome (9)	4,110	2
Washington, DC	1	CO Uptown (1)	766	3
19,404	2	CO West End (4)	777	8
	3	AMC Courthouse (8)	1,233	9
Tampa	1	Cobb Northdale Court (6)	1,146	1
16,830	2	Muvico Palm Harbor (10)	1,744	2
	3	Fun-Lan D-I (3)	506	4
Orlando	1	Cobb Southchase (7)	1,234	4
15,047	2	GCC Renaissance (8)	949	9
	3	AMC Fashion Village (8)	923	7

Top 3 Actively* Requested Theatres:

1. CO Worldwide New York, NY
2. Sony Lincoln Sq. New York, NY
3. AMC Mall of Americas Miami, FL

*Caller specifically requested theatre

Key to Exhibitors

AMC	AMC Theatres, Inc.	Cobb	Cobb Theatres
Act III	Act III Theatres	Dksn	Dickinson Theatres
Blm	Blumenfeld Theatres	Famous	Famous Players
Carmike	Carmike Cinemas, Inc.	GCC	General Cinema Theatres
Century	Century Theatres	General	General Theatres
CO	Cineplex Odeon Corp.	Hark	Harkins Theatres
Hollywood	Hollywood Theatres	Muvico	Muvico Theatres
Landmk	Landmark Theatre Corp.	Pacific	Pacific Theatres
Mann	CinAmerica Theatres, LP	Sony	Sony Theatres
Mann MN	Mann Minneapolis	Star	Loeks-Star Theatres
Met	Metropolitan Theatres Corp.	UA	United Artists Theatre Circuit

777-FILM

BOXOFFICE

	October	November	December	JANUARY (Current)
Buena Vista (818) 567-5000 (212) 593-8900	**D3: The Mighty Ducks**, 10/4, Com, PG, 104 min, Flat, Dolby SRD. Emilio Estevez, Joshua Jackson, Jeffrey Nordling, Heidi Kling. Dir: Rob Lieberman. **The Associate**, 10/25, Com, PG13, 108 min, Flat, Dolby SRD. Whoopi Goldberg, Dianne Wiest, Tim Daly, Bebe Neuwirth. Dir: Donald M. Petrie.	**Ransom**, 11/8, Thr, R, 121 mins., SR, SR-D, SDDS, Flat. Mel Gibson, Rene Russo, Gary Sinise, Lili Taylor. Dir: Ron Howard. **101 Dalmations**, 11/27, Live Act C, G, 103 mins., SR, SR-D, SDDS Anamorphic. Glenn Close, Jeff Daniels. Dir: Stephen Herek. **The War at Home**, 11/22 ltd., Dra, R, 125 min., SR, SR-D, Anamorphic. Emilio Estevez, Martin Sheen, Kathy Bates. Dir: Emilio Estevez.	**The Preacher's Wife**, 12/13, Rom/Com, 124 mins., SR, SR-D, SDDS, Flat. Denzel Washington, Whitney Houston, Gregory Hines. Dir: Penny Marshall. **Evita**, 12/25 NY,LA, 1/10/97 wide, Mus./Drama, 130 mins., PG-13, SR, SR-D, SDDS, Anamorphic. Madonna, Antonio Banderas, Jonathan Pryce. Dir: Alan Parker.	**Metro**, 1/17, Dra, SR, SR-D, SDDS, Anamorphic. Eddie Murphy, Carmen Ejogo, Michael Rappaport. Dir: Thomas Carter.
Columbia (310) 280-8000 (212) 833-8500	**Get on the Bus**, 10/16, Dra, R, 122 min, Flat, Dolby A, SR, SDDS. Charles S. Dutton, Ossie Davis, Isaiah Washington, Richard Belzer. Dir: Spike Lee. **Picnic** (1955 reissue), Dra, PG, 115 min, Anamorphic. William Holden, Rosalind Russell, Kim Novak, Cliff Robertson. Dir: Johsua Logan.		**Ghosts of Mississippi**, 12/20 ltd, 1/3 exp., Dra. 123 min., PG-13, Dolby A, Sr, SDDS, Flat. Alec Baldwin. Dir: Rob Reiner. **Hamlet**, 12/25 ltd, 1/24 exp. Dra, 242 mins. Scope. Dir/Star: Kenneth Branagh. **Some Mother's Son**, 12/26 ltd , SR, Flat. Dra, R, 112 min. **People Vs. Larry Flynt**, 12/27 ltd, 1/10 exp, Dra, R, 130 min. Dolby A, SR, SDDS, Scope. W Harrelson, Courtney Love. Dir: Milos Forman.	
MGM/UA (310) 449-3000 (212) 708-0300	**Mad Dog Time**(formerly Trigger Happy), 10/4 ltd, 11/1 exp, Com, R. Richard Dreyfuss, Jeff Goldblum, Ellen Barkin, Gabriel Byrne. Dir: Larry Bishop.	**Larger Than Life**, 11/1, Com, PG, 93 min, Flat, Dolby A, DTS. Bill Murray, Janeane Garofalo, Linda Fiorentino, Keith David, Matthew McConaughey. Dir: Howard Franklin.		**Turbulence**, 1/31, Act/Dra. Ray Liotta, Lauren Holly, Hector Elizondo. Dir: Robert Butler.
Miramax (212) 941-3800 (213) 845-4200	**Small Wonders** (formerly Fiddlefest), 10/4 NY, LA, Doc, G, 80 min. Dir: Allan Miller. **Microcosmos**, 10/9, Doc, G, 75 min. Dirs: Claude Nuridsany, Marie Perennou. **Swingers**, 10/18, 11/1 exp, Com, R, 96 min. Jon Favreau, Vince Vaughn. Dir: Doug Liman. **Unhook the Stars**, 10/31, Nov exp, R, 102 min. Gerard Depardieu, Gena Rowlands, Marisa Tomei, Jake Lloyd Dir: Nick Cassavetes.	**Everyone Says I Love You**, 11/1, Mus, R, 107 min. Dir: Woody Allen. **The English Patient**, 11/15, ltd., 11/22 wide, Dra. Ralph Fiennes, Juliette Binoche. Dir: Anthony Minghella. **Albino Alligator**, 11/15, Dra, R, 96 min. Dir: Kevin Spacey **Sling Blade**, 11/22, Dra, R, 140 min. Dir/Star. Billy Bob Thornton. **Nightwatch**, 11/22. Nick Nolte. Dir. Ole Bornedal. **Ridicule**, 11/27, Dra, 102 min. Fanny Ardant. Dir: Patrice Leconte	**Substance of Fire**, 12/6, R, 98 min Sarah Jessica Parker, Timothy Hutton. Dir: Dan Sullivan. **Citizen Ruth**, 12/13, Jan exp, Com, 102 min. Laura Dern, Swoosie Kurtz. Dir: Alexander Payne. **Marvin's Room**, 12/18 Meryl Streep, Diane Keaton, Leonardo DiCaprio. Dir: Jerry Zaks. **Scream** (formerly Scary Movie), 12/20 wide, Hor/Com. Drew Barrymore, Courteney Cox, David Arquette. Dir: Wes Craven.	**Kolya**, Dra. Zdenek Szerak. Dir: Jan Szerak.
New Line (310) 854-5811 (212) 649-4900	**The Long Kiss Goodnight**, 10/11, Act/Thr, Anamorphic, Dolby SR & SRD, SDDS. Geena Davis, Samuel L. Jackson, Yvonne Zima, Craig Bierko.Dir: Renny Harlin.	**Set It Off**, 11/6, Dra, R, Flat, Dolby SR & SRD, SDDS. Jada Pinkett, Queen Latifah, Vivica Fox, Kimberly Elise. Dir: F. Gary Gray.	**Michael**, 12/25, Rom/Com. SR, SR-D, SDDS, Flat. John Travolta, Andie MacDowell, William Hurt. Dir: Nora Ephron. **In Love and War**, 12/25 ltd, 1/24/97 wide, Rom/Dra. SR, SR-D, SDDS, Anamorphic. Sandra Bullock, Chris D'Donnell. Dir: Richard Attenborough.	**Jackie Chan's First Strike** 1/10, Act, PG-13. SR, SR-D, SDDS, Anamporphic. Jackie Chan. Dir: Samo Hung. **In Love and War**, 1/24/97 wide, Rom/Dra. SR, SR-D, SDDS, Anamorphic. Sandra Bullock, Chris O'Donnell. Dir: Richard Attenborough.
Paramount (213) 956-5000 (212) 373-7000	**The Ghost and the Darkness**, 10/11, Adv/Dra, R. Val Kilmer, Michael Douglas, Bernard Hill, John Kani. Dir: Stephen Hopkins. **Stephen King's Thinner**, 10/25, Dra/Thr, R. Robert John Burke, Joe Mantegna, Michael Constantine. Dir: Tom Holland.	**Dear God**, 11/8, Com. Greg Kinnear, Laurie Metcalf, Hector Elizondo, Tim Conway Dir: Garry Marshall. **Star Trek: First Contact**, 11/22, SF Patrick Stewart, Brent Spiner, Jonathan Frakes, LeVar Burton, Michael Dorn. Dir. Jonathan Frakes.	**Beavis and Butthead Do America**,12/20, Ani. Voices: Mike Judge. Dir: Mike Judge. **Night Falls on Manhattan**, 12/20 NY, LA, Dra. Andy Garcia, Richard Dreyfuss. Dir: Sidney Lumet.. **The Evening Star**, 12/25 ltd, Dra, PG13. Shirley MacLaine, Bill Paxton, Juliette Lewis, Ben Johnson. Dir. Robert Harling. **Mother**, 12/25 NY,LA, Com. Rob Morrow, Debbie Reynolds. Dir/Star: Albert Brooks.	**The Relic**, 1/17, Thr, R. Penelope Ann Miller, Tom Sizemore, Linda Hunt. Dir: Peter Hyams.
TriStar (310) 280-8000 (212) 833-8500	**High School High**, 10/25, Com, PG-13, 86 min, Flat, Dolby A & SR, SDDS. Jon Lovitz, Tia Carrere, Mekhi Phifer, Louise Fletcher. Dir: Hart Bochner.	**The Mirror Has Two Faces**, 11/15, Rom/Com, PG-13, 125 mins. Dolby A & SR, SDDS, Flat. Barbra Streisand, Jeff Bridges, Pierce Brosnan, Mimi Rogers. Dir: Barbra Streisand.	**Jerry Maguire**, 12/13, Com/Dra, R, Dolby A & SR, SDDS Flat. Tom Cruise, Cuba Gooding Jr., Kelly Preston, Rene Zellweger Dir: Cameron Crow	**Beverly Hills Ninja**, 1/17, Com, PG-13, 90 mins., Flat, Dolby A & SR, SDDS. Chris Farley, Nicolette Sheridan. Dir: Dennis Dugan.
20th Century Fox (310) 369-1000 (212) 556-2400	**That Thing You Do!**, 10/4, Rom/Com, PG, 110 min, Flat, Dolby SR & SRD, SDDS, DTS Tom Hanks, Liv Tyler, Tom Everett Scott, Johnathan Schaech. Dir: Tom Hanks.	**Romeo & Juliet**, 11/1, Rom/Dra, R, Anamorphic, Dolby SR &SRD. Leonardo DiCaprio, Claire Danes, John Leguizamo. Dir: Baz Luhrmann. **Jingle All the Way**, 11/22, Com, PG SR, SR-D, Flat. Arnold Schwarzenegger, Phil Hartman. Dir. Brian Levant. **The Crucible**, 11/27 ltd, Dra, PG-13, 115 min, Flat, Dolby SR & SR-D. Daniel Day-Lewis, Winona Ryder, Joan Allen.Dir: Nicholas Hytner	**One Fine Day**, 12/20, Rom/Com, PG, 105 min, Flat, Dolby SR & SR-D. Michelle Pfeiffer, George Clooney, Mae Whitman, Alex Linz. Dir: Michael Hoffman.	**Star Wars** (1977 reissue), 1/31, SF, PG, Anamorphic, Dolby SR & SRD, SDDS, DTS. Harrison Ford, Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher, Alec Guiness, Peter Cushing. Dir: George Lucas.
Universal (818) 777-1000 (212) 759-7500	**Vertigo** (1958 reissue), 10/6 NY, 10/9 Wash., 10/19 SF. Dra/Thr, Vista-vision, Dolby SR, DTS. James Stewart, Kim Novak, Barbara Bel Geddes Dir: Alfred Hitchcock **The Chamber**, 10/11, Thr, R, Dolby SR, DTS. Chris O'Donnell, Gene Hackman,		**Daylight**, 12/6, Act, PG-13, Dolby SR, DTS. Sylvester Stallone, Amy Brenneman, Viggo Mortensen Dir: Rob Cohen.	**Fierce Creatures**, 1/10, Com, 98 min, Anamorphic, Dolby SR, DTS. Kevin Kline, Jamie Lee Curtis, John Cleese, Michael Palin. Dir: Robert Young
Warner Bros. (818) 954-6000 (212) 484-8000	**The Glimmer Man**, 10/4, Act, R, 91 min. Steven Seagal. Dir: John Gray. **Michael Collins**, 10/11, 136 min, R. Liam Neeson. **Sleepers**, 10/18, 149 min. Robert DeNiro, Brad Pitt. Dir: Barry Levinson. **Sunchaser**, 10/18, R, 118 min. Woody Harrelson. Dir: Michael Cimino. **Surviving Picasso**, 10/25, Dra, R, 120 min. Anthony Hopkins. Dir: James Ivory.	**Bad Moon** (formerly Thor), 11/1, Thr, R, 81 min., Dolby SR, Anamorphic. Mariel Hemingway, Michael Pare. Dir: Eric Red. **Space Jam**, 11/15, Ani. PG, 87 min., SR, SR-D, SDDS, DTS. Flat. Michael Jordan, Bugs Bunny, Theresa Randle, Charles Barkley. Dir: Joe Pytka **North Star**, Adv, R, 88 min, SR, Anamorphic. James Caan, Christopher Lambert, Catherine McCormack. Dir: Nils Gaup.	**Mars Attacks!**, 12/13, SF/Com. Jack Nicholson, Pierce Brosnan, Glenn Close. Dir: Tim Burton. **My Fellow Americans**, 12/20, Com. Jack Lemmon, James Garner, Dan Aykroyd, Lauren Bacall. Dir: Peter Segal. **The Honest Courtesan**, 12/20 ltd. Catherine McCormack, Moira Kelly, Rufus Sewell. Dir: Marshall Herskovitz. **Rosewood**, 12/20 ltd, 1/17 wide, Dra. Jon Voight, Ving Rhames. Dir: John Singleton.	**Murder at 1600**, Thr. Wesley Snipes, Diane Lane, David Benzali, Dennis Miller. Dir: Dwight H. Little.

FEATURE CHART — JANUARY 1997

February	March	Forthcoming	
That Darn Cat, 2/14, PG, Flat. Christina Ricci, Doug E. Doug, Dyan Cannon. Dir: Robert Spiers. **Grosse Pointe Blank**, 2/14, Com, R. John Cusack, Minnie Driver, Dan Aykroyd, Joan Cusack. Dir: George Armitage.	**Jungle2Jungle**, 3/97, Com. Tim Allen, Martin Short. Dir: John Pasquin.	**Gone Fishin'**, Com, PG. Joe Pesci, Danny Glover. Dir: Christopher Cain. **ConAir**. Act/Adv, .Spring, Nicolas Cage, John Malkovich. Dir: Simon West. **Deep Rising**, Act/Thr. Treat Williams. Dir. Stephen Sommers. **George of the Jungle**, Live Act. Brendan Fraser. Dir. Sam Weisman. **G.I. Jane** (or Navy Cross), Act. Demi Moore. Dir: Ridley Scott. **Nothing to Lose**, Com. Martin Lawrence, Tim Robbins. Dir: Steve Oedekerk. **Playing God**, Dra. Timothy Hutton. Dir: Andy Wilson. **Pretontaine**, Dra. Jared Leto, Amy Locane. Dir: Steve James. **Romy and Michelle...**, Com., Summer, Mira Sorvino, Janeane Garofalo. Dir. David Mirkin. **The Shadow Conspiracy**, Dra, R. Charlie Sheen. Dir: George P. Cosmatos. **Sixth Man**, Spring, Com. Marlon Wayans. Dir: Randall Miller. **Washington Square**. Dra. Jennifer Jason Leigh. Albert Finney. Dir: Agnieszka Holland	**Buena Vista** (818) 567-5000 (212) 593-8900
Absolute Power, 2/7, Act/Thr, Dolby A &SR, SDDS. Anamorphic. Clint Eastwood, Gene Hackman, Scott Glenn, Ed Harris, Judy Davis. Dir: Clint Eastwood. **Fools Rush In**, 2/14, Rom/Com, Dolby A, SR, SDDS, Flat. Matthew Perry, Salma Hayek, John Tenney. Dir: Andy Tennant. **Booty Call**, 2/28, Com. Jamie Foxx, Viveca Fox. Dir: Jeff Pollack.	**The Devil's Own**, 3/26, Sus/Thr, Dolby A & SR, SDDS, Anamorphic. Harrison Ford, Brad Pitt, Margaret Colin, Treat Williams. Dir: Alan J Pakula.	**AFO** (formerly Air Force One), B/1. Harrison Ford, Gary Oldman, Glenn Close. Dir. Wolfgang Peterson. **Anaconda**, 4/18, Adv. Jon Voight, Jennifer Lopez, Ice Cube. Dir: Luis Llosa **Bad Boys 2**, Act/Com. Will Smith, Martin Lawrence. Dir. Tom Dey. **Buddy**, Summer, Com. Rene Russo, Robbie Coltrane, Paul Reubens. Dir. Caroline Thompson. **Cattaca** (formerly The Eighth Day), SF. Ethan Hawke, Uma Thurman, Jude Law. Dir: Andrew Niccol. **The Fifth Element**, 5/9. Bruce Willis, Gary Oldman. Dir: Luc Besson. **Excess Baggage**,Summer, Act/Adv. Alicia Silverstone, Benecio del Toro. Dir: Marco Brambilla. **Men in Black**, 6/6, SF. Tommy Lee Jones, Will Smith, Linda Fiorentino. Dir. Barry Sonnenfeld.	**Columbia** (310) 280-8000 (212) 833-8500
Touch, Dra. Tom Arnold, Bridget Fonda, Christopher Walken, Gina Gershon, Janeane Garofalo.Dir: Paul Schrader.	**Hoods** (formerly Hoodlum), 3/28, Dra. Laurence Fishburne, Tim Roth, Andy Garcia, Vanessa Williams.Dir: Bill Duke.	**All Along the Watchtower**, Dra. **All the Pretty Horses**, Dra. Dir: Mike Nichols. **Bond 18**, 11/20/97. Pierce Brosnan. Dir: Roger Spottiswoode (tent). **The Day After Tomorrow**, Sus.**The Fantasticks**, Mus/Com, PG, 108 min. Joel Grey, Joe McIntyre. Dir: Michael Ritchie. **Fireworks**, Dra. Dir: Mark Rydell. **Killer's Kiss**, Act/Thr. Linda Fiorentino. **Kiss Me Deadly**, Thr. Dir: Michael Mann. **Sea Hunt. Sixteen Pleasures.** Dir: Michael Apted. **Supernova**, SF/Thr. Dir: Joe Nimziki. **To Brave Every Danger**, Dra. **Warriors of Virtue**. Angus MacFadyen, Mario Yedidia, Marley Shelton. Dir: Ronny Yu. **Wild Card**. Dir. Robert Altman. **The Fortune Cookie**, C, Bette Midler, Candice bergen. Dir.: John Amiel.	**MGM/UA** (310) 449-3000 (212) 708-0300
Temptress Moon, Dra. Gong Li, Leslie Cheung. Dir: Chen Kaige.	**Mimic**, 3/97, SciFi, Mira Sorvino, Charles Dutton.	**B. Monkey**, Dra. Jared Harris, Rupert Everett. Dir: Michael Radford. **Children of the Revolution** Judy Davis, Sam Neill. Dir: Peter Duncan. **Copland**. Dra. Sylvester Stallone, Robert DeNiro. Dir James Mangold.**Dogwater**, Rom/Com. David Schwimmer, Lara Flynn Boyle. Dir. David Schwimmer. **Mouth to Mouth** (Spain), Com. Javier Bardem, Maria Barranco. Dir. Manuel Gomez Pereira **Operation Condor**, Act/Adv. Jackie Chan. Dir: Jackie Chan. **Talk of Angels**, Dra. Polly Walker, Vincent Perez. Dir: Nick Hamm. **Sarajevo**. Dra. Woody Harrelson, Marisa Tomei. Dir: Michael Winterbottom.**She's DeLovely**. Sean Penn, Robin Wright, John Travolta, Gena Rowlands. Dir: Nick Cassavetes. **Wings of a Dove**, Dra. Helena Bonham Carter, Linus Roache. Dir: Ian Softley.	**Miramax** (212) 941-3800 (213) 845-4200
Lovejones. SR, SR-D, SDDS, Flat. Larenz Tate, Nia Long. **Trial and Error**, Com. 2/14, Anamorphic. Michael Richards, Jeff Daniels. Dir: Jonathan Lynn.	**B.A.P.s**, Com. 3/28, SR, SR-D, SDDS, Flat. Halle Berry, Martin Landau. Dir. Robert Townsend.	**America's Most Wanted**, Act/Com. Keenan Ivory Wayans. Dir. David Hogan. **Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery**, Com. Mike Meyers, Elizabeth Hurley. Dir: Jay Roach. **Boogie Nights** 6/6, Com/Dra. Mark Wahlberg, Julianne Moore. Dir: Paul Thomas Anderson. **Dangerous Ground**, 4/18, Act/Dra., R, SR, SDDS, Flat. Elizabeth Hurley, Ice Cube. Dir: Darrell James Roodt. **Dark City**, Thr. William Hurt. Dir: Alex Proyas. **Edwards and Hunt**, Com. Chris Farley, Matthew Perry. Dir Christopher Guest. **Money Talks**, 5/2, Act/Com. Charlie Sheen, Chris Tucker. Dir: Brett Ratner. **One Night Stand**, Dra. 4/11, SR, SR-D, SDDS. Flat. Wesley Snipes, Nastassija Kinski, Robert Downey Jr. Dir: Mike Figgis. **Spawn**, 9/97, SF. Michael Jai White, John Leguizamo, D.B. Sweeney. Dir: Mark Dippe.	**New Line** (310) 854-5811 (212) 649-4900
Howard Stern's Private Parts, 2/14, Com, R. Howard Stern, Robin Quivers, Fred Norris, Mary McCormack. Dir: Betty Thomas. **Miss the Girls**, Sus. Morgan Freeman, Ashley Judd, Richard Timothy Jones, Cary Elwes. Dir: Gary Fleder.		**Beautician and the Beast**, Com. Fran Drescher, Timothy Dalton. Dir: Ken Kwapis **Face Off**. Act. John Travolta, Nicolas Cage. Dir. John Woo. **The Flood**, Act. Christian Slater, Morgan Freeman. Dir: Mikael Salomon. **Going West in America**. Thr. Dennis Quaid, Danny Glover. Dir. Jeb Stuart. **Illumination** (formerly Dne Golden Afternoon), Dra. Peter O'Toole. Dir. Charles Sturridge **In and Out**, Com. Kevin Kline, Tom Selleck, Joan Cusack, Debbie Reynolds. Dir. Frank Dz **Prince Valiant**, Act/Adv. Stephen Moyer. Dir. Anthony Hickox. **Rainmaker**, Dra. Laurence Fishburne, Claire Danes, Mickey Rourke. Dir: Francis Ford Coppola. **The Saint**, Act/Adv. Val Kilmer, Elisabeth Shue. Dir: Phillip Noyce. **'Til There Was You**. Jennifer Aniston, Dylan McDermott. Dir: Scott Winant. **Titanic**, Rom/Adv. Bill Paxton, Kate Winslet, Leonardo DiCaprio. Dir: James Cameron.	**Paramount** (213) 956-5000 (212) 373-7000
Donnie Brasco, 2/28, Dra. Johnny Depp, Al Pacino, Anne Heche, Michael Madsen. Dir: Mike Newell. **The Pest**, 2/7 Com. John Leguizamo, Jeffery Jones, Edoardo Ballerini. Dir: Paul Miller.		**The Colony**. Thr. Jean-Claude Van Damme, Dennis Rodman, Mickey Rourke. Dir: Tsui Hark **Desperate Measures**, 8/8, Act. Michael Keaton, Andy Garcia. Dir: Barbet Schroeder **Kilronen**, Thr. Jonathan Schaech, Jessica Lange, Gwyneth Paltrow. Dir. Jonathan Darby. **My Best Friend's Wedding**, 6/27, Rom/Com. Julia Roberts, Dermot Mulroney. Dir: P.J. Hogan. **Old Friends**, Dra. Jack Nicholson, Helen Hunt, Greg Kinnear. Dir. James Brooks. **Peter Pan**, Adv. Dir: John Hughes **Starship Troopers**, 7/2, SF. Neil Patrick Harris, Denise Richards, Dina Meyer. Dir. Paul Verhoeven. **Truth or Consequences**, Dra., Kiefer Sutherland, Vincent Gallo. Dir.: Kiefer Sutherland **Stinkers**, Com. B.D. Wong. Dir: Barnet Kellman	**TriStar** (310) 280-8000 (212) 833-8500
Volcano, 2/28, Act/Adv. Tommy Lee Jones, Anne Heche. Dir: Mick Jackson. **The Empire Strikes Back** (1980 reissue), 7/21, SF, PG Anamorphic, Dobly SR & SRD, SDDS, DTS. Harrison Ford, Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher, Billy Dee Williams. Dir: Richard Marquand. **Mighty Morphin Power Rangers II**, 3/21	**Return of the Jedi** (1983 reissue), 3/7, SF, PG Anamorphic, Dobly SR & SRD, SDDS, DTS. Harrison Ford, Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher, Billy Dee Williams. Dir: Richard Marquand.	**Alien 4: Resurrection**. Sigourney Weaver, Winona Ryder. Dir: Jean-Pierre Jeunet. **Anastasia**, Ani. Dirs: Don Bluth, Gary Goldman. **Anna and the King**. Rom./Dra., Chow-Yun Fat. **Bookworm**. Act./Thr.. Anthony Hopkins, Alec Baldwin. Dir. Lee Tamahori. **Fantastic Voyage**, Ac./SF. Dir Roland Emmerich. **Firestorm**, Ac./Adv., Howie Long, Suzy Amis. Dir. Dean Semler **Great Expectations**, Dra. Robert De Niro, Gwyneth Paltrow, Ethan Hawke. Dir. Alfonso Cuaron. **Inventing the Abbots**. Liv Tyler, Joaquin Phoenix. Dir: Pat D'Conner. **A Life Less Ordinary**, Dra. Cameron Diaz, Holly Hunter. Dir. Danny Boyle. **Out to Sea**, Com. Walter Matthau, Jack Lemmon. Dir: Martha Coolidge. **Picture Perfect**, Rom/Com. Jennifer Anniston. Dir: Glenn Gordon Caron. **Planet of the Apes**. Arnold Schwarzenegger. Dir: Danny Boyle. **Speed II**. Act. Sandra Bullock. Dir. Jan De Bont.	**20th Century Fox** (310) 369-1000 (212) 556-2400
	Liar, Liar, Spring, Com, Dolby SR, DTS. Jim Carrey, Maura Tierney, Cary Elwes, John Lovitz, Swoosie Kurtz, Jennifer Tilly. Dir: Tom Shadyac.	**Commandments**. Aidan Quinn, Courteney Cox. Dir: Daniel Taplitz. **Dante's Peak**. Act/Adv. Pierce Brosnan, Linda Hamilton. Dir: Roger Donaldson **The Day of the Jackal**, Thr. Bruce Willis, Richard Gere, Sidney Poitier. Dir: Michael Canton-Jones. **The Fairy Godmother** (or A Simple Wish), Com. Mara Wilson, Martin Short. Dir: Michael Ritchie **Leave it to Beaver**, Com. Janine Turner, Christopher McDonald. Dir: Andy Cadiff.**The Long Rains**, Act./Thriller, Dir.: John Frankenheimer. **The Lost World**. Memorial Day. Adv. SR, DTS. Jeff Goldblum, Julianne Moore. Dir: Steven Spielberg **McHale's Navy**, Com. Tom Arnold, David Alan Grier. Dir: Rod Daniel. **Primary Colors**. Fall '97. Dra. Emma Thompson. Dir: Mike Nichols. **That Old Feeling**, Com. Bette Midler, Dennis Farina, Danny Nucci. Dir: Carl Reiner. **Reach the Rock**, Dra. Bill Sadler, Karen Sillas. Dir: Bill Ryan.	**Universal** (818) 777-1000 (212) 759-7500
Incognito. Thr. Jason Patric. Dir: John Badham. **L.A. Confidential**, Dra. Kevin Spacey, Kim Basinger, Danny DeVito, Russell Crowe. Dir: Curtis Hanson. **Fire**, Dra. Billy Crudup, Donald Sutherland, Monica Potter, Judith Ivey. Dir: Robert Towne. **Trojan War**, Com. Will Friedle. Dir: George Huang	**Cat's Don't Dance**, 3/21, Ani. Voices: Scott Bakula, Kathy Najimy. Dir. Mark Dindal. **187**, Dra. Samuel L. Jackson, John Heard. Dir: Kevin Reynolds. **Wild America**, Adv. Jonathan Taylor Thomas. Dir: Bill Dear. **Fire Down Below**, Act/Adv. Steven Segal.	**Addicted to Love**, Rom/Com. Meg Ryan, Matthew Broderick. Dir: Griffin Dunne. **Anna Karenina**, D, Sophie Marceau, Sean Bean, Mia Kirschner, Dir.: Bernard Rose. **Batman and Robin**. Act/Adv. George Clooney, Chris O'Donnell. Dir: Joel Schumacher. **Father's Day** (or Les Comperes), Com. Robin Williams, Billy Crystal. Dir. Ivan Reitman. **Free Willy 3**. Fam/Adv. Jason James Richter. Dir. Sam Pillsbury. **Mad City**,4/97, Dra/Thr. John Travolta, Dustin Hoffman. Dir: Constantin Costa-Garvas. **Steel**, Act. Shaquille O'Neal, Judd Nelson. **Vegas Vacation**. Chevy Chase, Beverly D'Angelo. Dir. Stephen Kessler.	**Warner Bros.** (818) 954-6000 (212) 484-8000

BOXOFFICE Independent Feature Chart JANUARY 1997

DECEMBER

CFP
212-995-9662

Losing Chase, Dra, R, 92 min. Helen Mirren, Kyra Sedgewick, Beau Bridges. Dir: Kevin Bacon. 12/6

Films Incorporated
800-323-4222, ext. 200

Walkabout *(re-issue, director's cut),* Dra, 100 min. Jenny Agutter, Lucien John. Dir: Nicolas Roeg. 12/27

Fine Line
212-649-4800

Shine, Dra, PG-13, 105 min. Armin Mueller-Stahl, Lynn Redgrave, Sir John Gielgud. Dir: Scott Hicks. 11/22 ltd, 12/25, 1/17/97, 1/31/97 exp

Gramercy
310-777-1960

I'm Not Rappaport, Com, PG-13, 135 min. Walter Matthau, Ossie Davis, Amy Irving. Dir: Herb Gardner. 12/26

Portrait of a Lady, Dra, PG-13, 150 min. Nicole Kidman, John Malkovich, Barbara Hershey. Dir: Jane Campion. 12/27

Fox Searchlight
310-369-4402

Ice Storm, Dra. Kevin Kline, Joan Allen, Sigourney Weaver, Christina Ricci. Dir: Ang Lee. 12/20 NY, LA

New Yorker Films
212-247-6110

La Ceremonie *(France),* Thr, 111 min. Isabelle Huppert, Sandrine Bonnaire. Dir: Claude Chabrol. 12/20

Sony Classics
212-833-8851

The Whole Wide World, Rom/Dra, PG, 111 min. Rene Zellweger, Vincent D'Onofrio. Dir: Dan Ireland. 12/25

Les Voleurs, Dra. Daniel Auteuil, Laurence Cote, Catherine Deneuve. Dir: Andrew Techine.

Trimark
310-314-3040

Kama Sutra, Dra, 114 min. Sarita Choudhury, Naveen Andrews. Dir: Mira Nair.

JANUARY '97

Arrow
212-258-2200

Farmer and Chase, Dra, NR 97 min. Ben Gazzara, Lara Flynn Boyle. Dir: Michael Seltzman. 1/10 NY

CFP

Angel Baby *(Australia),* Dra, NR, 105 min. John Lynch. Dir: Michael Rymer. 1/10

Guantanamera, Com, 124 min. Carlos Cruz. Dirs: Thomas Gutierrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabio Rey. 1/24

Concorde-New Horizon
310-820-6733

Terminal Virus, SF, 86 min. 1/8/

Blood Song, Hor, 86 min. 1/22

Dove
310-786-1600

Flipping, Thr, R, 110 min. Keith David, David Amos, David Proval. Dir: Gene Mitchell. 1/97

Filmopolis
310-914-1776

Blue Juice *(UK),* Com/Dra, 100 min. Sean Pertwee. Dir: Carl Prechezer.

Fine Line

Nowhere. Dir: Gregg Araki. 1/24

First Look
310-855-1199

johns, Dra., R, 99 min. David Arquette, Lukas Haas, Keith David. Dir: Scott Silver. 1/31

First Run
212-243-0600

The Jew *(Portugese),* Dra, 85 min. Dir: Jom Tob Azulay. 1/8 NY

Fox Searchlight

Blood and Wine, Dra, R. Jack Nicholson. Dir: Bob Rafelson.

Gramercy

Gridlock'd, Dra. Tupac Shakur, Tim Roth. Dir: Vondie Curtis Hall.

Greycat
702-737-0670

Parallel Sons, Rom/Dra, 93 min. Gabriel Mick, Laurence Mason. Dir: John C. Young. 1/97 NY

Kino Intl.

A Tickle in the Heart, Doc, 83 min. Dir: Stefan Schweitert. 1/25 NY

Saint Clara *(Israel),* Dra, 85 min. Dir: Ori Sivan and Ari Fu. 1/29

Orion
310-282-2948

Prisoner of the Mountains *(Russian),* Dra. Dir: Sergei Budrov. 1/97 LA, 2/97 NY

Strand

Boys Life 2, *(shorts compilation),* Com/Dra, 90 min. Dir: Four directors.

The Graduate *(1967 reissue),* Com/Dra, 105 min, R. Dustin Hoffman. Dir: Mike Nichols.

Inside, Dra, 95 min. Nigel Hawthorne, Eric Stoltz. Dir: Arthur Penn.

Trimark

Meet Wally Sparks, Com, PG-13. Rodney Dangerfield, David Ogden Stiers. Dir: Peter Baldwin. 1/10

Nothing Personal, Dra, R. John Lynch. Dir: Thaddeus O'Sullivan.

Ripe, Dra. Dir: Mo Ogrodnik.

Sprung. 1/31

FEBRUARY '97

CFP

Margaret's Museum *(Canada),* Dra, R 118 min. Helena Bonham Carter, Kate Nelligan. Dir: Mort Ransen. 2/7

The Daytrippers, Com, 90 min. Parker Posey, Stanley Tucci. Dir: Greg Mottola. 2/14



Sir John Gielgud and Noah Taylor in Fine Line's "Shine."

Dove

Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, Com/SF, 92 min. Featuring Douglas Adams. Dir: Neil Davies.

Inside the Goldmine, Thr, 92 min. Josh Evans, Alicia Tully Jensen. Dir: Josh Evans.

Fine Line

Love Letter *(Japan),* Dra, PG, 116 min. Miho Nakayama, Etsushi Toyokawa. Dir: Shunji Iwai.

Roseanna's Grave, Com. Jean Reno, Mercedes Ruehl, Polly Walker, Mark Frankel. Dir: Paul Weiland. 2/14

First Look

Slaves to the Underground, Dra. Dir: Kristine Peterson.

First Run

Boyfriends *(England),* Dra/Com, 82 min. Dirs: Neil Hunter and Tom Hunsinger. 2/14

Fox Searchlight

The Van, Com, R. Colm Meaney, Donal O'Kelly, Ger Ryan. Dir: Stephen Frears. 2/14

Smilla's Sense of Snow, Thr. Julia Ormond, Gabriel Byrne. Dir: Billie August. 2/28

Goldwyn
310-284-9273

Hard Eight *(formerly Sydney),* Dra, Gwyneth Paltrow, Samuel L. Jackson, Colm Meaney. Dir: Paul Thomas Anderson. 2/7

Gramercy

When We Were Kings, Doc. Dir: Leon Gast. 2/14

Live
818-778-3174

Hotel De Love, Rom/Com, 93 min. Aden Young, Simon Bossell, Saffron Burrows. Dir: Craig Rosenberg. 2/7 LA, 2/14 exp

BOXOFFICE Independent Feature Chart JANUARY 1997

Seventh Art
213-845-1455

Salut Cousin *(French Algeria)*, Com. Dir: Merzak Allouache.

Sony Classics

SubUrbia, Com/Dra. Giovanni Ribisi, Steve Zahn, Parker Posey. Dir: Richard Linklater. 2/7

Broken English, Dra. Sashka Vujcic, Rade Serbedzija. Dir: Gregor Nicholas.

Trimark

Warrior of Waverly Street, SF. Joseph Mazzello. Dir: Manny Coto.

Triumph
310-280-8059

Bliss, Rom/Dra. Terence Stamp, Craig Sheffer. Dir: Lance Young. 2/14

MARCH '97

Artificial Eye
212-255-1922

Monhomme *(France)*, Com/Dra, 95 min. Dir: Bertrand Blier. 3/7

CFP

Hollow Reed, Dra, 106 min. Martin Donovan, Ian Hart, Joely Richardson. Dir: Angela Pope.

The Pillow Book, Dra, 126 min. Vivian Wu, Ewan McGregor. Dir: Peter Greenaway.

Fine Line

All Over Me. 3/7

Anthem. 3/21.

Crash, Dra, 100 min. Holly Hunter, James Spader, Rosanna Arquette, Elias Koteas. Dir: David Cronenberg.

The Quiet Room, Dra. Chloe Ferguson, Celine O'Leary, Paul Blackwell. Dir: Rolf de Heer. 3/21

Fox Searchlight

Love and Other Catastrophes *(Australia)*, Com. Alice Garner. Dir: Emma Kate Croghan. 3/21

Goldwyn

Napolean, Ani, G, 82 min. Voices: Adam Wylie, Bronson Pinchot. Dir: Mario Andreacchio. 3/11

Gramercy

Commandments, Dra. Courteney Cox, Aidan Quinn.

Live

Gentlemen Don't Eat Poets, Dra. Sting, Theresa Russell. Dir: John Paul Davidson.

New Yorker Films

Flamenco, Doc. Manolo Sanlucar, Matilde Coral, Manuela Carrasco. Dir: Carlos Saura.

Orion

Independence, Dra. Dean Cain, Drew Barrymore. Dir: Tamra Davis. 3/97

Strand

Nights of Cabiria *(1957 Italian reissue)*, Dra, 110 min. Giulietta Masina, Francois Perier. Dir: Federico Fellini.

APRIL '97

CFP

Bandwagon, Com/Mus, 103 min. Kevin Corrigna, Lee Holmes. Dir: John Schultz.

Fine Line

Love! Valor! Compassion! Dra. Jason Alexander, John Glover. 4/23

Pink Flamingos (1972 reissue). Divine. Dir: John Waters.

First Look

This is the Sea, Rom/Dra. Richard Harris, John Lynch, Gabriel Byrne. Dir: Mary McGuckian. 4/97

Fox Searchlight

Paradise Road, Dra. Glenn Close, Frances McDormand, Julianna Marguiles, Jean Simmons. Dir: Bruce Beresford.

Goldwyn

Kissed, Dra, 80 min. Molly Parker, Peter Outerbridge. Dir: Lynne Stopkewich. 4/11

Gramercy

How To Be a Player, Com. Bill Belamy. Dir: Lionel Martin. 4/97

MAY '97

Artificial Eye

Le Bonheur Dans Lepres (France), Com, 102 min. Dir: Etienne Chatiliez. 5/16

Fox Searchlight

Intimate Relations, Dra. Julie Walters, Rupert Graves. Dir: Philip Goodhew. 5/9 ltd.

Orion

Eight Heads in a Duffle Bag, Com/Dra. Joe Pesci, Carol Kane, Kristy Swanson, George Hamilton. Dir: Tom Schulman. 5/97

FORTHCOMING

Cabin Fever
203-622-3449

The Elevator, Com. Martin Landau, Martin Sheen.

The Secret Agent Club, Act. Hulk Hogan, Barry Bostwick.

Skeletons, Hor. Dir: Ken Russell.

CFP

Shivers, Hor, 87 min. Paul Hampton, Joe Silver, Lynn Lowry. Dir: David Cronenberg.

Dove

Wrong Exit, Dra. Billy Campbell, Heather Graham. Dir: Bo Zenga.

Dreamworks SKG
818-733-7000

El Dorado: City of Gold, Ani. Dir: Will Finn.

Mousehunt, Com/Ani. Nathan Lane. Dir: Gore Virbinsky.

The Peacemaker, Act/Adv. George Clooney, Nicole Kidman, Gary Werntz, Holt McCallany. Dir: Mimi Leder.

The Prince of Egypt, Ani.

Fine Line

Head Above Water, Dra/Com. Harvey Keitel, Cameron Diaz, Billy Zane. Dir: Jim Wilson.

The Tears of Julian Po. Christian Slater, Robin Tunney.

Winter Guest. Emma Thompson. Dir: Alan Rickman. 6/18

First Look

The Apprentices *(France)*, Com, 97 min. Francois Cluzet, Guillaume Depardieu. Dir: Pierre Salvadori.

The Designated Mourner. Dra/Com. Mike Nichols, Miranda Richardson. Dir: David Hare.

Hugo Pool, Rom/Com. Robert Downey Jr., Sean Penn, Cathy Moriarty. Dir: Robert Downey Sr.

Fox Searchlight

Cousin Bette, Dra. Jessica Lange, Elisabeth Shue, Bob Hoskins. Dir: Des McAnuff.

Goldwyn

Paperback Romance (formerly Lucky Break), Rom/Com. Anthony LaPaglia. Dir: Ben Lewin.

Gramercy

The Eighth Day *(France)*, 108 min. Daniel Auteuil, Pascal Duquenne. Dir: Jaco Van Dormael.

Kit Parker
800-538-5838

Day For Night *(1973 French reissue)*, Dra, PG, 120 min. Francois Truffaut, Jacqueline Bisset. Dir: Francois Truffaut.

Death in Venice *(1971 Italian reissue)*, Dra, PG, 130 min. Dirk Bogarde, Mark Burns. Dir: Luchino Visconti.

Legacy
213-461-3936

Adrenaline, Thr. Christopher Lambert, Natasha Henstridge. 11/97

Live

DMZ, Act/Dra. Michael Biehn. Dir: Steven Anderson. 6/97

Critical Care, Dra/Thr. James Spader, Albert Brooks, Kyra Sedgewick, Helen Mirren. Dir: Sydney Lumet. 10/97

Movieworld Ent.
510-244-5590

The Killing Kind, Dra. Kirk Harris.

New Yorker Films

Forever Mozart, 84 min. Madeleine Assas, Frederick Pierrot. Dir: Jean-Luc Godard.

Gabbeh, Dra, 75 min. Dir: Mohsen Makhmalbas.

A Mongolian Tale (China), Dra. Dir: Xie Fei.

October

Kicked in the Head. James Woods, Michael Rappaport. 6/97

Lost Highway, Dra/Thr, R. Bill Pullman, Patricia Arquette. Dir: David Lynch.

Orion

Ulee's Gold, Dra. Peter Fonda. Dir: Victor Nunez. 6/97

Gang Related, Dra, R. Tupac Shakur, Jim Belushi, Lela Rochon. Dir: Jim Kous. 9/97

Sony Classics

Call Me Victor *(France)*, Com, PG, 100 min. Jeanne Moreau. Dir: Guy Jacques.

The Myth of Fingerprints, Dra. Noah Wyle, Julianne Moore. Dir: Bart Freundlich.

Waiting for Guffman, Com. R, 82 min. Eugene Levy, Parker Posey, Catherine O'Hara, Fred Willard. Dir/Star: Christopher Guest.

Strand

Contempt *(1963 French-Italian reissue)*, Com, 103 min. Brigitte Bardot, Fritz Lang. Dir: Jean-Luc Godard.

The Tit and the Moon, Com, 92 min. Dir: Bigas Lunas.

Tara
415-454-5838

Mushrooms *(Australia)*, Com, 93 min. Julia Blake, Lynette Curran. Dir: Alan Madden.

Trimark

Crimetime, Thr, R. Stephen Baldwin. Dir: George Sluizer.

Underworld, Thr. Denis Leary, Joe Mantegna. Dir: Roger Christian.

Triumph

Jackal *(or Untitled Carlos Project)*. Aidan Quinn, Ben Kingsley. Dir: Christian Duguay.

Smart Alec, Act/Com. Patrick Stewart, Vincent Kartheiser, Brenda Fricker. Dir: Roger Christian

THE BOXOFFICE HOME RELEASE CHART

BOXOFFICE

JANUARY 1997

HOME VIDEO RELEASE DATE	TITLE	BOXOFFICE GROSS	SCREENS	THEATRICAL RELEASE	THEATRICAL/VIDEO DISTRIBUTOR
January 7	Fled	$17,200,000	2,104	July 19	MGM/UA
January 7	Kingpin	$25,000,000	1,975	July 26	MGM/UA
January 14	Bordello of Blood	$5,600,000	1,695	August 16	MCA/Universal
January 14	Phenomenon	$103,100,000+	2,139	July 3	Buena Vista/Touchstone
January 14	She's the One	$9,500,000	459	August 23	Fox
January 21	Eddie	$31,000,000	2,000	May 31	Buena Vista/Hollywood
January 21	Escape From L.A.	$25,000,000	2,312	August 9	Paramount
January 28	Dead Man	$1,100,000	37	May 10	Gramercy/PolyGram
January 28	The Fan	$18,500,000	2,016	August 16	TriStar/Columbia TriStar
January 28	Il Postino	$21,300,000	430	June 16 (1995)	Buena Vista/Miramax
January	Bogus	$7,620,000	1,209	September 6	Warner Bros.
January	Carpool	$3,300,000	1,487	August 23	Warner Bros.
January	Courage Under Fire	$59,000,000	2,001	July 12	Fox
January	Harriet the Spy	$26,400,000	1,876	July 10	Paramount
January	Joe's Apartment	$4,600,000	1,512	July 26	Warner Bros.
January	A Time to Kill	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
February 1	Trigger Effect	$3,600,000	524	August 30	MCA/Universal
February	Chain Reaction	$20,600,000	2,256	August 2	Fox

January	Harriet the Spy	$26,400,000	1,876	July 10	Paramount
January	Joe's Apartment	$4,600,000	1,512	July 26	Warner Bros.
January	A Time to Kill	$108,300,000+	2,313	July 26	Warner Bros.
February 1	Trigger Effect	$3,600,000	524	August 30	MCA/Universal
February	Chain Reaction	$20,600,000	2,256	August 2	Fox
February	Big Night	$7,600,000	366	September 20	MGM/UA
February	Emma	$22,000,000	585	August 2	Buena Vista/Miramax
February	First Kid	$24,800,000	1,878	August 30	Buena Vista/Hollywood
February	House Arrest	$7,000,000	1,623	August 14	MGM/UA
February	Jack	$56,600,000	2,232	August 9	Buena Vista/Hollywood
February	Lone Star	$11,900,000+	189	June 21	Sony Classics
February	Maximum Risk	$14,100,000	2,358	September 13	Columbia/Columbia TriStar
February	Rich Man's Wife	$8,300,000	1009	September 13	Buena Vista/Hollywood
February	Supercop	$16,100,000+	1,469	July 26	Buena Vista/Miramax
February	A Very Brady Sequel	$21,300,000+	2,147	August 23	Paramount
February	Walking and Talking	$1,300,000	60	July 17	Buena Vista/Miramax
March 4	Hunchback of Notre Dame	$98,600,000+	2,835	June 21	Buena Vista/Walt Disney
March	Alaska	$11,500,000	1,566	August 14	Columbia/Columbia TriStar
March	Extreme Measures	$17,300,000	2,298	September 27	Columbia/Columbia TriStar
March	Kansas City	$1,350,000	215	August 16	Fine Line
March	Solo	$5,000,000	1,230	August 23	Triumph
March	The Spitfire Grill	$12,500,000	1,247	August 23	Columbia/Columbia TriStar
March	Trainspotting	$16,100,000+	357	July 19	Buena Vista/Miramax
March	2 Days In the Valley	$10,900,000	855	September 27	MGM/UA
April	First Wives Club	$97,100,000+	2,406	September 20	Paramount
April	Fly Away Home	$22,700,000+	1,401	September 13	Columbia/Columbia TriStar
April	Last Man Standing	$17,700,000	2,579	September 20	New Line

Compiled by BOXOFFICE MAGAZINE. Numbers for ***Boxoffice Gross*** represent total domestic boxoffice grosses to the nearest $100,000; + signs indicate that films remain in theatrical release. Number of ***Screens*** indicates the maximum number of screens in widest, simultaneous release. Entries in the ***Theatrical/Video Distributor*** column list two names when the video releasing company is different from (or releases through a subsidiary different from) the theatrical distributor. Exact day-and-date specific entries for ***Home Video Release*** are confirmed; in all other cases, the month indicated for a release is forecast by the editors of BOXOFFICE. BOXOFFICE is not liable for errors or omissions in the chart.

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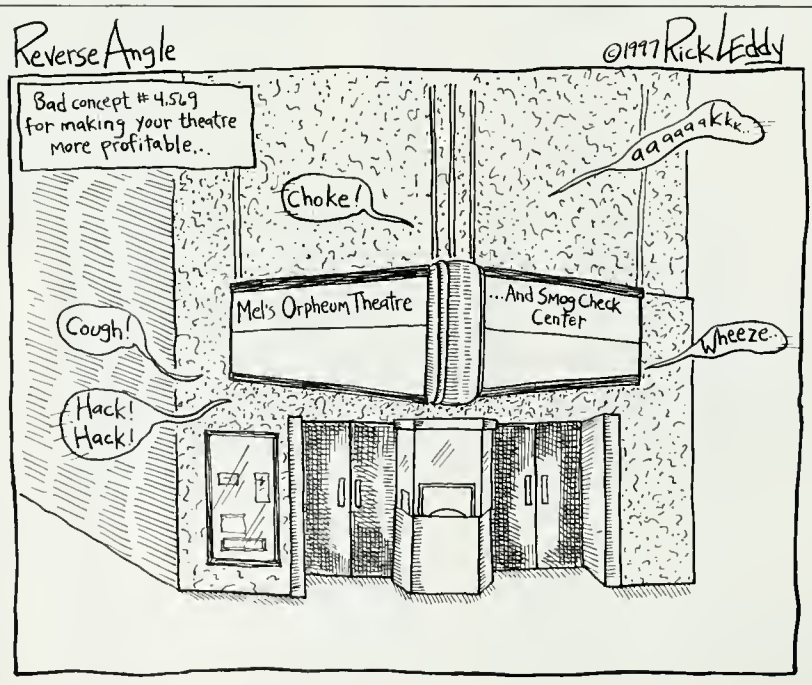
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The Big Picture

Although the concept of the cinematic actor/director seems to have gathered renewed vitality of late, the phenomenon is in fact as old as the movies themselves. D.W. Griffith, the legendary silent filmmaker and a man largely credited with inventing the visual syntax of the modern feature film, began his creative career as a stage actor who later took work in the "flickers" only as a way to make ends meet during the off-season. During the nickelodeon era, even starving stage players were ashamed to be associated with the movies, which they (like most people of the day) considered to be a lowbrow form of entertainment. Griffith shared this prejudice initially, preferring to work without screen credit in the films he appeared in, which included a stint at the Edison studio, where in 1908 he played the hero in a short called "Rescued From an Eagle's Nest" for "Great Train Robbery" director Edwin S. Porter. But Griffith—who was among the first to grasp the range of creative possibilities inherent in the movie medium—changed his tune within months: before 1908 was out, he was already directing a film every two weeks for the Biograph studio; by 1915, when his most famous feature "The Birth of a Nation" was released, Griffith was putting his name in the promotional materials, in letters as large as the title itself.



It was Charlie Chaplin, though, who charted the trajectory of most modern actor/directors by using his boxoffice clout to take control over the projects he appeared in. As his star began to rise during his early days at Mack Sennett's Keystone studio, Chaplin began to insist on what was already the star prerogative of most major Keystone actors (Mabel Normand and Fatty Arbuckle were also directors at Keystone). But of all the Keystone comics, Chaplin alone viewed directing as an extension of the artistic explorations he was making onscreen; his performing and directing blossomed simultaneously, so that by the time he made the leap to feature filmmaking with 1921's "The Kid," the maturation of both his comedic talents and his skill as a writer/director launched an almost unheard of run of great cinematic works that lasted all the way into the 1950s.

The "studio era" (roughly the late 1920s through the early '60s) was not an especially accommodating time for actor/directors. Most star talent was under long-term contract to the major moguls: the Warners at Warner Bros., L.B. Mayer at MGM, Harry Cohn at Columbia, Adolph Zukor at Paramount Pictures. Terms were often onerous, and artistic freedom was a closed issue; talent did as it was told, with the studio making all the choices about what film a star would appear in, and with whom. A few acting/directing achievements stand out anyway—Robert Montgomery's immortal (if somewhat misguided) Raymond Chandler knock-off "The Lady in the Lake," shot entirely in subjective camera, with the star himself only appearing onscreen whenever he happened to see himself in a mirror; Charles Laughton's "Night of the Hunter;" and of course the films of Orson Welles. Illustrious as his achievements were, Welles' filmmaking career demonstrates how reluctant the studios of his day were to cede directing control to their stars; though Welles never had trouble getting work as an actor, his Hollywood directing career was essentially over less than eight years after he revitalized the entire medium with the release of "Citizen Kane."

The end of the studio era and the court-ordered severing of the studios' corporate ties to the exhibition circuits which ensured the profitability of their output put much of the packaging power for feature films into the hands of star talent and the agents who service it, a situation which has changed little in the last three decades. Along with Woody Allen, Clint Eastwood was one of the first major post-studio system film stars to make a go of directing over the long-term; his career as a filmmaker has run virtually parallel to his career as a superstar, culminating in his Academy Award for directing "Unforgiven" in 1992. By then, the concept of the star actor/director had become so entrenched that Eastwood was actually following in the footsteps not just of Allen (who grabbed both writing and directing Oscars for 1977's "Annie Hall") but of Robert Redford (who was Best Director for "Ordinary People" in 1980), Warren Beatty ("Reds," 1981), Richard Attenborough ("Ghandi," 1982) and Kevin Costner ("Dances With Wolves," 1990)—all stars who won Oscars as directors without ever winning them as performers. Last year's Best Director winner Mel Gibson is the latest member of this august company to fit that profile.

But it is Quentin Tarantino who really opened things up for actor/directors in the '90s, by demonstrating with "Pulp Fiction" that quirky, well-made niche titles can find crossover success. It would be unfair to tar such intriguing recent efforts as Kevin Spacey's "Albino Alligator," Steve Buscemi's "Trees Lounge," Stanley Tucci's "Big Night," and Matthew Broderick's "Infinity" with the same dreaded post-Tarantino brush—each film is as different as the person who made it. But it is significant that each of these actor/filmmakers has chosen to go the low-budget, indie filmmaker route in making their directing debuts—a course that made Tarantino into the first "rock star director," and a scene over which (despite some recent setbacks) his shadow still looms large.

The irony, of course, is that Tarantino himself has shown signs of being predominantly a frustrated actor who just happens to make brilliantly executed gangster masterpieces as his day job. While actors have consistently demonstrated their ability to grasp the intricacies of moviemaking, such post-"Pulp" Tarantino star turns as "Destiny Turns on the Radio" and "From Dusk Till Dawn" go a long way toward raising the question of whether or not the process works both ways. But given the increasing intertwining of acting and directing as creative pursuits, chances are moviegoers will get other opportunities to test that hypothesis before too much time has passed.—***Ray Greene***







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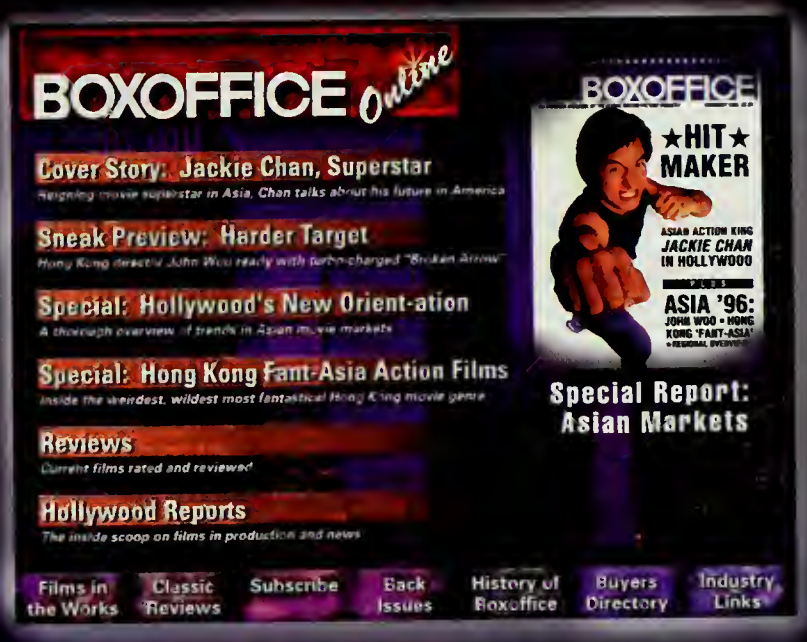
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FEBRUARY, 1997 VOL. 133 NO. 2

UNQUOTE: *There's always going to be some sort of contradiction between the role that filmmakers see for themselves and what the government sees for them.*—**Tsui Hark**

SPECIAL REPORT: ASIA 1997/CINEASIA

Boxoffice's *annual look at the Asian market, timed to coincide with CINEASIA 1997—the premier event for exhibition professionals doing business on the Asian continent!* CINEASIA 1997: JAN. 28-30, SINGAPORE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTER.

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SPECIAL REPORT: CINEASIA 1997

Because of the explosive economic development currently underway in most Asian nations, the increasing significance of the Asian marketplace to theatrical exhibition and the companies that service it cannot be overstated. Rising disposable incomes and a relatively primitive and underscreened infrastructure are factors which, in combination, will make Asia an inevitable and expanding profit center in the years to come.

Business thrives on relationships. As most international-minded business people already know, this is particularly true of Asian countries, where it can be difficult to penetrate new and emerging markets without close ties to local business communities.

All of this is what makes Singapore-based CINEASIA *such an important opportunity for U.S. exhibition professionals. By bringing together leading figures from the Asian exhibition communities with their U.S. and European counterparts,* CINEASIA *offers the chance to get in on the ground floor of a market that will still be growing exponentially well into the next century.*

The following is a listing of events scheduled for this year's CINEASIA:

MONDAY, JANUARY 27

10:00 AM-5:00 PM: CineAsia/Coca-Cola Hospitality Area (Ballroom Foyer)

12:00 PM-7:00 PM: General Convention Registration (Main Level, SICEC)

10:00 AM-7:00 PM: Trade Show Registration (Hall 601, SICEC)
7:00 PM-9:00 PM: Screening (TBA)

TUESDAY, JANUARY 28

7:30 AM-7:30 PM: General Convention Registration (Main Level, SICEC)

7:30 AM-6:00 PM: Trade Show Registration (Hall 601, SICEC)

8:00 AM-8:30 AM: Continental Breakfast
Sponsor: *ITT Singapore*
Host: *Russell Scott, General Manager, Marina Square*

8:30 AM-10:00 AM: Technical Seminar (Marina Square)
"The S's of Cinema: Screen, Sight, Sound, Sensation & Service"
Moderator: *Russell Scott, General Manager, International Theatre Technology, Singapore*
Presentations by: *Russell Scott, ITT Singapore; Patrick Artiaga, Lucasfilm/THX; Ian Sims, Harkness Screens; Greg McKibbin, Eastman Kodak*

10:00 AM-12:30 PM: Columbia/TriStar Screening (Marina Square)

10:00 AM-5:00 PM: Coca-Cola Hospitality Area (Ballroom Foyer, SICEC)

1:00 PM-2:30 PM: Luncheon (Ballroom, SICEC)
Sponsor: *Columbia/TriStar Film Distributors International*
Hosts: *Duncan Clark/Tony Manne*
Keynote Address: *Robert Dowling, Hollywood Reporter*

2:30 PM-6:00 PM: Opening Day CineAsia Trade Show & Cocktail Reception (Hall 601, SICEC)
Sponsor: Sony Cinema Products Corp.
Hosts: *John Scarcella/Gemma Richardson, Sony*

6:15 PM-7:45 PM: Opening Night Welcome Dinner (TBA)

8:30 PM-10:00 PM: Buena Vista Screening

10:00 PM-10:30 PM: Dessert Party (UATC Theatre, Bugis Junction)
Host: *United Artists*

10:30 PM-12:45 AM: Screening (UATC Bugis Auditorium)

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29

7:30 AM-6:30 PM: Convention Registration (Main Level, SICEC)

8:00 AM-8:45 AM: Continental Breakfast (Suntec Ballroom Foyer)

9:00 AM-5:30 PM: Trade Show Registration (Hall 601, SICEC)

8:45 AM-10:15 AM: International Concessions Forum (Suntec Auditorium 2nd Floor) **Moderator:** *Steve Smith*

10:00 AM-5:00 PM: Coca-Cola Hospitality Area (Ballroom Foyer, SICEC)

10:45 AM-12:45 PM: Warner Bros. Screening (UA Cinemas at Bugis Junction) (Buses to SICEC depart following screening)

1:00 PM-4:00 PM: Trade Show Floor Luncheon (Ballroom, SICEC)
Sponsor: *Warner Bros. International*
Hosts: *Ed Frumkes/Ivan Cheah*

5:30 PM-8:30 PM: Gala Dinner Party
Sponsor: *Twentieth Century Fox International*
Hosts (Fox Int'l): *Jim Gianopulos, President & Paul Hanneman, VP Asia/Pacific Fox (Far East)*

9:00 PM-11:00 PM: Twentieth Century Fox Screening (UA Cinemas at Bugis Junction) (Buses depart for the Pan Pacific Westin Hotels immediately following the screening)

THURSDAY, JANUARY 30

7:30 AM-6:00 PM: General Convention Registration (Main Level, SICEC)

8:00 AM-12:45 PM: Trade Show Registration (Hall 601, SICEC)

8:30 AM-9:00 AM: Continental Breakfast (Ballroom Foyer, SICEC)

9:00 AM-10:30 AM: "Projecting the Future of Exhibition in the Asia/Pacific Marketplace" with a focus on Japan, a summary of Vietnam and China (Auditorium)
Moderator: *Don Groves, Asia/Pacific Bureau Chief, Variety*
Panelists: *Toru Okuyama, Shochiku; Adam Gower, UCI Japan; Mark McDonald, AMC; Osaka Sato, Warner Mycal; Bill Ireton, Warner Bros.; Julian Levin, 20th Century Fox*

10:00 AM-5:00 PM: Coca-Cola Hospitality Area (Ballroom Foyer, SICEC)

10:30 AM-1:00 PM: CineAsia Trade Show (Ballroom, SICEC)

1:00 PM-2:15 PM: Luncheon
Sponsors: United International Pictures
Hosts (UIP): *Andrew Cripps, Executive V.P. Int'l Sales; Hy Smith, Exec. V.P. Int'l Marketing; Steve Ashmore, VP Sales SouthEast Asia.* (Buses to Bugis Junction depart at 2:15 PM)

2:45 PM-4:45 PM: United International Pictures Screening (Bugis Auditorium, UA Cinemas at Bugis Junction)

7:00 PM-8:00 PM: Cocktail Reception (Ballroom Foyer, SICEC)
Sponsor: *Eastman Kodak*
Hosts: *Jack Teahan/David Sanderson*

8:00 PM: Gala Final Night Awards Banquet
Sponsor: Coca-Cola International
Hosts (Coca-Cola): *Ben Knight, V.P. & Dir. Cust. Serv., Pacific Group; Steven Smith, Dir. Cust. Serv. (On-Premise) Middle and Far East Group*

THIS JUST IN...

At press time, rumors were circulating that a major U.S. exhibition circuit was about to put itself up for sale. As the available information was impossible to verify in time for our editorial deadline, **BOXOFFICE** has elected to wait for confirmation from the circuit in question before publishing any speculative details. A full report on this breaking story will appear in the next issue of **BOXOFFICE**, should circumstances warrant it.

HOLLYWOOD UPDATES

Fourteen months after **Michael Ovitz** rocked Hollywood by leaving CAA, the agency he co-founded, to become president of the **Walt Disney Co.,** the superagent-turned-studio topper has stunned industry onlookers again by stepping down from his post. The move was reportedly a mutual decision between Ovitz and Disney chairman and CEO Michael Eisner, with both agreeing the arrangement wasn't working. Some insiders blame a poorly-defined job description, with lack of specific instruction causing Ovitz to infringe upon other executives' territory. No immediate plans to fill the position have been announced. Ovitz has not divulged what he plans to do, but he won't be on line at the unemployment office: Under his settlement with Disney, he's leaving with at least $50 million in cash and $3 million in stock options, plus an additional $10 million due upon termination of his contract on Jan. 31—a buyout that had some Disney stockholders seething. Not bad for a little over 400 days' work. Ovitz will continue to serve as a consultant to the company.

It's official: As anticipated, **MCA Inc.** has formally changed its name to **Universal Studios Inc.**, a move that marks a directional change under the leadership of parent company Seagram Inc. A new audiovisual Universal logo will debut in theatres on Memorial Day, timed to coincide with the opening of Steven Spielberg's Universal-distributed "Jurassic Park" sequel, "The Lost World." With the name change, MCA, which came into its own as a pioneering talent agency before acquiring Universal in the early '60s, has effectively ceased to exist.

After a three-year hiatus, **Billy Crystal** has announced he'll be resuming his role as host of the **Oscars.** This will be the fifth time Crystal has emceed the awards telecast, having hosted four years in a row from 1990-1993. Crystal's major task, besides co-writing a script that will keep the show moving briskly, will be to top his elaborate comic entrances of previous years, which included memorable parodies of "Silence of the Lambs" and of '50s Biblical epics. Crystal received Emmy nominations for his performances in 1991, 1992 and 1993, and won the Emmy in '91. He also won writing Emmys for the 1991 and 1992 shows. The Oscar ceremony will be held March 24 at the Los Angeles Shrine Auditorium.

French actress **Isabelle Adjani** ("Diabolique") has been selected as president of the **1997 Cannes Film Festival jury.** The festival, which takes place May 7-18, will celebrate its 50th anniversary this year. Adjani won Best Actress honors at Cannes in 1981 for her roles in James Ivory's "Quartet" and Andrzej Zulawski's "Possession."

Actor **George Clooney** ("One Fine Day") and producer **Robert Lawrence** ("Clueless") have signed a three-year, first-look deal with Warner Bros. to develop and produce features. The much sought-after Clooney's decision to strike a long-term deal with Warner comes as no surprise; Clooney is already slated to replace Val Kilmer as the Caped Crusader in Warner's upcoming "Batman" title, "Batman and Robin." On the boards for Clooney's and Lawrence's new production company, Left Bank Prods., is "Becky Downtown," a romantic comedy in which Clooney may star.

Also signing with **Warner** is red-hot actor **Matthew McConaughey** ("A Time To Kill") and his production company, **j.k. livin prods.** (which is short for "just keep living"). The first-look pact calls for McConaughey to produce, star in and possibly direct films. McConaughey will next be seen in Warner's Jodie Foster starrer "Contact," fulfilling one film of a two-picture option that was part of his "A Time To Kill" contract.

Director **Wes Craven** ("Scream") has entered into a multi-picture deal with **Miramax Films,** under which Craven will direct for both Miramax and its sci-fi/horror genre label, **Dimension**. The first project under the deal will be "Bad Moon Rising," a tale about a havoc-wreaking motorcycle gang with a lycanthropic twist.

Barry Barnholtz, co-founder and senior vice president of **Trimark**, is leaving the company to start **Barnholtz Entertainment,** a production, sales and acquisitions company. He'll still maintain ties with Trimark, however. Barnholtz Entertainment has a first-look deal with Trimark, and Barnholtz remains Trimark's third-largest shareholder.

Film exec **Jeff Lipsky** has joined **East-West Film Partners** as head of distribution. The first film to be released under Lipsky's leadership will be "Good Luck," a comedy starring Gregory Hines and Vincent D'Onofrio as two disabled former athletes. Lipsky, who co-founded October Films with Bingham Ray in 1991, left the company in 1995 to pursue filmmaking. He's since directed a feature, "Childhood's End," which is still looking for a distributor, and he plans to direct a second film, "Dear Monica," after "Good Luck" is released.

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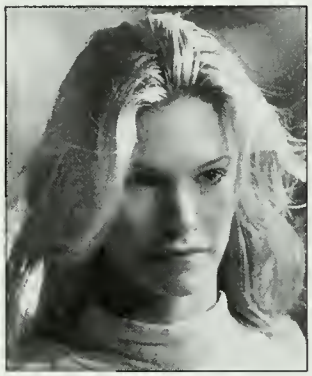
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HOLLYWOOD REPORT



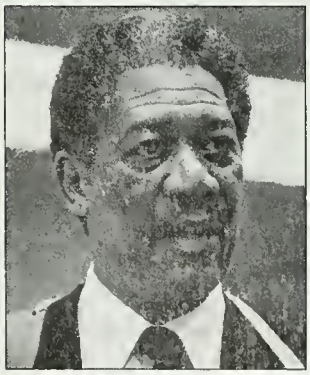
LEONARDO DI CAPRIO

"Iron" Man



NATASHA HENSTRIDGE

Collars "Dog"



MORGAN FREEMAN

Sets Sail With "Amistad"

"THE SECRET LIFE OF WALTER MITTY" Jim Carrey ("The Cable Guy") will take the title role in this remake of the 1947 Danny Kaye starrer, based on the classic story by James Thurber, about a mild-mannered milquetoast who has a heroic alter existence in his daydreams. (New Line)

"THE MAN IN THE IRON MASK" In this adaptation of the Alexandre Dumas classic novel, Leonardo DiCaprio ("Romeo & Juliet") will play twin brothers, one of whom becomes the King of France while the other is raised by D'Artagnan, leader of the Three Musketeers. Gerard Depardieu is in talks to play Musketeer Porthos. (UA)

"DOG PARK" Former "Kids in the Hall" star Bruce McCulloch scripted and will direct this romantic comedy about a man who pines over his ex-girlfriend (Natasha Henstridge, "Maximum Risk"), and manipulates her into spending time with him by making her attend therapy sessions for the benefit of their dog. Henry Czerny ("Mission: Impossible") is in talks to star. (Distribution is to be set)

"BOYS' NIGHT OUT" In this thriller, Sean Patrick Flanery ("Powder"), Jay Mohr ("Jerry Maguire"), Johnny Galecki (TV's "Roseanne") and Henry Thomas ("Legends of the Fall") will portray prep school boys who kidnap a Mafia don ("The Funeral's" Christopher Walken) in order to negotiate a trade for the kidnapped sister of one of the boys. The script is by Wayne Rice ("Only You") and Gina Goldman (TV's "The Wonder Years"). (LIVE Entertainment)

"FOR RICHARD OR POORER" Tim Allen ("Jungle2Jungle") is set to star for director Bryan Spicer ("McHale's Navy") in this comedy about a real estate hustler and his socialite wife who are on the brink of divorce, but suddenly must go into hiding together when they get into trouble with the IRS. They wind up in an Amish town in Pennsylvania where they must pretend to be long-lost relatives. (Universal)

"THE KISS" In this comedy-drama, Holly Hunter ("Crash") will play a woman who befriends an elevator operator ("Matilda's" Danny DeVito) after her husband leaves her. Richard LaGravenese ("The Fisher King") scripts and directs. (New Line)

"AMISTAD" Steven Spielberg's next directing project after the "Jurassic Park" sequel "The Lost World" will be this historical drama about the 1839 mutiny on the African slave ship Amistad. The script is by David Franzoni ("Citizen Cohn") and Steve Zaillian ("Schindler's List.") Morgan Freeman ("Moll Flanders") is attached to star. (DreamWorks)

"MR. MAGOO" Director Stanley Tong ("Jackie Chan's First Strike") goes from action films to live-action in this adaptation of the '60s cartoon series that featured an eccentric, likable curmudgeon whose nearsightedness caused him to constantly misinterpret his surroundings. Mr. Magoo, who was voiced by Jim Backus on the TV show, will be played by Leslie Nielsen ("Spy Hard"). Pat Proft, who wrote the Nielsen starrer "Naked Gun," will script. (Buena Vista)

"MEET JOE BLACK" Brad Pitt ("Sleepers") will star for director Martin Brest ("Scent of a Woman") in this comedy, which is based on the 1934 film "Death Takes a Holiday," in which the Grim Reaper decides to vacation on the earthly plane, where he falls in love with a mortal woman. (Universal)

"FROSTY" Anyone who's daunted by the lack of originality in Hollywood screenplays should do a double-take at this plot synopsis. George Clooney ("One Fine Day") is in talks to star in this film about a jazz musician who doesn't pay enough attention to his child. He dies suddenly, and gets a chance to redeem himself when he's reincarnated as Frosty the Snowman. Sam Raimi ("Army of Darkness") will direct from a script by Mark Steven Johnson ("Grumpy Old Men"). (Warner)

"HOME FRIES" Drew Barrymore ("Mad Love") is the object of two brothers' obsession in this film—one adores her, the other wants to kill her. Jake Busey ("Starship Troopers") and Catherine O'Hara ("Waiting for Guffman") also star. (Warner)

"DINNER AT FRED'S" Christopher Lloyd ("Addams Family Values"), Gil Bellows ("The Shawshank Redemption"), Parker Posey ("Party Girl") and John Neville ("The Adventures of Baron Munchausen") will star in this comedy about a man whose car breaks down on his way to his future in-laws' house for Christmas dinner, and is rescued by a strange man named Fred. The script is by standup comic Shawn Alex Thompson. (Distribution is to be set)

"HOME ALONE 3" Audiences and exhibitors probably figured that with Macaulay Culkin reaching an age where being home alone was no longer a big deal, that would be the end of one majorly successful franchise. But in Hollywoodland, anything's possible. Postpubescent Mac is being replaced by 7-year-old Alex D. Linz, who made his film debut in "The Cable Guy" and most recently appeared in "One Fine Day." In this take on the child-repeatedly-thwarts-bumbling-adult-crooks theme, Linz will play a boy who must protect his home from mysterious, malevolent neighbors. (Fox)

"GIRL INTERRUPTED" James Mangold ("Copland") will direct Winona Ryder ("The Crucible") in this true story about Susanna Kaysen, a teenager who admitted herself into a mental institution and later wrote a book about the experience. (Columbia)

"FEAR AND LOATHING IN LAS VEGAS" Alex Cox ("Sid and Nancy") will direct and co-script with Tod Davies this adaptation of Hunter S. Thompson's cult classic book of the same name about a road trip taken under the influence of extreme amounts of drugs and alcohol. Johnny Depp ("Donnie Brasco") is in talks to play the iconic gonzo journalist. (Rhino)

ET CETERA: Anjelica Huston and Alicia Silverstone will play mother-daughter scam artists in UA's comedy **"Breakers"**... Ewan McGregor ("Trainspotting") will star in **"Velvet Goldmine,"** about the '70s glitter-rock scene, for director Todd Haynes ("Safe"). He'll also play Irish author James Joyce in the Pat Murphy-helmed **"Nora,"** a biopic of Nora Barnacle, Joyce's lover...British actor-comedian Lee Evans ("Funny Bones") has joined Nathan Lane in DreamWorks' **"Mousehunt,"** about two brothers who try to sell a mansion they've inherited, but are thwarted by an ingenious rodent...Richard Harris has signed on as the eponymous coiffeur in the Julia Ormond starrer **"The Barber of Siberia."** Harris and Ormond recently worked together on the upcoming "Smilla's Sense of Snow."

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Response No. 99

Sneak Preview

Radio's Controversial First Amendment Poster-Boy Reveals His "PRIVATE PARTS" *by Christine James*

If you're going to put out a movie, it better be damn well kick-ass and great," asserts Howard Stern, whose long-in-development "Private Parts" will finally go public this March. After Stern's first film, "Fartman," about a flatulent but benevolent superhero, ran out of gas at New Line in 1993, and "Private Parts" was juggled from cash-strapped Savoy to Paramount in '96, fans grew restless and critics wondered aloud if Stern would ever make it to celluloid. Says Stern of his detractors: "I remember seeing all these articles popping up, 'Howard Stern can't make a movie,' 'Howard Stern doesn't have any clout,' 'Howard Stern is afraid to make a film,' and I was reading all this s—, and I go, you know, I'm the one f—ing idiot who has some integrity. I'm not like those 'Saturday Night Live' guys, just grabbing a script and making any damn piece of s— movie. You'd think someone would applaud that. But of course I got attacked for it."

Howard Stern—the name has become synonymous with the term "shock jock," a phrase Stern claims was created in recent years just for him. Whether it's used contemptuously, admiringly or merely descriptively, this two-word expression, which basically conveys the fact that he's a deejay who says outrageous things, can't even begin to summarize Stern's remarkable and bizarre decades-spanning career.

The radio talk show host-cum-superstar has drawn a lot of fire over the years for radicalizing modern media with his controversial radio program. He's been vilified by the religious right, minority groups and the Federal Communications Commission as the embodiment of evil, the feculent foundation of all that is wrong in the world. Rarely a day goes by that an irate listener doesn't call in warning Stern that his soul will burn in hell. "The people who tell you your soul's gonna be damned are the ones who probably are gonna end up in hell," says Stern. "I don't trust anybody who starts evaluating people's souls. Bible Belt types—you sit and listen to these people and you realize how phony they are."

A reluctant poster-boy for the First Amendment, Stern claims he just tells it like it is, with no intent to shock or scandalize. His humor, he contends, is constantly misconstrued by a society that can't laugh at itself, for fear of breaching some unwritten yet incontrovertible code of political correctness.

"I think a lot of people sort of cop an attitude about what I do because they think it's somehow raunchy or filthy or bad for society or something like that," he says. "And some people might honestly just listen to the show and feel that way. But I know that there are a lot of people who have never listened to the show, or have never really spent more than a minute or two on what I'm saying, and they might hear something that's a little outrageous because I'm being honest. And then suddenly they take it the wrong way and they haven't given the show a chance. I think the misconception is that the show is just raunchy without being funny or perhaps without making a point. I think the show can actually be, dare I say, intelligent at times.

"I *want* people to think what I do is wacked out and outrageous and wrong. I know when I go on the radio sometimes, even *I* think some of the things I'm saying are outrageous, because I can't believe I'm letting them come out of my mouth. But that's the strength of the show."

With his 6'5" frame, long dark hair and rock 'n' roll wardrobe, Stern cuts an imposing figure that's well-matched to his notoriously aggressive, love-to-hate-him personality. No ordinary deejay by any means, Stern never plays a single record—unless he's talking over it, ridiculing the artist, discussing the physical attributes of the artist's current girlfriend, or making up his own preposterous, possibly semi-obscene lyrics to the song. An excellent debater with the intelligence to back up his assertions and that notorious twisted sense of humor to keep things lively, Stern is the host of a daily program that's four to five straight hours a day of just talk—predominantly extemporaneous dialogue among himself, co-host Robin Quivers, writers Fred Norris and Jackie Martling, and producer Gary "Baba Booey" Dell' Abate. Entertainment and world news are discussed; over the course of a morning, current events, pop culture and the personal lives of the entire radio crew are targets for Stern's wit. Radio station interns become running gag characters. His studio is populated by a constant parade of world-renowned celebrities, aspiring starlets, professional strippers, amateur strippers, and a wide variety of human oddities with strange physical or mental afflictions, extremist doctrines or sociologically astounding patterns of behavior.

> "I've often said that *off* the air, I'm play-acting. When I go home, I can't say whatever I want, I can't behave the way I want to. Because obviously they'd lock me up in a mental institution if I behaved the way I do on the air."

Stern is ruthless in pointing out the foibles of his guests, all manner of public figures and anyone else who happens to be around him, but he's just as cruel to himself. "A lot of my humor is self-effacing because I really feel I am a disaster," he says bluntly. "I think I am a train wreck. There's nothing pretty about me. There's a lot of things wrong with me. And I point them out because I think that if you're going to be honest, you'd better damn well talk about your own faults, not just everyone else's." Alternately megalomaniac and mercilessly self-deprecating, Stern is a dichotomy it's hard to get a fix on. But every weekday morning, 18 million people laugh at his mercurial moods, his tirades, his bodily-function jokes, his lasciviousness and his political and social commentaries. It begs the question: Could 18 million people be wrong?

Among his humongous fan base are numerous Hollywood luminaries who regularly drop by to plug their latest project, knowing full well they're not going to escape before getting the grilling of their lives. Daring to ask megastars like Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sting and Jim Carrey how their wives are in bed is just one example of what makes Howard Stern different from any other media figure in the world. He says whatever is on his mind—anything to get a rise out of

A BOXOFFICE EXCLUSIVE

HOWARD'S


TURN

his interviewee. It makes for great radio. And television—Stern's show is filmed and shown daily on the E! cable TV network, and he had his own syndicated series in the early '90s, which was comprised mostly of bizarre skits and game shows involving both celebrities and idiosyncratic people off the street.

The next medium the self-proclaimed King of All Media plans to conquer is film, with the release of his biopic, "Private Parts," which is based on Stern's best-selling autobiography of the same name. Directed by Betty Thomas ("The Brady Bunch Movie"), produced by Ivan Reitman ("Twins") and scripted by Len Blum ("Stripes"), "Private Parts" tells how Stern first got into radio, and of his constant battles with manager after manager, all of whom tried to squelch his personality and turn him into another run-of-the-mill automaton record-spinner. "The people that I worked for—they didn't get what I was doing at all," Stern recalls. "They were really—some of them were downright awful. It is unbelievable, the plotting and planning that went on behind my back." But a mouth like Stern's couldn't be silenced.



GOD BLESS AMERICA: *Stern with director Betty Thomas.*

"I think people are really going to be fascinated with this movie. A lot of people probably think I'm sitting and spanking girls for two hours. But really, it is my true story, and anybody who has a [job] knows how people are always sitting there and telling you how things should be done. And sometimes you have a vision of the way things should be done, and you know you're right, but nobody else gets it. Quite frankly, when I look back on it now, I can't believe I didn't buckle under, you know? It would have been so much easier!"



YEE-HAW: *Stern's brief '80s stint as Country Music Howie is documented in "Private Parts."*

As recounted in his book, Stern went from station to station, always encountering managers and program directors who at first seemed to appreciate his unique talents but inevitably tried to crush any and all creativity out of him. Despite the fact that it could have—and often did—cost him his job at a time when he had a wife and young daughter to support, Stern stood his ground, though he's still not sure what gave him the strength to do so.

"Probably some of it was stupidity," he laughs. "I mean, I just didn't know any better. I swear to you that I really always knew what kind of radio show I wanted to do, since I was five years old. I mean, it takes me a while to get to that point, as you'll see in the movie. I'm awful on the air. When I first get on the air, that's half the fun of the movie. I'm just so bad. And everyone wants to fire me. Not because I'm outrageous, but because I suck so bad. But I think I had this clarity of purpose, if you will. And believe it or not, the clarity of purpose is for telling penis jokes. But I knew what I wanted to do. And because I knew what I wanted to do, I couldn't take no for an answer from these people, and I think that's what gave me the strength to go on. I felt like there was a lot of good radio stuff I could be doing if I could just get around these obstacles, which was really bad management."

What was a frustrating and nearly career-destroying hindrance in real life serves as comedy on his show, in his book and now in his movie. "The people who play these managers, they nail the essence of the people I dealt with. And they just do such a beautiful job," Stern enthuses. "They're the real stars of the film, in a sense. They just keep this thing going. You sometimes go, 'How do you take these guys?!' They're funny. They're comical. They're [Marx Bros. foil] Margaret Dumonts, in a way. They're funny even though they don't know they're being funny."

Also focused on in the film is Howard's family life, from his dysfunctional upbringing to his marriage to Alison Stern, who's played in the film by Mary McCormack. ("Mary did a super job. When we're sitting and yelling at each other, it feels like home," Stern jokes.) "Private Parts" the movie spans 43-year-old Stern's entire life. "The story starts from when I'm a little kid all the way to the present day. It's this travel through the radio career, and it's sort of the woman-behind-the-man kind of thing. A lot of people are really curious about my personal life. They go, 'Who the hell would be married to this guy? He's such a monster,' or 'He's such a maniac, he's—' everything you can think of. I don't think my fans or anybody has ever seen me at home, you know, quite this way." Despite daily on-air encounters with strippers, masseuses, porn stars, Playboy models and other miscellaneous female exhibitionists, Stern has repeatedly claimed complete fidelity to his wife of almost 20 years, with whom he has three young daughters. It's just another facet of the dichotomy.

Although "Private Parts" is a humanizing portrait of Stern, he doesn't pretend that he is anything other than the abrasive character on the radio. "I've often said that *off* the air, I'm play-acting. I'm living a lie. I think that most of us have to pretend to be a certain way most of the day. When I go home, I can't say whatever I want, I can't say what's on my mind. I can't behave the way I want to. Because obviously they'd lock me up in a mental institution if I behaved the way I do on the air. When I get on the air, I find that that's the point where I'm most free and really most like myself. And I'm really expressing what's on my mind and not putting a governor on myself, you know? I'm allowing things to happen. So I kind of think that the guy *off* the air is probably the phony. The one on the air is really truthful."

And yet he routinely tells wife Alison that the opposite is true. "Of course. You have to, because you have to be a phony," he affirms.

But, says Stern, there is more to him—and his story—than meets the eye. "I hope people don't sort of get caught up in, 'Oh, Howard Stern, he's an asshole, I can't go see his movie.' I hope that somehow word gets out, and that people get to see it, because it is a good movie, and that they don't get swayed by what they think I am, as opposed to what I really am."

While imitators try to replicate Stern's success by being mean-spirited, lewd and contentious, they always fall short. That indefinable Howard Stern quality—call it charisma, high intelligence, low cunning or just plain gall—isn't there to balance it out and make it work. It's a formula that cannot be duplicated. For better or worse, when Howard Stern was made, they broke the mold.

"Private Parts." Starring Howard Stern, Mary McCormack, and Robin Quivers. Directed by Betty Thomas. Written by Len Blum, based on the novel by Howard Stern. Produced by Ivan Reitman. A Paramount release. March 14.


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MARCH TRAILERS

One way or another, this promises to be a precipitous month

Will this be a month for ledgers, or ledges?

Given that the studios' dreadnoughts were fired over the Christmas and President's Day holidays, March's larder—although numbering 36 in total releases—is relatively star-shy, leading exhibitors to wonder whether it'll be a month of ticket sales or ticket plunges. For those films that have set dates, it's not till March 14 that a genuinely big new title arrives: Buena Vista's "Jungle 2 Jungle" (see photo below), starring "The Santa Clause's" Tim Allen. Two weeks later, in superstar fashion, Harrison Ford and Brad Pitt arrive in "The Devil's Own" from Columbia.



Also, although not yet dated, Universal's "Liar Liar"—the latest $100 million possibility from Jim Carrey—makes up the third of the month's top trio.

Although numbered among the remainder are several studio titles with breakout potential, like Warner's "Selena" and Columbia's sci-fi "Gattaca" (name change, please), March will be an interesting will-the-promise-deliver test of the industry's move toward megaplexes during the past two years.

Indie distributors have been eager to have their fare win large-site plays, and this month they might, as exhibitors wanting to fill their new teens- and twenties-hall plexes turn to such specialized titles as Miramax's "Mimic," Fox Searchlight's "Love and Other Catastrophes" and Orion's "Independence." Indeed, of March's movie total, indies account for a hefty two-thirds. Will they provide sure footing?

MARCH 7

Return of the Jedi

The third film in the "Star Wars" trilogy, "Return of the Jedi" follows Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) and Han Solo (Harrison Ford) as they face the ultimate battle with the



Imperial forces, aided by the toy-cute Ewoks. Originally released in 1983, the film also stars Carrie Fisher and was directed by Richard Marquand. (Fox, 3/7)

Exploitips: *Fox concludes its 25th-anniversary rollout of the George Lucas trilogy. As with the original releases, expect numbers for this iteration to modestly best the new returns for last month's "The Empire Strikes Back."*

Mon Homme

A cheerful and kindhearted prostitute finds a pimp through a strange set of circumstances, and he becomes her man. Bertrand Blier directs this French film starring Anouk Grinberg and Gerard Lanvin. (Artificial Eye, 3/7)

Exploitips: *Artificial Eye head Tom Prassis was sure enough of "Mon Homme" to showcase it at Showeast. As Prassis suggests, exhibitors should play up the film's sensuality—sex does sell—but not forget its Continental humor. Arthouse audiences looking to warm themselves from a long winter are the likely candidates here.*

Boys Life 2

This collection of shorts is a followup to 1994's successful "Boys Life" and relates more stories of gay adolescence, coming of age and manhood by a number of directors. (Strand, 3/7)

Exploitips: *A presold item with its select moviegoing audience, "Boys Life 2" is that rarity in gay cinema: a sequel, certainly highlightable as such. The release was held from late 1996.*

MARCH 14

Jungle 2 Jungle

In order to marry Charlotte (Lolita Davidovich), a New York businessman named Michael ("The Santa Clause's" Tim Allen) must finalize his divorce with his first wife (JoBeth Williams). He travels to the heart of the Amazon to find her; there, he learns he has a 13-year-old son, Mimi Siku (Sam Huntington), who's been raised in the wilds by his mother and a local tribe. When Mimi returns to New York with Michael, cultures clash. Martin Short co-stars for director John Pasquin (who paired with Allen for "The Santa Clause"); Charlie Peters, Ray Gideon and Bruce Evans script; Brian Reilly produces. See photo, this page. (Buena Vista, 3/14)

Exploitips: *TV favorite Allen (ABC's "Home Improvement") became an instant movie exhibitor favorite with the $100+ mil. performance of "The Santa Clause." Disney has high expectations here, having acquired English-language remake rights to the French comedy "Little Indian, Big City" in part by dubbing and releasing the original Thierry Lhermitte film stateside. The studio might be right; the casting is perhaps the month's most perfect, and the plot—a man is transformed via adventures with his son—will sound pleasingly familiar to family audiences.*

Wide Awake

In this coming-of-age-story, a 10-year-old boy and girl develop a special friendship. Denis Leary ("Two If By Sea"), Rosie O'Donnell, Dana Delany ("Fly Away Home") and Joseph Cross star. M. Night Shyamalan ("Praying With Anger") directs; Cary Woods and Cathy Konrad (who paired for Miramax's "Citizen Ruth") produce. (Miramax, 3/14)

Exploitips: *Shyamalan's debut film, in which he also starred, was heartfelt to a fault, barely performing in specialized houses. With a pro cast like this, however, his instincts might receive the playing they need, and the Woods/Konrad imprimatur is an increasingly solid one.*

Hearts and Minds

Set in South Africa in the '80s, first-time director/co-writer Ralph Ziman's film follows apartheid death-squad member Andries Fourie (Danny Keogh of the forthcoming "Bliss") who is hired to assassinate an ANC leader (co-writer Patrick Shai). When Andries loses his job after the release

of Nelson Mandela, he is forced to face his dark past. Ziman and Benjamin Howell produce. (Northern Arts, 3/14)

Exploitips: *Northern Arts' more active slate is a sign of the tiny distributor's success with overlooked art-house fare. Expect this to perform best in college towns; similarities to the recent release "Inside" might curtail turnout.*

MARCH 21

Power Rangers II

Jason David Frank, Steve Cardenas, Johnny Yong Bosch, Catherine Sutherland and Nakia Burrise star in the second cinematic offshoot (also known as "Turbo: A Power Ranger Adventure") of TV's "Mighty Morphin Power Rangers" that finds the superheroes on another quest. David Winning directs; Shuki Levy and Shell Danielson script; Jonathan Tzachor produces. (Fox, 3/21)

Exploitips: *"Mighty Morphin Power Rangers" provided underwhelming ($37.8 mil.) returns after its midsummer 6/30/95 bow, but that could be attributed to that weekend's "Apollo 13" success in drawing not only adults but also the family demo. This time, in a less-crowded late winter frame, the key competition will be second-weekend auds for "Jungle 2 Jungle"—which could be competition enough, as "Miracle on 34th Street" and "The Swan Princess" found opening against weekend #2 of "The Santa Clause." Also, Fox will have to battle decreased strength in the Power Ranger fad, as shown in Christmas toy sales; too bad the producers can't work a Tickle Me Elmo into the proceedings.*

The Quiet Room

A seven-year-old girl (Chloe Ferguson) stops talking when she comes to believe that words are the cause of her family's problems. In this drama, writer/director Rolf De Heer ("Bad Boy Bubby") explores the disintegration of a family. Celine O'Leary and Paul Blackwell star; De Heer also produces with Domenico Procacci. (Fine Line, 3/21)

Exploitips: *"Bad Boy Bubby" drew mixed reviews at its recent AFI run—some strong, some negative. On Fine Line's current slate, this can be expected to be among the lower-profile entries (there are no stars, and the lead character is a child), meaning the dedicated art-house crowds that attended the likes of "Manny & Lo" are the probable candidates.*

Mimic

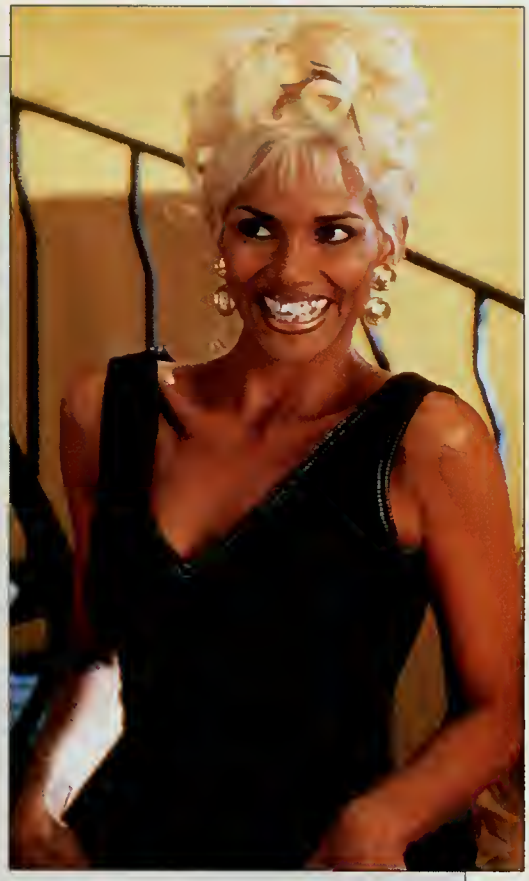
Two scientists try to rid the world of disease-infested cockroaches—with interesting results. Mira Sorvino ("Mighty Aphrodite") and Jeremy Northam ("The Net") star. This sci-fi tale is written by a compelling trio of talents: John Sayles ("Lone Star"), Steven Soderbergh ("King of the Hill") and Guillermo del Toro ("Cronos"); del Toro also handles the directing duties. (Miramax, 3/19)

Exploitips: *If Miramax can avoid having "Mimic" thought of as the second coming of "Joe's Apartment," it might see good art-house returns here. Even more than the Sorvino name, the Sayles/Soderbergh/del Toro triumvirate promises something different.*

B.A.P.S.

In this comedy, Halle Berry ("Executive Decision") stars as Nisi, a poor girl from Georgia who moves to Beverly Hills with her friend Mickey (Natalie Deselle) to pursue fame and fortune. Nisi is soon hired to entertain dying millionaire Mr. Blakemore ("Ed Wood's" Martin Landau) for $20,000, but what she doesn't realize is that she's in the middle of a setup. Robert Townsend ("Hollywood Shuffle") directs; Troy Beyer scripts; Mark Burg produces. (New Line, 3/28)

Exploitips: *Reviewers and moviegoers seem to agree on two things about Halle Berry movies: She's impossibly gorgeous, and they're, well, not. Unlike the adult-themed "The Rich Man's Wife" and the family-oriented "Race the Sun," "B.A.P.S." might play first to urban audiences, meaning it will need time to begin a crossover push, o lo "Waiting to Exhale." Townsend's recent track record (e.g., "The Meteor Man") doesn't inspire absolute confidence that will happen, however, especially given that the urbon demo (at least for male-choice ticket sales) for the 3/28 frame is likely to be governed by "Hoods."*



Gray's Anatomy

Steven Soderbergh ("The Underneath") directs the third monologue from Spalding Gray ("Swimming to Cambodia," "Monster in a Box"). Fearing eye surgery, Gray discusses his adventures into alternative medicine. Gray scripts with Renee Shafransky; John Hardy produces. (Seventh Arts, 3/19)

Exploitips: *Although "Swimming to Cambodia" provided good specialized boxoffice, "Monster in a Box" was less successful. To boost interest here, exhibitors might try a catchy Q&A contest, with questions based on the famed medical text, and the prize being a (plastic, we hope) human skeleton.*

MARCH 28

The Devil's Own

Brad Pitt ("Sleepers") and Harrison Ford ("The Fugitive") star in this action drama about a vengeful IRA soldier who is taken in by a New York City cop. Alan J. Pakula ("All the President's Men") directs; Kevin Jarre scripts; Lawrence Gordon ("Die Hard") produces. (Columbia, 3/26)

Exploitips: *This project garnered a lot of bad press during its filming, with tabloidists highlighting supposed Pitt-vs.-Ford contretemps over last-minute script changes that boosted the "Seven" star's character profile here. But this is one of the few A-list vehicles this month, so audiences will be star-starved. And, as "Sleepers" showed, testosterone-heavy casts can deliver big openings.*

Hoods

In this actioner, gangster Bumpy Johnson tries to overthrow mob boss Dutch Schultz and take control of the numbers racket in 1930s Harlem. Laurence Fishburne ("Othello"), Tim Roth ("Four Rooms") and Vanessa Williams ("Eraser") star. Bill Duke ("Deep Cover") directs; Chris Brancato scripts; Frank Mancuso, Jr. produces. (UA, 3/28)

Exploitips: *UA wants the 3/28 weekend to go after holiday audiences, but "The Devil's Own" seems rather weighty competition; not only is it the same genre but, tine actors that they are, Fishburne and Roth don't have the massive mainstream draw of Ford and Pitt. Just as the Lion found earlier dates too bumpy for "Turbulence," expect this one to move, or else settle for urban-audience dominance.*

Love and Other Catastrophes

An Australian comedy from first-time director Emma-Kate Croghan, this film follows the adventures of five university students. Mia (Frances O'Connor) and Alice (Alice Garner) search for a roommate, but aren't keen on Mia's girlfriend, Danni (Radha Mitchell), as a choice. Classics student Ari (Matthew Dyktynski) falls for Alice, but so does Michael (Matt Day), a shy medical student. Croghan scripts with Yael Bergman and Helen Bandis; Stavos Andonis Efthymiou produces. (Fox Searchlight, 3/28)

Exploitips: *This Down Under effort arrives still warm with accolades from Cannes; our reviewer (see our Aug. '96 issue) called it "engaging" and "one of the festival's genuine*

LATE MOVIE MOVES INTO FEBRUARY...

Jerusalem

Bille August ("The House of the Spirits") directs this period story of a preacher who influences two young lovers, ultimately disrupting their lives. Based on the novel by Selma Lagerlof, this Swedish film stars Maria Bonnevie, Ulf Friberg, Olympia Dukakis and Max Von Sydow. (First Look)

Exploitips: *Which August will show up here—the man behind "The Best Intentions" and "Pelle the Conqueror," or the man behind "The House of the Spirits"? Our Toronto fest reviewer (see this issue) says the latter, but expect the August/Swedish combination to win a select following.*

The Sadness of Sex

Music video/commercial helmer Rupert Wainwright explores sex in this collection of 15 vignettes. Peta Wilson stars. Barry



Yourgrau writes and narrates; Rupert Maconick and David Lancaster produce. (Tara)

Exploitips: *Our reviewer has some reservations about this, but the title has a built-in sales cachet. Target the twentysomething, MTV and college crowds.*

Plump Fiction

In this spoof of Quentin Tarantino's "Pulp Fiction," two insect exterminators—Jimmy (Second City troupe comedian Paul Dinello) and Julius ("In Living Color's" Tommy Davidson)—work for L.A.'s meanest boss, Montello (Robert Costanza). All goes well until Montello asks Jimmy to take out his plump wife Mimi (Julie Brown of "Earth Girls Are Easy"). Sandra Bernhard co-stars. Bob Koherr directs and scripts; Gary Binkow produces. (Rhino)

Exploitips: *Another entry whose strongest element is its title (and which shares "The Sadness of Sex's" demos), "Plump Fiction" might've been more timely had it arrived this past summer as planned. But runs in college markets could pay dividends.*

Fire on the Mountain

Directors/producers Beth Gage and George Gage's documentary combines interviews and historical footage to tell the story of the U.S.'s 10th Mountain Division, an infantry trained for winter warfare that fought in World War II. (First Run)

Exploitips: *Best marketing move: Buy 30-second local avails on The Discovery Channel and The History Network (both of which heavily program WWII documentaries) via your cable operator, who might be willing to do a cross-promo.*

Message to Love

Featuring rare footage of '60s music greats Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison and Joni Mitchell, this documentary offers a behind-the-scenes look at the 1970 Isle of Wight Musical Festival. Other acts include Leonard Cohen, The Who and Emerson Lake & Palmer. Murray Lerner ("From Mao to Mozart") directs. (Strand)

Exploitips: *Aim at both the Boomer and Gen-X crowds; a tie-in with your local cable operator carrying MTV and VH-1 would reach those demos.*

Sudden Manhattan

Adrienne Shelly (who writes and directs) stars as a penniless twentysomething who, in her New York wanders, meets an array of characters, like fortune-teller Domingo ("Bananas'" Louise Lasser) and philosopher/actor Adam ("Courage Under Fire's" Tim Guinee). Marcia Kirkley (who executive-produced "Dogs: The Rise and Fall of an All-Girl Bookie Joint") produces. (Phaedra)

Exploitips: *Another college crowd/Gen-X title, "Sudden Manhattan" could attract the distaff audience that didn't get "Beavis and Butt-head Do America."*

Cobra Verde

This 1987 German film by writer/director Werner Herzog (who adapts the novel "The Viceroy of Ouidah") follows a poor man (Klaus Kinski) who becomes an outlaw. Lucki Stipetic produces. (Roxie)

Exploitips: *The Herzog name is the sell here, as it has resonance with older art-housers (the largest segment of the specialized audience).*

To Have (Or Not)

Fish canner Alice (Sandrine Kiberlain) searches for a happier life in Lyon. Roschdy Zem co-stars, and French directors Claire Denis and Didier Flamand appear in cameos. French writer/director Laetitia Masson makes her filmmaking debut. (Cinema Parallel)

Exploitips: *Emphasize the French-language angle to attract the goodly Francophiles among art-house auds.*

Le Samourai

Alain Delon ("Assassination of Trotsky") stars as a hitman in this 1967 film noir. Natalie Delon ("Le Sex Shop") co-stars. French filmmaker Jean-Pierre Melville ("Breathless") directs; the movie will be released in the original uncut 35mm version. (Artificial Eye)

Exploitips: *As with "Cobra Verde," emphasize the Delon and Melville names; the primary demo here is mature art-housers.*

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

sleepers," although at 76 minutes "It seems a bit slight." That last element could work against it for more serious art-housers, who prefer their movie fare like their espressos—dark and dense. Exhibitors should emphasize the distaff doings here, including the 23-year-old director, in hopes of drawing the twentysomething female crowd that made the likes of "Muriel's Wedding" a breakout success.

Chasing Amy

This romantic comedy, written and directed by Kevin Smith ("Clerks," "Mallrats"), follows a man who falls in love with a lesbian. Ben Affleck ("Last Call"), Joey Lauren Adams ("Dazed and Confused"), Jason Lee ("Mallrats") and Dwight Ewell ("Amateur") star. Scott Mosier produces. (Miramax, 3/28)

Exploitips: *If "Love and Other Catastrophes" grabs the progesterone-type twentysomethings, then "Chasing Amy" might find itself chasing testosterone-type twentysomethings. Even if "Mallrats" wasn't the hit or even success d'estime "Clerks" was, Smith still has a following among the young-adult crowd that can be exploited by exhibitors. Daring theatre owners might try an offbeat Dating Game contest to garner publicity. Just don't pull a Jenny Jones.*

Good Luck

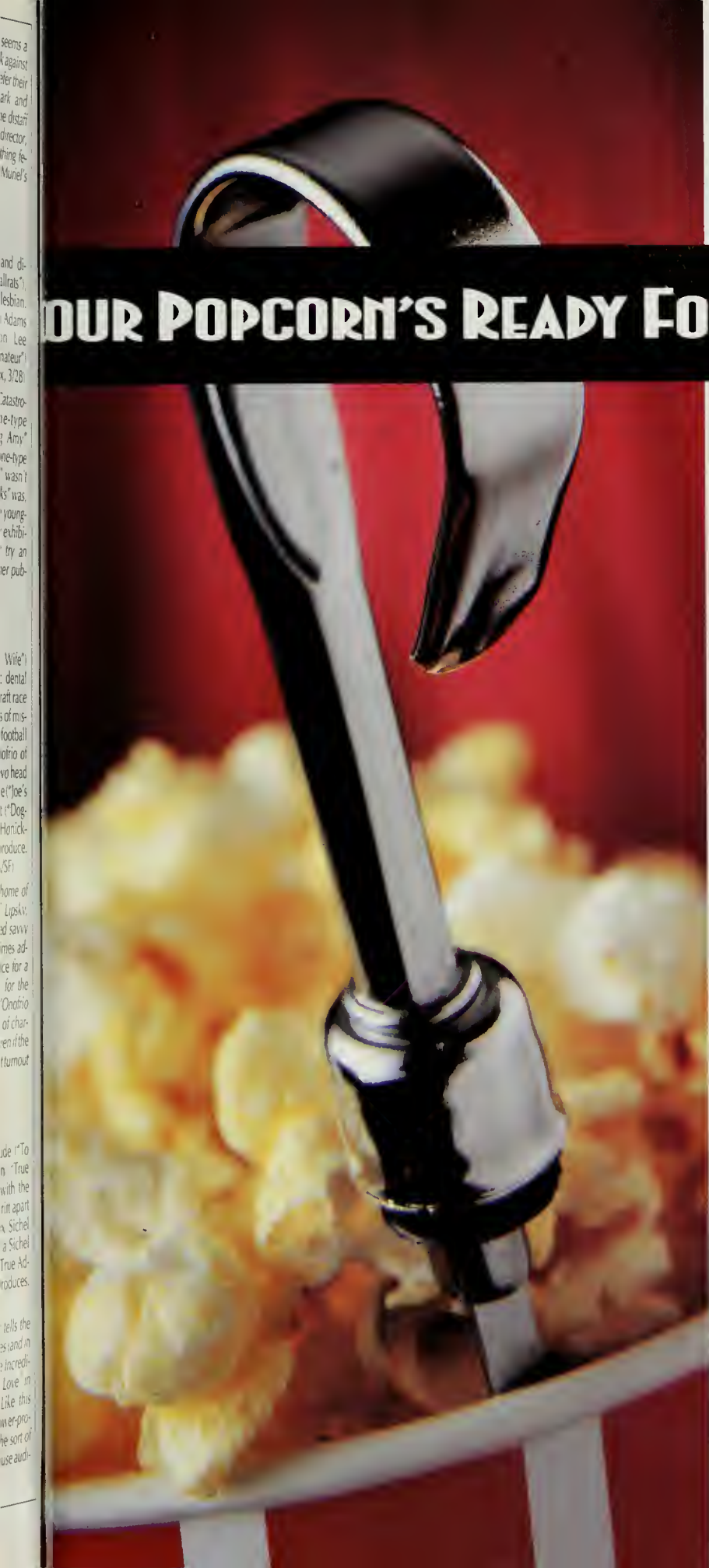
Gregory Hines ("The Preacher's Wife") plays Bernard Lemley, a paraplegic dental technician who dreams of running a raft race over treacherous waters. After a series of mishaps, Bernard teams up with blind ex-football hero Tony Olezniak (Vincent D'Onofrio of "The Whole Wide World") and the two head off on a wild adventure. Richard LaBrie ("Joe's Rotten World") directs; Bob Comfort ("Dogfight") scripts; Richard Hahn, Shirley Honickman Hahn and Andrzej Kamrowski produce. (East West Film Partners, 3/27 NY/LA/SF)

Exploitips: *East West is the new home of former October Films founder Jeff Lipsky, who exhibited substantial specialized savvy during his tenure there. This good-times adventure might seem a change of pace for a Lipsky project (almost a "Kingpin" for the art-house crowd), but the Hines-D'Onofrio pairing holds promise, both in terms of character interplay and audience draw, even if the lack of a love-story subplot could limit turnout by the distaff demo.*

All Over Me

Fifteen-year-old best friends Claude ("To Die For's" Alison Folland) and Ellen ("True Crimes'" Tara Subkoff) must deal with the pain of separation as they begin to drift apart and make new acquaintances. Alex Sichel directs her feature debut; sister Sylvia Sichel scripts; Dolly Hall ("The Incredibly True Adventures of Two Girls in Love") produces. (Fine Line, 3/28)

Exploitips: *The Dolly Hall credit tells the story here; expect the same audiences (and in the same quantity) as attended "The Incredibly True Adventures of Two Girls in Love" in '95 and "Manny & Lo" in '96. Like this month's "The Quiet Room," this is lower-profile Fine Line fare, but it's exactly the sort of against-the-grain product that art-house audiences can find provocative.*



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CATS DON'T DANCE

This animated musical tells of the adventures of two cats who want to be Hollywood stars. "Cats Don't Dance" features the voices of Scott Bakula, Natalie Cole, Ashley Peldon and Kathy Najimy. Mark Dindal directs; executive producer Sandy Russell Gartin also handles scripting chores; David Kirschner ("The Pagemaster") and Paul Gertz produce. (Warner Bros., 3/28)

Exploitips: *Although the Kirschner-produced "Pagemaster" didn't set boxoffice records during its Thanksgiving 1994 run, it hod an intelligent narrative (perhaps too intelligent) and some intriguing visuals. "Cats Don't Dance" sports the animals 'n' singing combination that family audiences more commonly expect of animated films. But the usual caveat applies here: Only the Disney imprimatur is a guarantee of tot turnout for feature-length cartoon fare.*

MARCH UNDATED

Liar Liar

As his birthday present, the son of a fanatical liar/attorney ("The Cable Guy's" Jim Carrey) receives his wish, and his father is forced to tell the truth for 24 hours. Maura Tierney and Cary Elwes ("Twister") co-star. Tom Shadyac ("Ace Ventura: Pet Detective") directs; "City Slickers" scripters Lowell Ganz and Babaloo Mandell team with writers Paul Guay and Stephen Mazur ("The Little Rascals") for the screenplay; Brian Grazer ("Apollo 13") produces. (Universal)

Exploitips: *The reason Universal was a bit product-shy this past Christmas was that "Liar Liar" had been slated to be U's big holiday title. As distribution president Nikki Rocco (and all exhibitors) say, however, this is a 12-months-a-year industry, so a Carrey title—even after the comparatively low returns for "The Cable Guy"—arriving in March holds promise. And the Lion certainly profited with a big-star comedy last March with "The Birdcage." More importantly, the scenario here could return Carrey to his frantic antic mode, which is what moviegoers pay their $7 to see.*

Selena

Writer/director Gregory Nava (who scored with New Line's "My Family/Mi Familia") explores the life and death of the superstar Tejano singer Selena (rising star Jennifer Lopez, most recently in "Jack" and "Blood and Wine"), who was murdered in 1995. Edward James Olmos ("Caught") also stars. (Warner)

Exploitips: *Advanced from May, "Selena" holds promised of being an unexpectedly big hit. Expect heavy turnout from youth, female and Hispanic audiences, which comprised Selena's millions-deep fan base. Nava's most recent, "My Family/'Mi Familia," garnered substantial critical acclaim, so "Selena" could become "The Rose" of the '90s.*

Inventing the Abbotts

Raised in the shadow of an unresolved secret between their families, two brothers—one whose soul is filled with anger, and one whose soul is fueled by love—compete for the affections of three wealthy sisters. Billy Crudup ("Sleepers"), Joaquin Phoenix ("To Die For"), Liv Tyler ("Stealing Beauty"), Jennifer Connelly ("Mulholland Falls") and Joanna Going ("Wyatt Earp") star. Pat O'Connor ("Circle of Friends") directs; Ken Hixon adapts the Sue Miller short story; Brian Grazer and Janet Myers produce for Imagine. (Fox)

Exploitips: *The strong young cast, teaming with O'Connor (who gave Savoy its one good film), gives "Inventing the Abbotts" sleeper promise. Depending on when Fox slates the film's first weekend, one might expect strong initial interest from the twenty- and thirtysomething crowd; if reviews are good, other demos could come in on succeeding frames.*

Commandments

After losing his job, wife and home, Seth ("Michael Collins'" Aidan Quinn) is hit by a lightning bolt while yelling at God, and must live with his dead wife's sister ("Scream's" Courteney Cox) and her tabloid reporter husband ("Trees Lounge's" Anthony LaPaglia). To

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

LATE INTO FEBRUARY...

Boyfriends

Directed, written and produced by Neil Hunter and Tom Hunsinger, this contemporary comedy explores the relationships of three gay couples as they spend Easter weekend together in the country. James Dreyfus, Michael Urwin, David Coffey, Mark Sands, Andrew Ableson and Darren Petrucci star. (First Run)

Exploitips: *Catchline: "The Big Chill" goes gay. If your run continues through the end of March, emphasize the Easter theme to give this a seasonal flavor.*

I Was a Jewish Sex Worker

This documentary, mode by directar/writer/producer Phillip B. Roth, explores the life of the filmmaker as he grapples with his religion, family and homosexuality—all the while as he works as an erotic masseuse. (Greycat)

Exploitips: *Despite the diverting title, this will likely play only to the specialized gay demo. Controversy could cause crossover.*

Satantango

At 430 minutes, "Satantango" is an epic that explores the corrosian of ideals in Eastern Europe during the fall of communism. Bela Tarr directs. (Cinema Parallel)

Exploitips: *And some thought "Hamlet" long. Think of it this way: If you have an intermission every 90 minutes, "Satan Tango" provides four breaks for concessions.*

Scream of Stone

Two climbers (Vittorio Mezzogiorno and Stephan Glowacs) ascend the world's most difficult peak. Werner Herzog directs; Hans-Ulrich Klenner and Walter Saxer script, and Soxer produces with Henry Lange and Richard Sadler. (Roxie)

Exploitips: *As with "Cobra Verde," the Herzog name is the selling point here.*

Without Air

South American filmmaker Neil Abramson directs, writes ond photographs this film about a stripper/blues singer (Lauri Crook) who has outgrown her junkie boyfriend (Jock May). Leigh-Anne Potter, Nakie Taylor and Pat Lawyer co-star; John Bick produces. (Phaedra)

Exploitips: *Although our Sundance review (Aug. '96) was only 2 1/2 stars, it notes that "Lauri Crook gives a riveting autobiographical performance."*

The Daytrippers

Directed by Greg Mottola, this comedy stars Hope Davis, Stanley Tucci, Parker Posey, Liev Schreiber, Anne Meora and Campbell Scott. (CFP)

Exploitips: *Highlight the players' recent efforts: Scott/Tucci's "Big Night," Pasey's "subUrbia," Schreiber's "Denise Calls Up."*

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Gattaca

In this futuristic sci-fi film, genetic engineering is a prosperous and competitive business. Predestined to die in his early 30s, Vincent Freeman ("Before Sunrise's" Ethan Hawke) tries desperately to change his fate. Uma Thurman ("Beautiful Girls") and Alan Arkin ("Mother Night") star in writer/director Andrew Niccol's feature debut. Danny DeVito, Stacey Sher and Michael Shamberg produce for their Jersey Films production company, lately moved to Universal. (Columbia)

Exploitips: *Even though there's no top A-list talent here (at least compared to Columbia's other big title this month, the Ford-Pitt "The Devil's Own"), the "Gattaca" genre is A-list at least for the first weekend, when the sci-fi crowd usually can be counted on to turn out in abundance. Also aim at the twenty- and thirtysomething crowd, Hawke and Thurman's strong suits.*

get God's attention, Seth decides to break the ten commandments. Writer/director Daniel Taplitz makes his feature debut with this black comedy; Michael Chijich, Joe Medjuck and Daniel Goldberg produce. (Universal)

Exploitips: *Similar not only in studio but in setup and genre to this month's "Liar Liar," this could generate less attention simply due to comparative casting. If Universal opens "Liar Liar" first, however, be sure to program "Commandments" trailers to inform and attract their shared audiences.*

Crash

Based on the 1973 novel by J.G. Ballard, this film follows a married man ("Two Days in the Valley's" James Spader) who becomes fascinated with sex and danger after he survives a near-fatal car crash with Dr. Helen Remington ("The Piano's" Holly Hunter). Elias Koteas ("Exotica"), Deborah Kara Unger and Rosanna Arquette co-star. David Cronenberg ("Naked Lunch") directs, scripts and produces. (Fine Line)

Exploitips: *Not only Ted Turner doesn't like "Crash's" explicitness—it's the world, with country after country weighing in with objections. Fine Line (pre-Ted) had planned to release this NC-17, but it has an R version ready. Best bet: Use a banned-in-Boston approach to emphasis the high-PR controversy.*

Gentlemen Don't Eat Poets

Set in the countryside of 1949 England, director John-Paul Davidson's film follows aristocrat Sir Hugo Coal (Alan Bates), who

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Response No. 2

becomes furious when his favorite daughter ("The Summer House's" Lena Headey) decides to marry a practitioner of the poetic arts (Steven Mackintosh). Theresa Russell stars as Hugo's bored wife. Patrick McGrath scripts; Trudie Styler produces. (Live)

Exploitips: *At long last, former home video-only concern Live—which two years ago said it was entering the theatrical production/distribution game—seems to be carrying through. Expect this fare to score with the same group that responded to Live's "Hotel de Love" last month.*

Independence

In this comedy/drama, a group of friends on their way to attend a wedding find themselves caught in the midst of a bank heist. Dean Cain (best known as TV's Superman) and Drew Barrymore ("Everyone Says I Love You") star. Tamra Davis ("Billy Madison") directs. (Orion)

Exploitips: *Orion (which had recently handled Live efforts like "The Arrival") also seems to be returning to stride after a couple years offering only occasional Orion Classics titles. Barrymore is a known movie name (for a few generations, even), and among female auds the Cain moniker might generate some interest from twentysomething tube watchers.*

A Brother's Kiss

Writer/director Seth Zvi Rosenfeld's film tells the story of two brothers living in the New York ghetto. Lex ("Con Air's" Nick Chinlund) dreams of becoming a pro basketball player; his younger brother Mick ("Federal Hill's" Michael Raynor) wants to become a detective. When Lex screws up his life, he turns to drugs and crime, and his brother, try as he might, can't save him. Rosie Perez, Cathy Moriarty and John Leguizamo co-star; Bob Potter produces. (First Look)

Exploitips: *The title might be an offputting minus here with the likely male demo, but First Look—even in the post-Ray Price era—has done an excellent job of selecting its specialized titles. This one might need time to build, so accelerate word-of-mouth by emphasizing positive coast reviews.*

Dead Men Can't Dance

In this action-genre film, a group of soldiers must cross enemy lines in order to secretly demolish a Korean nuclear power plant. Michael Biehn ("Tombstone"), Adrian Paul and Kathleen York star. Stephen M. Anderson ("South Central") directs; Bill Kerby, Mark Sevi and Paul Sinor script; Elaine Hastings-Edel produces. (Live)

Exploitips: *Live seems to be specializing in catchy titles this month; with a month that sees both "Dead Men Can't Dance" and "Gentlemen Don't Eat Poets," it's showing it will be offering exhibitors diverse fare. This actioner will likely play to the male crowd that attended "The Arrival."*

Broken English

A young Croatian immigrant, Nina (Aleksandra Vujcic), lives with her refugee family in a poor Auckland migrant enclave. Her relationship with her domineering and racist father ("Before the Rain's" Rade Serbedzija) deteriorates when she begins an affair with a local Maori named Eddie (Julian Arahanga). A crisis ensues when Nina becomes pregnant. Gregor Nicholas directs, and Nicholas scripts with Johanna Pigott and Jim Salter; Robin Scholes produces for Communicado/Village Roadshow. (Sony Classics)

Exploitips: *Sony Classics debuted "Broken English" for exhibitors at Showeast, showing an appropriate level of confidence by the distributor. As we suggested in our Showeast coverage, "Broken English's" logline could be "Once Were Warriors" meets "Before the Rain," as it merges New Zealand and Serbian/Croat elements. Still, exhibitors might best highlight the romantic entanglement over that of the film's politics to expand the film's audience draw. Held from Feb. '97.*

Female Perversions

A high-powered prosecutor ("Orlando's" Tilda Swinton) in line for a judgeship must hang on to her sliding personal life when her combative sister (Amy Madigan) is arrested for shoplifting and when she falls in love with a woman psychiatrist ("What Happened Was...'s" Karen Sillas). Susan Streitfeld directs and co-adapts a nonfiction book by Freudian therapist Louise J. Kaplan. (October Films)

Exploitips: *So full of stylizations and symbolism about the female psyche that it's almost uninterested in narrative, "Female Perversions" could win interest among arthousers of both genders; exhibitors might play up its strangeness for marketplace cachet. Held from Nov. '96.*



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Sleepover

After lying to their parents about their whereabouts for the coming night, three teenage boys stay out all hours and find themselves in life-threatening situations. Michael Albanese, Karl Giant, Shannon Berry, Heather Casey, Ken Miles and Megan Shand star. John Sullivan directs and scripts; Jim McNally produces. (Artistic License)

Exploitips: *This could generate interest from Baby Boomer males who pulled the same sleepover stunt during their youth, but the older-teen and twentysomething date-night crowd is the likelier target.*

The Watermelon Woman

An African-American lesbian filmmaker, Cheyrl (played by writer/director Cheyrl Dunye), researches the life of a Golden Age actress known only as the Watermelon Woman in hopes of trying to confirm her suspicion that the actress was involved in an interracial lesbian relationship. Guin Turner ("Go Fish") co-stars. Harry Swimar and Alexandra Juhasz produce. (First Run)

Exploitips: *Not only homosexual audiences but also the more experimental college crowd, female but also male, might be attracted by this unconventional fare. "Go Fish" was a select-site hit for Goldwyn, so the Turner name and that credit will ring a bell with lesbian moviegoers.*

Mushrooms

In this Australian comedy, widows and boarding-house owners Minnie (Lynette Curran) and Flo (Julia Blake) resort to shoplifting to get by after their husbands go to their heavenly rewards. When a crook named Grubb (Boris Brkie) dies in their house, they must try to get rid of the body while not incurring the suspicion of the resident policeman (Simon Chilvers). First-time feature filmmaker Alan Madden directs and scripts; Brian Rosen produces. (Tara)

Exploitips: *"Arsenic and Old Lace" goes Down Under and less deadly. Aussie comedies (e.g., "Muriel's Wedding") have a way of playing stateside, so this could build strength as Tara bicycles the prints around America. Play up the reviews, especially any calling "Mushrooms" a distaff "Shallow Grave."*

Mandela

Jo Menell and Angus Gibson's documentary chronicles the turbulent life of South African President Nelson Mandela, who narrates the film. "Mandela" is produced by Jonathan Demme, Edward Saxon and Peter Saraf for Clinico Estetico. (Island)

Exploitips: *Expect interest from college-town demos, although January's "Inside"—which covered similar thematic ground—might cut into returns here (as with this month's "Hearts and Minds"). To counter this, emphasize the well-regarded Mandela name. A nod to Demme and Saxon (who paired for the big-title likes of "Philadelphia") can't hurt.*

Salut Cousin!

Alilo (Gad Elmaleh) arrives in Paris from Algiers to retrieve a suitcase he must deliver back home. While staying with his worldly cousin Mok (Mess Hattou) Alilo is amazed at and attracted by the West's freedoms, so different from his repressive homeland. Meanwhile, his cousin continually schemes to escape the poverty of his immigrant life. Merzak Allouache directs, and co-scripts with Caroline Thivel; Jacques Bidou produces.(Seventh Art)

Exploitips: *Our reviewer (see Dec. '96) cites Elmaleh as an enaging performer and Hattou as an effective character contrast, and also notes that filmmaker Allouache, in exile from Morocco since he made "Bab el-Oued City" (1994), allows his experiences to "give a complexity" to "Salut Cousin!" As did Sony Classics with "Broken English," Seventh Art held this from this year's crowded February.*

Flipping

Writer/director Gene Mitchell's crime drama explores the life of Hollywood mobster Michael Moore ("The Takeover's" David Amos), who tries to overthrow the neighborhood boss ("Dead Presidents'" Keith David). Meanwhile, an undercover cop (David Proval of "The Shawshank Redemption") falls in love with Moore and loses his objectivity. Mitchell and Amos also produce. (Dove)

Exploitips: *Held from Dove's '96 slate, "Flipping" has generated select good reviews on the fest circuit that exhibitors can exploit. The against-the-genre homosexual wrinkle, which with certain male demos could work against the film, is also a plus, providing exhibitors serving specialized gay audiences with an added marketing hook.*

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Response No. 467

THE BEST LITTLE ART-HOUSE IN TEXAS

Scott Dinger Explains Why the Dobie Theatre is Austin's Premier Venue for Alternative Fare

By Susan Lambert



Scott Dinger in the Dobie's Gothic auditorium, one of four grandiosely themed cinemas.

There is a lot of film going on in Austin," says Scott Dinger, owner of the Dobie Theatre. And he's not just talking about the number of screens the capital city of Texas supports. Among independent filmmakers, the Dobie Theatre—located in the heart of the fair Lone Star city—is the stuff of legends. A few years back, then-unknown filmmaker Richard Linklater approached Scott Dinger about showing his independent movie—which some would later call the quintessential film of Austin—at the Dobie. Dinger agreed to give "Slacker" a try.

Sold-out shows and a subsequent string of film festivals led Hollywood straight to Linklater, and he followed up his efforts with "Dazed and Confused," "Before Sunrise" and "subUrbia." When fellow Austinite Robert Rodriguez broke onto the scene with "El Mariachi," his success also inspired a generation of Texas film students and Austin artists to a boom of independent production never before seen in the city. Scott says proudly, "At this year's New York IFM [Independent Film Market], there were six films in there from Austin."

And Austinites are just as proud of their theatre. As one Austin filmmaker put it, "If you could keep only one theatre open in all of Austin, it would have to be the Dobie. No question."

Scott Dinger began his exhibition career when his brother, Jeffrey Dinger, who runs a theatre in Rockport, Texas, decided to buy a local drive-in and asked Scott to come down from Philadelphia and help run it. "The drive-in had been closed for some time, and we spent months making sure everything was ready and getting all the speakers working. I'd just gotten some test film in when a hurricane came through the Gulf of Mexico and we had to evacuate." They returned to a destroyed drive-in. "So that was my short-lived drive-in career." But Scott stayed to help Jeffrey run his surviving theatre. "I had never worked in a theatre before, and that's where I learned the mechanics—projection, threading, trouble-shooting and all that stuff."

After a few years, Scott grew bored with Rockport. "It's on the water and it's real pretty, but it's a small resort town. So I moved to Austin." And briefly out of the movie business.

Then, around Christmas 1985, Scott noticed the theatre located in the Dobie Center mall was shuttered. "So I talked to Jeff and I said, 'You know, I think we can do this.'" Scott and Jeff worked long and hard to persuade the then-owner, Presidio—a local chain that thought the two-screen Dobie too small for its expansion plans—to sell to the Dingers and keep the Dobie going. It started out as a second-run house, but, as the market grew and changed in Austin, Scott found there was a need for something different. Eleven years later, the Dobie is considered one of the premier art/alternative houses in Texas and plays host to every film festival in Austin.

As for being the only independent theatre left in Austin, Scott is fairly blunt about the competition. "It's cutthroat," he says. "Austin is a big city, but the majors have come in and just squeezed everybody out."

Scott recently renovated the Dobie from two to four screens. "One of the reasons we did this expansion was the competition. It was a do-or-die kind of thing." The theatre was built as a one-screener in 1970, though it was almost immediately expanded to two screens. "And it was that way for 20 years, so we basically knocked everything down." The theatre took over the neighboring lot and Dinger renovated the entire area. "Basically it's a new theatre. New lobby, new concession stand, new restrooms, new seating, new everything."

And each auditorium was opulently and dramatically designed with a different theme. "My idea was that we play different kinds of movies, so I wanted the theatres to be different-



The 275-seat Egyptian auditorium, the Dobie's largest theatre.

looking. The largest theatre [275 seats] is Egyptian. The next one [175 seats] is what we call Gothic. We created archways with stained glass and gargoyles. The third one [150 seats] is art deco, and the smallest one [100 seats] is the hardest to describe. It has a lot of tapestries on the wall and it has a big old red velvet curtains with gold tassels down by the screen." Scott says his goal was to create something singular. "To me it really hearkens back to what it must have been like years ago with movies. It's like, 'Hey, *this* is showmanship.' You have to get the public excited, and that's what I feel some of this is."

Scott asserts the challenge to survive has made the Dobie stronger. "We had to develop things to survive: courting all the film festivals that come to town, or creating our own, like a Hong Kong festival or a 3-D festival, that sort of thing. I think it's a lot of the things that made us what we are." Scott thinks the independent theatre owner is a special breed. "There are some that have been in the business forever and it's in their blood. There is all this video and competing markets, but they are still there in these smaller towns, you know, showing movies. I guess maybe it's that little bit of show business. You couldn't close them down if you wanted to. They love it."

"Excitement" is how Scott would capture the movie business in one word. "It's getting people out and getting them into lines to buy their ticket. That whole pre-show excitement. The lights come down and all that—that to me is the movie experience."

To generate interest, Scott has several methods of getting the word out on upcoming screenings. "We do a lot of promotion on the films. I think it would be tough for somebody who wouldn't actually be owning it and actually operating it to keep it going that way." Along with the usual calendar put out every two months, the Dobie Theatre has its own successful website (http://www.hyperweb.com/dobie). The Dobie also does promotions with radio stations, record stores and many other institutions. For "Kansas City" it did cross-promotion with the well known jazz clubs in town. The Dobie also works with neighboring businesses. "We'll do trades that will allow us to put posters up in their windows and in high-traffic areas."

"To me it really hearkens back to what it must have been like years ago with movies. It's like, 'Hey, this is showmanship.' You have to get the public excited, and that's what I feel some of this is."

One of the cinemas can accommodate 16mm and video projection along with 35mm. Scott says the versatility comes in quite useful for the film festivals, schools and local filmmakers. "We get a real interesting mix. We rent the theatre out for one-time show type things to a lot of different people."

The Dobie's usual crowd is not just the local University of Texas students, but what Scott calls the "hip crowd" of Austin. "We run seven days a week and we run midnight movies seven days a week. Four midnight movies every night. There are some movies, like 'Welcome to the Dollhouse,' where the midnight movie does better than the 7 o'clock show." Scott explains it's because much of his clientele isn't usually families, unless they play a family film. "Like last summer our biggest film was 'The Secret of Roan Inish.' We played it all summer and it went through the roof."

"What we're doing here is a lot of work, but it's extremely satisfying also," says Scott. "Because each film or festival or series that you put together is really unique. And of course you get to do really interesting things, like have Quentin Tarantino sitting in your office for 10 days."

Yes, *the* Quentin Tarantino. The Dobie recently ran a special 10-day program featuring the notorious filmmaker with some of his personally owned film prints. "He's a real film collector," explains Scott. "I think he owns prints of maybe 200 films. He was here for 10 days and each day was a different sort of genre. So one night was 'Good 'Ol Boy' night—films from the '70s set in the south with someone running moonshine and big car chases. One was 'Cheerleader Night' and 'Kung Fu' night. We had a big horror-thon that went on until like 5 in the morning." They would usually show double features and Tarantino would introduce each film. "And then he'd sit in the audience and most times actually yell at the movies. It was a lot of fun." The proceeds went to benefit the Austin Film Society which was started at the Dobie Theatre 10 years ago by Richard Linklater and Lee Daniels (cinematographer for "Slacker" and "Dazed and Confused"). Scott says it's those kinds of events that offer the most triumphant moments of being a film exhibitor. "It's creating a unique event at the Dobie that to me is a real memorable thing. That's the high."

The Dobie Theatre
2021 Guadalupe Street
Austin, TX 78705
(512) 472-3240
Owners: Scott & Jeffrey Dinger

Earliest Movie Memory: "Those Magnificent Men in Their Flying Machines," 1965

Favorite Concession Item: Soft pretzels with mustard and light salt

Favorite Boxoffice Feature: Independent Feature Chart; Reviews Section; Independent Exhibitor Showcase. "When I get my Boxoffice, I go through it the back first. I really like to look at the Independent Feature Chart. I like to look at the reviews because the reviews have really been expanded into more of something that I'm looking for. I also enjoy the Independent Exhibitor Showcase because you can get some ideas from it. You see what someone is doing and say, 'Hey, I could adapt that to my theatres.'"

Advice to Other Independents: "It's a niche market and you just work it."

HONG KONG: THE CITY ON THE EDGE OF FOREVER



RED TIDE: *The looming presence of reunification has more and more frequently become the subject of Hong Kong films. Jet Li, a top HK draw and the star of "Bodyguard From Beijing," is one of few HK actors actually born in China itself. Li retains his Chinese citizenship.*

At the stroke of midnight, June 30, 1997, a hundred years of British colonial rule in Hong Kong will come to an end as one of the world's most bustling capitalistic metropolises reverts to the People's Republic of China. With the expiration of Britain's century-long lease comes a flood of anxiety, anticipation, expectation and uncertainty. The reversion is especially unique in the annals of the post-Cold War world in that it marks the first peaceful transfer of territory from a democratic, capitalistic state to an authoritarian, communist one.

Nowhere, however, is the hand-over viewed with more scepticism than by the world's filmmaking community. Symbol of artistic freedom in the West, preferred tool for propaganda in the East, the cinema and its artisans continue to find themselves in the eye of the political storm in virtually all corners of the world. And all will be watching with bated breath as two of the world's most dynamic yet radically different film industries prepare to merge.

Promises to maintain the status quo in Hong Kong for another 50 years notwithstanding, most observers believe that some degree of change in the Hong Kong and mainland film industries will occur almost immediately. It is fitting, perhaps, that the hand-over occurs as both industries find themselves in a critical downturn. While filmmakers on the mainland are under increasing pressure to toe a rigid party line, and once-lauded status directors like Zhang Yimou and Chen Kaige are made to endure official censure for "pandering" to foreign audiences, Hong Kong is finally reaping the fruits of such pandering as the exodus of talent to Hollywood continues, leaving the once thriving industry in a state of disarray and chaos.

The truth of the matter is that Hollywood has made vast inroads with the moviegoing public in both China and Hong Kong and, despite the better efforts of authorities, audiences are continuing to abandon their domestic cinema. Precisely how and if two film industries built on such diametrically opposed principles will be able to consolidate remains to be seen, particularly in light of the dim view with which Communist Party officials regard the explicit use of sex and violence on which Hong Kong cinema has historically thrived.

In an attempt to cast a bit of fresh light on the future, **BOXOFFICE** *consulted with a number of industry insiders and experts close to the situation. Sadly, representatives from Hong Kong and China were conspicuously uncooperative and evasive when approached for their perspective. For this reason, by their own choosing, an official government viewpoint is not represented here..*

by Wade Major



THE CITY ON THE EDGE OF FOREVER: *Hong Kong at night. This and other cityscapes courtesy the Hong Kong Tourist Association.*

BOXOFFICE

SPECIAL REPORT:

ASIA 1997

TERENCE CHANG PRODUCER, WCG ENTERTAINMENT

Longtime producer and partner of director John Woo, Terence Chang's credits include Woo films on both sides of the Pacific like "Hard Boiled," "Hard Target," "Broken Arrow" and the forthcoming "Face Off." Chang is presently partnered with Woo and former William Morris agent Chris Godsick in Los Angeles-based WCG Entertainment.

The Hong Kong film industry is not very healthy at the moment. In fact, it's never been worse. And that's why a lot of talent, actors and directors, have come to Hollywood to look for work. That John [Woo] has succeeded here is encouraging. But I think things are so bad, they have nowhere to go but up. Five years ago, no one was thinking about the hand-over. They were thinking, "We've got five more years. Make as much money as possible and we'll worry about it when the time comes." Now the time has come and the feeling is very, very different.

I think there are two ways to think about it. One is to be optimistic and look at China as a huge new market. While markets in other parts of Asia are shrinking, China is growing. And many Hong Kong producers are already working with studios in China. On the other hand, even directors working in China, like Chen Kaige, want to come to Hollywood and make films because they don't have the freedom to make whatever they want. Censorship is a problem for them. Even American studios are realizing that. If you can work around the regulations, I think things should change very little. Hong Kong was never a true democracy. We've always had a very politically-sensitive censorship system. Anything that is politically hostile is discouraged. So it's not something entirely new in that way.

Whether or not the two industries will be able to consolidate artistically, I don't really know. But I'd like to think positively. There is a huge pool of talent in China which we don't know about. And the drain of talent from Hong Kong to Hollywood seems to be leveling off right now. Overall, I'd say I'm optimistic. It's going to be a totally new picture and Hong Kong obviously will not be producing the same kinds of films in the future. But I still think it will be good. It's time for a change.

TOM GRAY, SR. VICE PRESIDENT IN CHARGE OF PRODUCTION, GOLDEN HARVEST

As an executive with American majors like Paramount and United Artists during the 1970s, Gray became instrumental in helping to spread the popularity of Hong Kong cinema by becoming the first-ever person to purchase Jackie Chan films from Hong Kong-based entertainment conglomerate Golden Harvest for foreign distribution. Soon thereafter, he joined Golden Harvest, where he is presently Sr. Vice President in Charge of Production and principal Los Angeles liaison for the company.

The Hong Kong industry has been diving downward these past few years, for several reasons. Foremost is that a lot of the top-talent directors have emigrated to the United States. John Woo, Ringo Lam, Stanley Tong—the stalwarts, their best directors—have all come over here and gotten themselves production deals, and they're doing quite well. Another reason is that in the run up to 1997, no one is certain what's going to happen. So there are a lot of films that are just thrown out there that aren't cutting edge. And people are getting tired of films coming out that have no clear-cut direction. Also, Taiwan used to be a great buyer of Hong Kong films, accounting for a lot of revenue. But that's dried up as the Taiwanese

exhibitors got together and decided they weren't going to pay those top dollars anymore. But probably the biggest reason for the decline is that the American majors have been able to move in and get a real stranglehold on the high end of the market. In Hong Kong, people got a taste of the more spectacular American product and they decided they like it. Those $100 million budget U.S. blockbusters are doing very well in Hong Kong, and one result is that the local product has suffered.



BRAIN DRAIN: *As June 30 approaches, the leading lights of Hong Kong cinema have been seeking higher international profiles. Jackie Chan's "Rumble in the Bronx" gave its star the U.S. hit he'd sought for years, making an overseas film career possible.*

I just came from Hong Kong, and it's hard to predict precisely what's going to happen come July. We have taken the initiative to produce films in China, doing 12 this year alone, basically for local consumption. There's no question that we all have to face up to the fact that the reversion is probably not going to reinforce the status quo. Although the official line is that we'll be able to do what we want, I have my doubts that filmmaking as we now know it will continue under the same guidelines. Category III films, which are the sexy films, and/or politically-themed films probably will not be allowed to be made. We don't know yet, but that's my suspicion.

The [communist] party line against "pandering" to foreign audiences is going to be a problem, but even the films that we are making in China today are already tailored to reflect the official guidelines. What's important to remember is that this is all still in the experimental stage, and we haven't put enough product through the pipeline yet to determine whether it's a viable way to do business. But censorship runs in strange ways, like anything else. Tolerance exists until there's an outcry, and then it gets slammed back.

As for the notion that Hong Kong may be the tail that wags the dog [by teaching the mainland the ways of capitalism], I think that's overly optimistic and I have my doubts about Hong Kong being kept separate for the next 50 years. I would imagine that the vibrant Hong Kong industry as we've known it will probably go through a further decline and then resurrect itself with some newer directors coming up who may be more palatable [to the powers that be] in terms of subject matter. It's also possible that some of the directors who've emigrated to Hollywood won't do so well here and will go back to Hong Kong to become the so-called "new stimulus." They may pick up some new techniques, go back and make films closer to the Hollywood style.

In general, though, people are nervous about the changeover. The frequency in moviegoing is down, people aren't spending as much money, the retail business is not doing as well. There's a general malaise in the market. People who have leisure money are not spending it like they used to. It's a wait and see attitude, and we've seen it have a pretty dramatic effect even on the American pictures. Unless it's a superblockbuster.

But I'd say I'm cautiously optimistic. We have to recognize China's potential. We've taken the optimistic approach by going in, trying to develop relationships and find new talent. There's no question we have to do it. You have to be aggressive to go into China. Whether we're successful or not remains to be seen. But clearly, there is talent there and there is a market there, and that's what we're trying to tap into.

TSUI HARK
WRITER/PRODUCER/ DIRECTOR

Hong Kong's most successful filmmaker ever, Tsui Hark's 50-plus credits as a writer, director and producer include the popular series "A Chinese Ghost Story," "Swordsman" and "Once Upon a Time in China" along with classics like "Peking Opera Blues," "Green Snake," "The Lovers" and "The Blade." As a producer in Hong Kong, he helped establish figures like John Woo and Chow Yun-Fat, and his influence has been visible in major American titles as diverse as "Mortal Kombat" and Francis Coppola's "Dracula." In 1997 his Hollywood debut, "Double Team," starring Jean-Claude Van Damme, will be released through Columbia Pictures.

The situation in Hong Kong right now is not political. It's more a transition period from one trend to another. I think the industry throughout the world is moving toward a different kind of filmmaking. People have become so media-saturated that motion pictures have become a familiar language. Audiences can predict almost anything that will happen onscreen. So I think we're all looking for something fresh and original with character and style. The situation in the Hong Kong industry is no different. We know that every so often we go through periods like this, and need a change. The reversion is just one such period. On the one hand we're excited, but we're also curious about what happens next.

Of course, there's a lot of anticipation and worry and frustration about the situation. But I think it's too early to say anything certain. I believe there's going to be a boom in every aspect in Hong Kong simply because everyone wants it that way. Even the Chinese government wants to come up with better prospects in Hong Kong. And they are very aware of the film industry and the kind of mentality we have in Hong Kong. Even with the government we have now, there are invisible restrictions on the media. You have this in America with the MPAA ratings. It works the same way. In Hong Kong we just see ourselves as a mirror reflecting different aspects of the environment around us.

But there's always going to be some kind of contradiction between the role that filmmakers see for themselves and what the government sees for them. I would hope that this kind of situation wouldn't develop too quickly. If it does happen, maybe we'll find some way to work it out. It's just too early to say.

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Response No. 95



NEON TWILIGHT?: *Will the urban energy of contemporary Hong Kong survive its assimilation into the mainland?*

ALEXANDRA SUN
PRESIDENT,
THE FILM LIBRARY GROUP

As President and Founder of The Film Library Group, with offices in Australia, Hong Kong and Beijing, Alexandra Sun is one of the most active importers and exporters of films from and to mainland China and Hong Kong, including such titles as "The Bride With White Hair 2" by Ronny Yu, along with award winners like Zhang Jin's "Sweet Grass" and Yim Ho's antiwar drama "Buddha's Lock."

I think people in Hong Kong seem to be more concerned right now with the generally bad condition of the market. The boxoffice figures are not very good for most Hong Kong films. A lot of companies aren't doing well, others have closed down. Mandarin Films even closed down their whole cinema chain. They're not exhibitors anymore. For this reason, many producers see mainland China as an expanding market. People have been shooting in China and doing co-productions there because, when you do an official co-production with China, you can distribute your film there. In the past, you could only sell your finished film to the Chinese government buying agency, which would pay you very little money. Because many producers now see China as a huge, expanding market of more and more importance, they're doing their best to familiarize themselves with the regulations and to build up connections.

What's difficult at the moment, particularly this year, is that the Chinese government has tightened up censorship rules. Even with some of the big Hong Kong producers, their production activities have been severely restricted in China because the government regards their films as too violent or because officials may not be happy with their activities in China. The dilemma right now is that a really good, commercial script would be very hard to get through the censors. But if a script's not commercial enough, why bother doing it? And this is frustrating for two types of producers. The first are the typical Hong Kong action producers who are frustrated because their films aren't doing well in Hong Kong and who're also finding it hard to get into China. The others are the art-house producers, whose films have never had a strong traditional market in Southeast Asia to begin with. It's not a very happy picture.

"What's difficult at the moment is that the Chinese government has tightened up censorship rules. Even with some of the big Hong Kong producers, their production activities have been severely restricted in China because the government regards their films as too violent or officials aren't happy with their activities in China. The dilemma right now is that a really good, commercial script would be very hard to get through the censors. But if a script's not commercial enough, why bother doing it?"

Still, I'd imagine that, after the takeover, there won't be so many changes as such. Even in China, producers are struggling to do films that are commercial, that audiences will like. I think that both Hong Kong and China are trying to do the same things. Hong Kong producers will just have to be more politically aware. You have to be more aware whenever you're operating in China. I represent films from China to other territories, and I've also been selling foreign films to China. And there are so many rules and regulations that you have to be aware of! And that means that your personal connections are very important.

Clearly, though, Hong Kong talent is more international than talent from the mainland. Most Hong Kong talent speaks English, and they are more Westernized. The Hong Kong culture is such that they can easily blend in and adapt to Western culture and what Western cinema demands. For mainland Chinese directors, the vision is very uniquely and strongly Chinese. And I don't think they can easily adapt to making a Western film.

Based on that schism, I think the two industries will remain somewhat separate because there are these cultural differences. Look at Taiwan and Hong Kong. The Taiwanese industry has always been very different from the Hong Kong industry. I think that more and more talent will try to get out, and not just because of politics. It has more to do with economics. They want to do bigger films that will travel wider. And it's been a blessing that Jackie Chan and John Woo have made it in Hollywood. Now others are trying to do it: Ringo Lam, Tsui Hark, Kirk Wong, Stanley Tong, Ronny Yu. And I think more talent will come out and try to work on the bigger international filmmaking circuit rather than just being seen as Hong Kong talent.

A regular contributor to **BOXOFFICE MAGAZINE**, *Wade Major has written about film for a variety of regional and national publications.*

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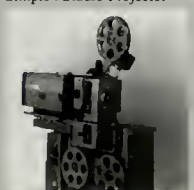
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Response No. 23



MADE IN JAPAN

Cinema City Takes Tokyo by Storm *by Buzz Hays*

Hirotaro Kawate, the owner, developer, and creative spirit behind the Cinema City—a remarkable six-screen theatre complex in Tachikawa, Japan, just outside of Tokyo—literally grew up in the cinema. Kawate began working in the theatre business in 1970, though his experience with the exhibition industry started when he was very young: his father was an actor who translated and performed live voices for silent films in his own small movie theatres.

Having grown up in Tachikawa, Kawate wanted to locate his own theatre there. When he began dreaming about Cinema City 14 years ago, there were only three other theatres in the area, primarily built to service U.S. Air Force base personnel. Once the base closed, the theatres went out of business, and the area remained theatre-free for many years (even today, the nearest competitive theatres are about 25 minutes away by train).

The concept for Cinema City was simple: to create a social center for the pure enjoyment of cinema. Some theatre owners and developers design theatres primarily to facilitate bottom-line concerns like concessions, with little regard for the social aspects of moviegoing. Cinema City was created to capture the feel of a private screening room in each theatre, coupled with specialized and inviting spaces for people to gather and discuss films before and after screenings.

The architecture is understated in order to let the films engage the patrons, avoiding the neon glitz of a cacophonous lobby. Little about the theatre complex design appears traditional to American cinemas. The complex is quiet, pleasing to the eye—a very comfortable place to enjoy films. Kawate's concepts have helped Cinema City to stand out; it has quickly become one of the most successful theatres in the Tokyo region.

When Kawate and his company, Tatsumi Corporation Inc., originally decided to build the theatre complex in Tachikawa, the local city government came forward and asked them to develop a larger area in addition to the theatres that would include shopping, restaurants, banking, and office space which would help revitalize the area. Kawate accepted the challenge, with the stipulation that all of the design work would be handled by his team in order to keep things in harmony with neighboring businesses. The result is a remarkable blend of art, architecture, and entertainment.

The entire Cinema City complex is dotted with works of sculpture, painting, and various forms of electronic art. Over 150 individual artworks reside in and around the buildings of Cinema City. Artists from all over the world contributed to the project—the U.K., Japan, Poland,

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1997

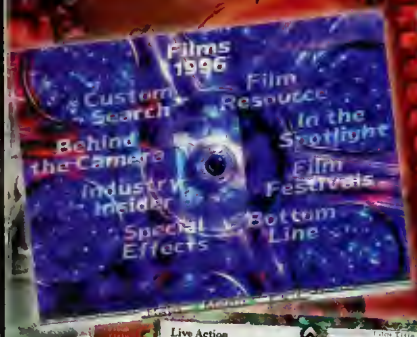
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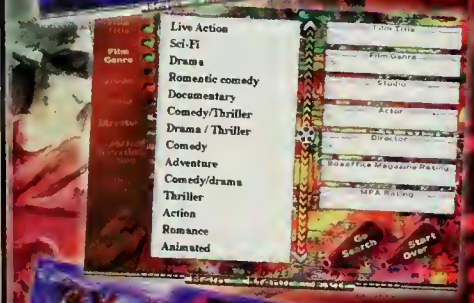
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Response No. 145

REMOTE CONTROL

CINEMA CITY SHOWCASES AN AUDIO TECHNOLOGY THAT COULD CHANGE THE WORLD by Buzz Hays

The DCS sound system at the Cinema City theatre was developed by DCS engineer Fumitaka Morita and Soundman, Inc. of Tokyo, Japan. The system is comprised of digitally controlled processors which control all aspects of the theatre's B-chain, including equalization, electronic crossovers, and level controls; all of which allow self-calibration after the initial installation. Once the B-chain alignment is completed for the first time, the system stores the frequency response curves and level adjustments for each of the screen and surround channels. At any point in the future, this system information can be recalled and checked against existing conditions in the theatre by placing a calibrated microphone in designated areas of the auditorium. The DCS checks the current measurements against the stored X-curve data, and makes automatic adjustments as necessary. The system has capabilities which allow remote control via modem, so a central office can keep track of a number of sound systems at any distance, making the adjustments with no more than an assistant at each theatre to place the microphone for the measurements.



umitaka Morita, inventor of the prototypal DCS sound system, promises to have a second-generation DCS prototype by mid-1997.

There are a number of safeguards built into the system to prevent potentially dangerous level and equalization corrections from occurring during the automated alignment. All of the system controls are a displayed on an LCD control panel. The crossover system is a digital implementation of the Linkwitz-Riley crossover with the appropriate time delay adjustments provided. 1/3 and 1/6 octave equalization and level adjustments for each channel are provided, and the complete alignment data set can be backed up to removeable RAM cards.

The DCS system installed at the Cinema City in Tachikawa is a prototype system which is comprised of a Dolby CP-65 processor, DCS Processing System, JBL MPA400 & MPA750 power amplifiers, JBL 4508A/2226H HF horns/drivers, JBL 2360A/2446H LF cabinets, ten (10) JBL 8330 surround loudspeakers, and four (4) JBL 4518A/2245H subwoofers.

A complete set of acoustical and electro-acoustical measurements was compiled by Fumitaka Morita (system inventor), Hiroyuki Takahashi (Soundman, Inc.), and Tsuyoshi Takahashi (Wakabayashi Acoustic Design Corp.). Measurements were done with a TEF20 spectrum analyzer with a B&K4006 calibrated microphone. All measurements were taken at four points within the auditorium and averaged. Sound pressure levels were taken from a location 2/3 of the way back in the theatre, slightly off center (Dolby Laboratories' recommended measurement position.) System measurements were compared with the THX Sound System installed in a second auditorium, and subjective listening tests were performed by the engineers. Recent screenings of "Independence Day" were held in both the DCS and THX theatres at Cinema City for industry professionals to compare the results for themselves. The initial conclusions of the design team indicated that the DCS system met or exceeded the performance characteristics of the THX Sound System. (It should be noted that no representatives of THX were present at the tests. The author also noticed a prominent difference in the subwoofer levels between theatres, the DCS system having a noticeably higher subwoofer level than the THX System. The calibration of the two systems was accomplished by different means.) Additional testing and refinement will continue over the coming months, and Mr. Morita expects to have the second-generation of the system ready to go in mid-1997. This is certainly a technology to keep an eye on.

Uruguay, Israel, India, Lebanon, and the U.S., to name just a few. Future plans involve an elevated walkway extension to the Tachikawa train station three blocks away, and the inclusion of a monorail station just one block away from the complex.

The actual design process used to create Cinema City was as unique as the results. Kawate spent a considerable amount of time with an environmental designer. Each floor of the complex has an entirely different look and feel, although functionally they are all the same. The complex is a vertical design with six screens, and four separate lobby areas, each with its own unique style ranging from highly-stylized post-modernism to spare simplicity.

The ticket booth is on the street level, set back from the sidewalk, and elevators take the patrons to the various theatres above. The first theatre is on the second floor, just behind the Cinema Cafe. This screen features a prototype sound system called the Digitally Controlled Sound System (DCS) developed by Fumitaka Morita, Soundman Inc., and Wakabayashi Acoustic Design Corporation. Theatre Two features a THX Sound System, and the remaining four screens have JBL and Altec loudspeakers and JBL power amplifiers with Dolby processors.

The Cinema Cafe lobby, located one story above street level, is the largest concession area in the Cinema City theatre. It has a glass-framed front wall made of green anodized aluminum, which overlooks the street below. Cafe tables and chairs are sprinkled about a veranda area outside, also overlooking the street. The cafe area has seating for roughly 20 patrons. The aquamarine blue walls are offset with a mahogany-stained pine bar area in the center of the room.

The wall material is a sandwich of translucent blue glass with aluminum backing. The floor is a polished concrete slab, sparsely dotted with aluminum accents. The very high ceiling is enhanced by custom light fixtures, and a stainless steel low-RPM fan above the concession bar. A suspended steel catwalk traverses the space above, providing access to the projection room for the DCS-equipped Theatre One. Dramatic lighting patterns accent the walls.

Each of the remaining three floors features a unique concession and lobby area. The second theatre (with the THX System) has a wildly post-modern design with blue-anodized brushed aluminum walls and an aluminum plate floor. A giant clock face is projected onto the wall behind

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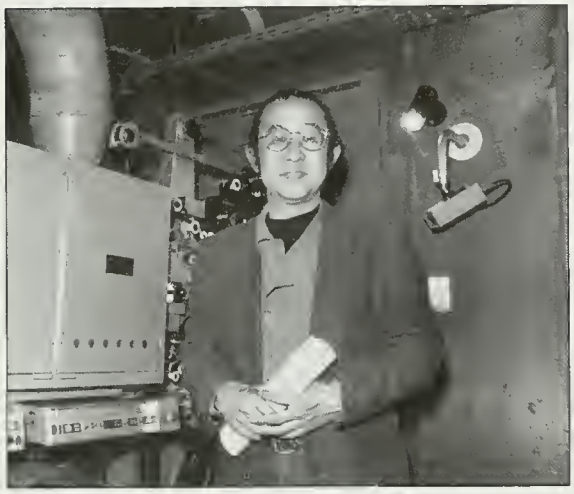
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Response No. 35

the concession bar, and the entrance to the theatre is marked by large circular bank-vault style door handles.

The remaining two lobby and concession areas have been designed to offer a more spare and elegant space, with mural art provided by one of the local designers. Each of these smaller lobby areas serves two small theatres.



Hirotaro Kawate, owner of Tachikawa, Japan's Cinema City.

Careful design consideration has been utilized so that there are no common walls between the theatres in order to minimize sound isolation problems throughout the complex. Each of the auditoriums is designed within a range of very appropriately dark colors (blacks and grays), with accents of color provided by custom lighting fixtures unique to each room. Once the room lights go out, the walls disappear, and the audience's attention is focused right where it should be: on the film presentation.

Elevators are located just outside of each lobby, providing convenient access to the shopping center and restaurant floors of the adjacent building. (There are 15 restaurants within walking distance of the theatre.) The common areas outside of the theatre are decorated with custom display cabinets showing the current and coming attractions of the Cinema City.

Projection and sound systems are state-of-the-art. Each theatre features Dolby CP-65 units, JBL power amplifiers and loudspeakers, Cine Forward projectors and lamphouses, and a variety of DTS and SR-D processors. The automation system is a custom-designed unit by the engineers at Cine Forward. Each auditorium is represented by a video monitor in the manager's office.

Color CCD cameras keep an eye on the concession area, projectors, and the screen in each auditorium. An array of six of these monitors lines the wall of the office, each with music playback and pre-show messaging systems installed. The staff can monitor the primary audio channels from any of the six theatres from a single location. Pacer/CATS ticketing system computers are located in the manager's office as well, allowing for centralized operation. Cinema City has even provided complete dressing room facilities for live presentations in conjunction with film programs.

The unique DCS Sound System installed in Theatre One is a self-tuning sound system that performs diagnostics and calibration of the entire B-chain, with remarkably good results *(see sidebar, page 36, for system details)*. All in all, technology plays a large role in the successful operation of the Cinema City, and Kawate's willingness to try new technologies such as DCS will continue to keep the theatre on the cutting edge.

Although Kawate has no immediate plans for similar projects, he has hosted theatre owners and developers from around the world who have travelled thousands of miles to experience Cinema City for themselves. In one form or another, the art of cinema is being celebrated in Tachikawa at Cinema City, a wonderful venue for those who love film as much as the man who created it.

Buzz Hays is a filmmaker who co-produced the theatrical feature "Swimming With Sharks." His production company, Stone's Throw Films, is currently at work on "Not Fade Away." Hays is the former Director of Engineering for Lucasfilm Ltd.



CINEMA CITY, TACHIKAWA, JAPAN

A SCREEN-BY-SCREEN LISTING OF PERTINENT TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

THEATRE ONE

Auditorium: 226 seats.
2 Cineforward FX-3000FA projection systems.
CX-2000 lamphouses w/ 2kW lamps.
Schneider Super Cinelux lenses (for 1.85:1, 1.66:1 and 2.35:1 images).
Dolby CP-65 processor, SR-D, DTS-6, and a DCS Sound System prototype.
JBL power amplifiers and loudspeakers.
Tamaboshi 1.3 gain screen.
Figueras #5036 chairs.
Custom wall sconces.

THEATRE TWO

Auditorium: 288 seats.
2 Cineforward FX-3000FA projection systems.
CX-2000 lamphouses w/ 2kW lamps.
Schneider Super Cinelux lenses (for 1.85:1, 1.66:1 and 2.35:1 images).
Dolby CP-65 processor, SR-D, DTS-6, and a THX Sound System.
JBL power amplifiers and loudspeakers.
Tamaboshi 1.3 gain screen.
Figueras #5036 chairs.
Custom wall sconces.

THEATRE THREE

Auditorium: 112 seats.
2 Cineforward FX-3000FA projection systems.
CX-2000 lamphouses w/ 2kW lamps.
Schneider Super Cinelux lenses (for 1.85:1, 1.66:1 and 2.35:1 images).
Dolby CP-65 processor
JBL power amplifiers and loudspeakers.
Tamaboshi 1.3 gain screen.
Figueras #5036 chairs.
Custom wall sconces.

THEATRE FOUR

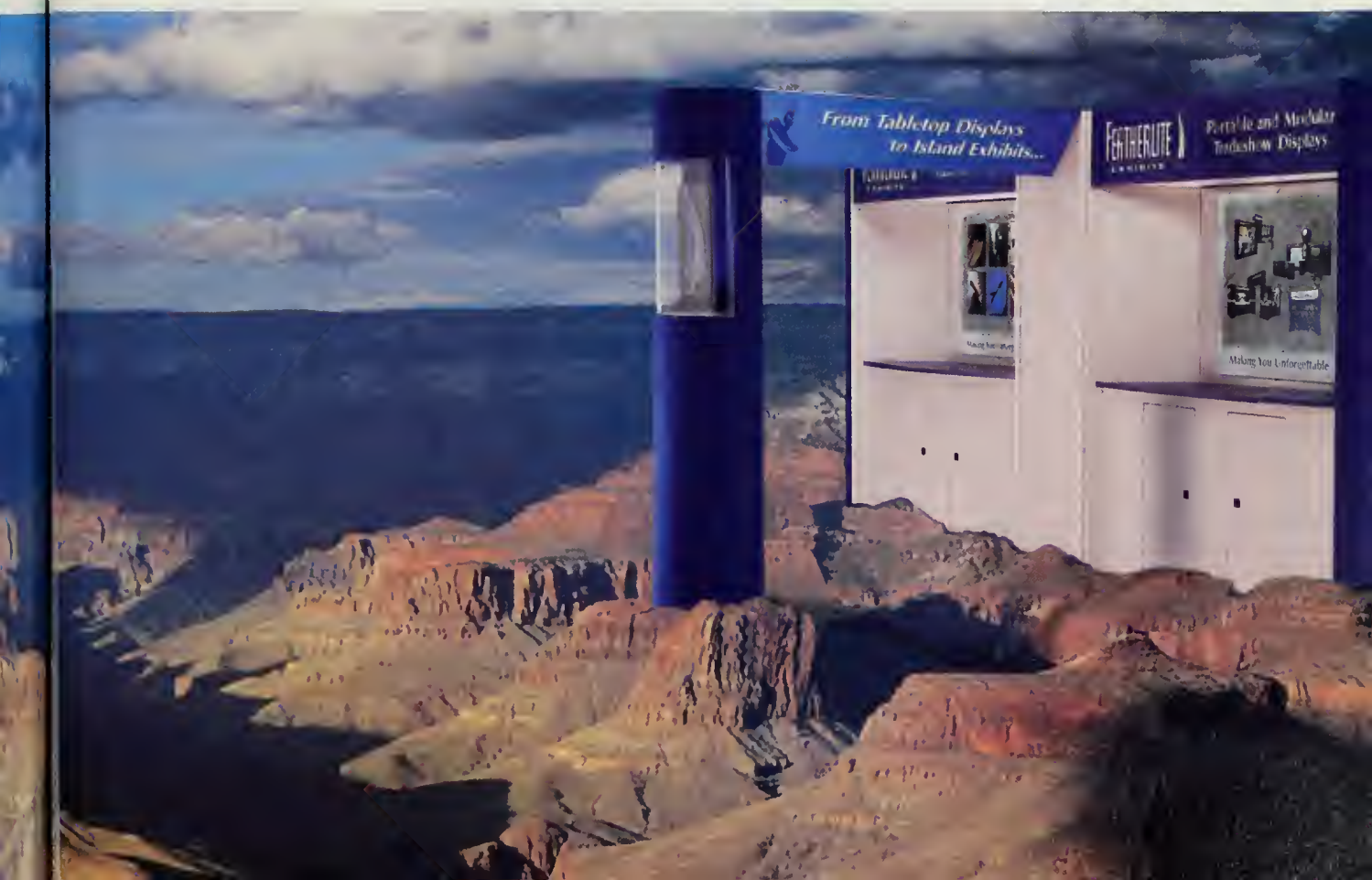
Auditorium: 170 seats.
2 Cineforward FX-3000FA projection systems.
CX-2000 lamphouses w/ 2kW lamps.
Schneider Super Cinelux lenses (for 1.85:1, 1.66:1 and 2.35:1 images).
Dolby CP-65 processor, and DTS-6 digital system.
JBL power amplifiers and Altec Lansing loudspeakers.
Tamaboshi 1.3 gain screen.
Figueras #5036 chairs.
Custom wall sconces.

THEATRE FIVE

Auditorium: 80 seats.
2 Cineforward FX-3000FA projection systems.
CX-2000 lamphouses w/ 2kW lamps.
Schneider Super Cinelux lenses (for 1.85:1, 1.66:1 and 2.35:1 images).
Dolby CP-65 processor.
JBL power amplifiers and loudspeakers.
Tamaboshi 1.3 gain screen.
Figueras #5036 chairs.
Custom wall sconces.

THEATRE SIX

Auditorium: 192 seats.
2 Cineforward FX-3000FA projection systems.
CX-2000 lamphouses w/ 2kW lamps.
Schneider Super Cinelux lenses (for 1.85:1, 1.66:1 and 2.35:1 images).
Dolby CP-65 processor, SR-D, and DTS-6 digital system.
JBL power amplifiers and loudspeakers.
Tamaboshi 1.3 gain screen.
Figueras #5036 chairs.
Custom wall sconces.



THIRD "TEAM"

Tsui Hark Joins Van Damme's Hong Kong Club With "Double Team"

by Wade Major

When John Woo did it, no one paid much attention. When Ringo Lam did it, people got suspicious. Now that Tsui Hark (pronounced "choy hok") has become the third Hong Kong director to mark his Hollywood debut with a Jean-Claude Van Damme film, though, things are looking downright conspiratorial.

Tsui, however, simply chuckles. "I don't mind when people ask me, 'Why Van Damme again?' I think it's become a sort of ritual for people to work with Van Damme to get into Hollywood."

In view of the tepid boxoffice response to Van Damme's previous collaborations with Hong Kong super-directors—Woo's "Hard Target" and Lam's "Maximum Risk," not to mention his forgettable 1985 debut film "No Retreat, No Surrender," directed by future "Legend of Fong Sai Yuk" helmer Corey Yuen-Kwai—one might be tempted to wonder why Tsui chose to follow in such ominous footsteps. But Tsui isn't merely another Hong Kong action director looking for a Hollywood toehold; he is, in fact, the single most successful filmmaker in the history of Hong Kong cinema—Asia's answer to Howard Hawks, Irving Thalberg and Ben Hecht all rolled into one. More importantly, Tsui saw opportunities in "Double Team" (formerly titled "The Colony") that could transcend what audiences had come to expect from Van Damme films.

"Van Damme is a friend of mine and he asked me to do it," Tsui explains matter-of-factly. "I was attracted by his sincerity. And I'd seen what John and Ringo did, so I wanted to see if I could do something different. Also, the story covers material that I've always liked a lot—espionage and spies. I've been a James Bond fan for a long time. So, when I read the script, I said, 'Let's do it.'"

With shades of Bond, "The Prisoner" and "The Fugitive," "Double Team" features Van Damme as Jack Quinn, a CIA operative whose botched assassination attempt on an international terrorist named Stavros (Mickey Rourke) lands him in a secret island prison for ex-spies called The Colony. But, when Stavros kidnaps Quinn's pregnant wife (Natasha Lindinger), Quinn teams with fellow prisoner and weapons specialist Yaz (NBA star Dennis Rodman) to escape the island, save his wife and child, and finish the job on Stavros.

"It was a totally different experience from a Hong Kong production," says Tsui, whose 50-plus credits include such classics of Hong Kong cinema as "Peking Opera Blues," the



BOXOFFICE

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ASIA 1997

"Once Upon a Time in China" series, Jackie Chan's "Twin Dragons," and the "Swordsman" films. "It's difficult to compare the two.

"I tried to do that at first, but eventually you have to just go with the system and work with people instead of trying to compare who's doing what and what has to be done. It's like comparing cake to dim sum."

Born in Vietnam in 1951, Tsui emigrated to Hong Kong at the age of 15. Later, after obtaining his education at the University of Texas, he began working with Hong Kong broadcast station TVB. Having exhibited a cinematic flourish there, Tsui in 1983 made his famous debut film "Zu: Warriors from the Magic Mountain."

The following year he established the Film Workshop for independent filmmakers, in which he would flourish as a producer, overseeing the careers of directors like John Woo and Ching Siu-Tung, whose films "The Killer" and "A Chinese Ghost Story" would become genre classics. Many credit Tsui for rejuvenating the Hong Kong film industry at a time when lowbrow comedies had brought boxoffice to a virtual standstill.

"I wanted to see something more serious," he says. "The trick is to combine elements and try to create a trend. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. Entertainment, for me, is like cooking. You work like a chef, try different things. Sometimes it's gourmet, and sometimes it's bad."

Tsui's facility with comedy, martial arts, action, fantasy, romance and drama leaves some seeing his move to Hollywood as an overdue transition. But Tsui has no intention of abandoning his career in Hong Kong. Ideally, he would like to continue working in both Hollywood and Hong Kong—and Europe. "I'd also be interested in shooting a film in France, in French and using French actors. I am very curious about how different it would be for an Asian director to work on a French film. Oshima did it once." Also in the offing are a long-delayed project with Francis Ford Coppola and a reteaming with Jackie Chan.

Now without the added burden of having to produce his own material, Tsui feels creatively freer than ever before. "When I was doing Hong Kong productions, I was doing two or three jobs at the same time. Now that I'm only doing the one job," Tsui says, "that makes it very relaxing to shoot. Compared to past experiences, it's the most fantastic thing ever.

"I suddenly feel like a director again."

"Double Team." Starring Jean-Claude Van Damme, Mickey Rourke, Dennis Rodman and Natasha Lindinger. Directed by Tsui Hark. Written by Paul Mones. Produced by Moshe Diamant. A Columbia release. Action. April 4.

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"KAMA" KARMA

Mira Nair Conjures Erotic Controversy With "Kama Sutra"

by Wade Major

Whoever said that Indian women were demure and submissive never met Mira Nair. Charismatic, outspoken and independent, the director of "Salaam Bombay," "Mississippi Masala" and "The Perez Family" bears little resemblance to the stereotypical Western image of an Indian woman. Yet her sensibilities remain Indian, an enigmatic blend of characteristics one might expect of a filmmaker daring enough to base a film on no less a controversial subject than the infamous third-century love manual called the Kama Sutra.

In making the film, Nair says, "My goal was to counter the fairly obscene and often subversive images of women in both Indian and international cinema and to address the rarity of a female view of sexuality. What my co-writer, Helena Kriel, and I wound up doing was making a film that is about sexual politics, not just sexual positions. Those games, those rituals are as valid today as they were when the Kama Sutra was written."

Not that sexual politics are anything new to Nair's work. On the heels of her Oscar-nominated 1988 debut film "Salaam Bombay," Nair next tackled a pair of unusual Hollywood romances, exploring the nature of romantic love from both an interracial perspective in "Mississippi Masala" and a class perspective in "The Perez Family." Neither film, however, quite tempted controversy like "Kama Sutra."

Shot in English with an all-Indian cast, the tale (set in the 16th century) centers on the friendship and rivalry between two young women—servant Maya (newcomer Indira Varma) and princess Tara (Sarita Choudhury)—as they seek love and purpose in a patriarchal world. Completing the romantic entanglement are two men: an intemperate king ("The English Patient's" Naveen Andrews) who will become Tara's husband and Maya's lover, and a proud sculptor (Ramon Tikaram) in whom Maya will finally find true love. Linking the story to its literary namesake is renowned Indian actress Rekha as Rasa Devi, a wizened teacher of the Kama Sutra who counsels Maya in the ways of both love and spirituality.

"I felt quite terrified, energized and also burdened by the idea of the title," Nair says. "But I wanted that title because, in the truest sense of the word, it is the Kama Sutra, which means 'lessons on love.' And our film is about lessons on love. Our film is about the many faces of love. If you read the ancient text of the Kama Sutra, it is so far from what everybody thinks it is—just a book on sexual positions."



BOXOFFICE

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After seven years in Hollywood, Nair expresses an exhilaration at returning to work in India. "I feel really charged here," she says. "Both visually and emotionally." But Nair's love for her country is not without its reservations. The culture in which the Kama Sutra was authored nearly 2000 years ago, she points out, exists today only in remnants, with that earlier era's sexual openness long displaced by taboo and repression. What has not disappeared is the patriarchal grip that men still hold on the nation's culture.

"Even though sexuality was integrated into life at that time, there wasn't anything extraordinary or pleasant about it when it came to women," Nair says. "Women existed to please men. So our story became one of women pleasing men and finally empowering themselves."

To lend their story the requisite dramatic weight, Nair and Kriel drew upon numerous classical inspirations, both Western and Eastern. "We certainly threw around Shakespearean references as well as Indian classical references, which aren't so well known in the West but which are also very Shakespearean. What's remarkable in many of these [referenced] mythological 13th-century Indian poems is how the erotic becomes divine. This struggle to get to a spiritual level through eros is very Indian and something we've come very far from up to now."

Having already run afoul of native censors over her film's explicit depictions of lovemaking, Nair's next step has been an appeal to the Indian Supreme Court. "My film challenges the notion of where you draw the line with nudity," she says. "And that is so hypocritical. With satellite, we get everything you get, all the same smutty movies. And then our own movies have their own share of vulgarity, incredible vulgarity with people simply wearing slivers of wet clothes. My film just has directness."

Fortunately, Nair says, her reputation among international distributors absolves her of the need to depend exclusively on either Indian or American boxoffice. And that, in turn, grants her a freedom of creativity she wouldn't exchange for anything in the world.

"I like the risks of independent filmmaking, because I'm putting my money where my mouth is," Nair says. "The bottom line of doing it this way is having complete control. And, for all the pleasures of working in Hollywood, you almost never have that there."

"Kama Sutra." Starring Sarita Choudhury, Indira Varma, Naveen Andrews and Ramon Tikaram. Directed by Mira Nair. Written by Helena Kriel and Mira Nair. Produced by Lydia Dean Pilcher. A Trimark release. Drama. Opens 2/14 ltd.



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ALIVE & KICKING

Meet Michelle Khan, Hong Kong's "Female Jackie Chan"

by Wade Major

If someone had told me 12 years ago that I'd have a movie screened in America," says Michelle Khan, "I would have fallen over laughing my head off."

Seated yoga-style on the floor of her Beverly Hills hotel suite, the actress who stateside is best known as Jackie Chan's "Supercop" co-star glows with enthusiasm at the prospect of a Hollywood career. After more than a decade as one of Hong Kong's pre-eminent action stars, success in America would be a perfect coda to a career path characterized by crushing setbacks and triumphant comebacks.

"I literally just go with the flow of my life," the actress says in impeccable English. "If I look back at the last 12 years in Hong Kong, nothing went as planned—because I never planned anything to begin with."

Trained as a dancer since childhood, Khan saw her hopes for a career in dance come to an abrupt halt when she was sidelined by a ballet injury during postgraduate studies at London's Royal Academy of Dance. Returning to her native Malaysia, she discovered that her mother had enrolled her in a beauty pageant and reluctantly followed through. Several months later, she was crowned 1983's Miss Malaysia.

As part of her subsequent celebrity chores, Khan was invited to Hong Kong to appear in a TV commercial with Jackie Chan. Impressed by her talent, director Po Chi-Leung arranged for a contract with D&B Films, and Khan made her entry into the chaotic, hazardous world of Hong Kong action filmmaking.

"As a dancer, you have to be disciplined and very dedicated," she says. "You have to learn to live with a lot of pain and injuries, much like martial artists do. Because athletics had always been in my blood, when they suggested action movies it just seemed natural."

The next seven years, however, proved anything but natural. After four years and five films (a meager output by Hong Kong standards) Khan announced her impending marriage and retirement. But the marriage failed and she returned to films three years later with "Supercop." Four years after that, "Supercop" was finally released in the U.S. by Miramax.

"It was my comeback movie," she says. "And to have it be such a big success was so gratifying. My career escalated again. It's not often that people get a second chance. To retire at my peak, come back and still have the chance to work with the best talent in Hong Kong—I still can't believe it."



BOXOFFICE

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ASIA 1997

Women have always figured prominently in Hong Kong action films, but colleagues credit Khan with earning them the same attention for fighting skills and stunt work as their male counterparts. "When I made my second film, 'Yes, Madam,' for director Yuen Kwai, he came to the gym to see if I was someone who was not afraid to get a few bruises, a few knocks. Then, in my first scene, I had to do a running leap onto the back of a car, land with a gun in my hand and shoot. After we did a couple takes, he came up to me and said, 'Your arm is getting dirty from all that jumping around.' When he tried to wipe it off, he realized it wasn't dirt but bruises. That's when he saw I was a fighter."

In addition to working frequently with Hong Kong's leading male action stars Jackie Chan and Jet Li, Khan has scored notable solo successes with "Wing Chun" and "Once a Cop." Her role as Invisible Woman, one of a trio of female superheroes in "The Heroic Trio" and "Executioners," is one Khan is especially fond of. "We had so much fun on those movies," she says of working with co-stars Anita Mui and Maggie Cheung. "The three of us are such good friends. When we started, they said, 'Now, don't do anything crazy, because if you do the director will expect us to do it, too!'"

On one of her more recent films, director Ann Hui's "Stuntwoman: The Story of Ah Kam," Khan suffered her first major injury. "I thought it was the end of my career, to be honest," Khan says. "The movie was my own little tribute to the stunt people of Hong Kong, because I wouldn't be here without them as my mentors, watching out for me. In one stunt I landed on my head, and my legs came out from behind me. I thought I'd snapped my back. I just thank God I'm so agile after all these years of training. The doctors are flabbergasted. I shouldn't even be walking. But I am."

During her recovery, Khan began to reflect on the future course of her career. "I think that time lying in the hospital with a cast around me—not able to do anything, a complete invalid—is when I started to think, 'Yes. It's time to move on.' And that's when America opened up." While her agents and managers cautiously field offers and consider her options, Khan is simply grateful that she has made it this far.

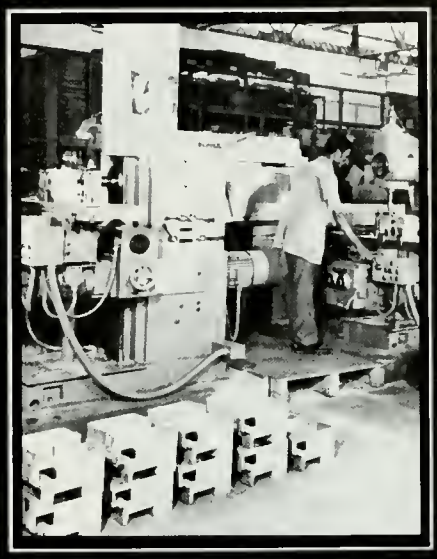
"I'm very excited that people have voiced an interest in having me do dramatic roles as well, which is very fulfilling as an actress," Khan says. "Being a Buddhist, I believe in fate and destiny, but I also believe that, if a chance comes, you had better work very hard to make sure something comes of it.

"If it doesn't, it's nobody's fault but your own."

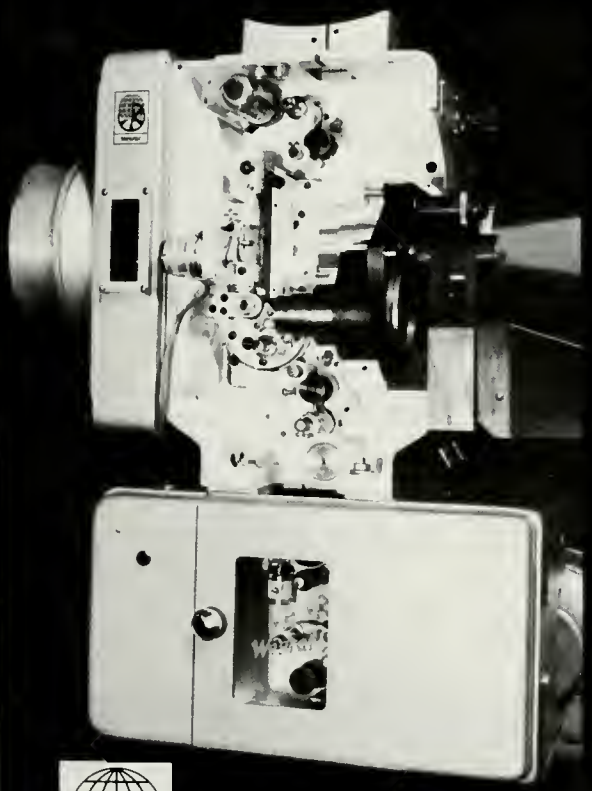
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OCTOBERFEST

With Headline-Making Acquisitions, a Slate of Acclaimed Titles and Top Honors at Cannes, October Films Is Poised as the Next Mega-Indie

by Christine James



From left: Bingham Ray, John Schmidt and Amir Malin head October Films.

The Russian revolution was October 17, when they overturned the Czar, and communism was born," says Bingham Ray of the reasoning behind the name October Films, the distribution company he co-founded with Jeff Lipsky in 1991. "We're not communists, I don't mean to say that," he explains. "But we are left-leaning liberal democrats. So we were trying for the spirit of revolution. And I thought that was embodied with October being a month which, you know, among politically-minded people is very well known.

"And we played around with having a 'k' instead of a 'c,' and a backwards 'r,' but we thought that was pretty stupid, so we just spelled it the way it's spelled. People always ask 'why October?' and you know, it's simple. We were both born in October, and it's the month of revolution—and," he pauses dramatically, "it happens to be the best month of the year. And I have the best birthday! In the best month of the year."

Such colorful reflections quickly characterize Bingham Ray as a fairly atypical executive. He smoothly vacillates from articulate and professional October topper to witty raconteur to fall-down-funny, sardonic comedian. While some would try to squeeze as much company rah-rahing into an interview as possible, Ray instead assumes the roles of multiple characters to tell BOXOFFICE an anecdote about a luncheon with his mother. "Let me tell you a story about when I was trying to tell my mother what I did," he begins. "She didn't get it, you know. I don't think she gave a lot of thought to how films actually got to these various theatres around her neighborhood. [One day] my mom took me to lunch with a bunch of her friends. It was like this little old lady kind of deal. I had known some of these ladies since I was a kid, you know. They were just kind of checking up on me and finding out what I'm doing, and I would try to explain to them what I do.

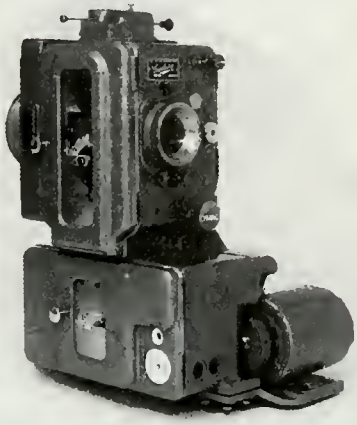
"There was this one friend of my mom's who was older even then my mom, who was really very hard of hearing. And she kept saying to my mother [adopts squawking, octogenarian voice], 'What'd he say?! What'd he do?! What?!' And it was like I wasn't there at this lunch. This lady goes 'What does he do?!' and my mother said to her, right in her ear, she yells, 'He talks on the phone for a living!' And that's how she boiled it down. That's what I did. That's what she could understand. She would say to me, 'Well, what, do you travel?' I'd say, 'Yeah, I travel all the time, Mom.' 'But how do you talk to these people? What do you do?' I said, 'Well, I talk to them on the phone, and I get these movies into their theatres, and I try to prepare the press for it, and I try to interest people like you and me into going to see it.' And she just, I don't know, she couldn't get her mind around that. I talked on the phone for a living. So that's what I do."

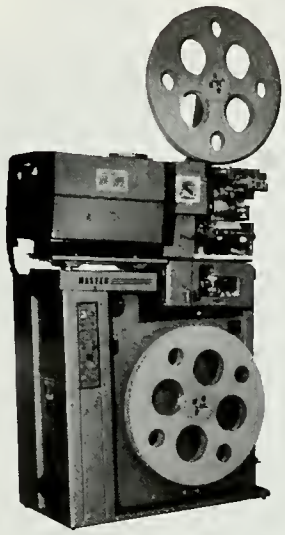
And he does it well, judging from some of October's recent coups. Soon after acquiring Mike Leigh's "Secrets and Lies" and Lars von Trier's "Breaking the Waves," the films won Cannes' Palme d'Or and Grand Prix, respectively—a double victory Ray had fantasizingly foreseen.

"A journalist had called me up—he was doing a pre-Cannes piece for the New York Post," recounts Ray. "And he asked me what did I want to see happen in Cannes. And I kind of glibly said, 'Look. In the perfect world, do you really want to know what I want to have happen? I'd really like to split the Palme d'Or between "Secrets and Lies" and "Breaking the Waves," and win it twice.' That was the kind of *kismet* thinking that I had. I was really optimistic, as were my partners, and the whole

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company, that we would fare well in Cannes. We were hoping that people would like both films. But we had no idea, nor did we really predict the kind of reactions that we got on both of them, or that they would win anything, let alone what they won. So it came as a great surprise, and it was just exceedingly pleasant."

Winning both the Palme d'Or and the Grand Prix was certainly an acceptable alternative to Ray's dream scenario of splitting the top prize. Add to that the high-profile acquisition of David Lynch's "Lost Highway" during the Cannes festivities and a slate of intriguing films by both renowned and up-and-coming directors, and you have a company that's on the fast track to success.

Ray and October co-founder Jeff Lipsky first met while cutting their teeth in the early '80s at New Yorker Films. In 1990, Ray was working for Avenue Pictures and Lipsky was with Skouras Pictures when the two friends decided to start their own company. "We were ready to get out from under the yoke of oppression of working for other people," as Ray hyperbolically puts it. "We decided that we would quit our jobs and just leap into the void." The company was launched with what turned out to be an art-house hit: Mike Leigh's acclaimed "Life Is Sweet."

And life is just getting sweeter for October. The company is now headed by an egalitarianly titleless triumvirate of "co-managing executives" comprised of Ray (in charge of acquisitions and distribution), John Schmidt (financial and strategic affairs) and Amir Malin (business and legal affairs). (Lipsky left in March of '95 to pursue writing, directing and producing.) The three share a vision of the company that is dedicated to bringing compelling fare to screens nationwide. The company gained fame with John Dahl's 1994 thriller "The Last Seduction"; recent releases have included Fina Torres' "Celestial Clockwork," Gillies MacKinnon's "Small Faces," Jim McKay's "Girls Town," Abel Ferrara's "The Funeral," Mike Leigh's "Secrets and Lies" and Lars von Trier's "Breaking the Waves." Coming up are controversial titles like Susan Streitfeld's "Female Perversions," David Lynch's "Lost Highway," Matthew Harrison's "Kicked in the Head" and a new Mike Leigh film that is currently untitled.

"I think that we're trying to be an alternative forum for hip young filmmakers, and trying to encompass the entire marketplace of specialized needs," says Amir Malin. "Specialized film doesn't necessarily have to be an art film. Specialized film can be a very hip, genre-oriented film. I mean, to me, 'Pulp Fiction' is basically a specialized film that has worked out very, very well and reached a boxoffice of $100 million. The lesson of the past eight, nine years in this marketplace is that you really can stretch the envelope with specialized films and find a much broader marketplace for them than ever existed before.

"I think right now we will be typified by the David Lynch film 'Lost Highway.' We will be getting more and more into those kinds of films," says Malin, citing Gramercy's "The Usual Suspects" and "Fargo" as other examples of the genre in which October is interested. "Those types of films have a crossover specialized commercial feel to them, with a potential of hitting a very large part of the moviegoing public."

October's release slate over the past five years has not only included some remarkable art-house fare, but it has also introduced some of the finest American and European acting and directing talents. 1994's "The Last Seduction" brought both actress Linda Fiorentino and film noir director John Dahl to prominence. 1993's "Un Coeur en Hiver" solidified the stateside reputations of Emmanuelle Beart ("Mission: Impossible") and Daniel Auteuil ("The Eighth Day"). Ashley Judd ("Heat," "Smoke") exhibited uncommon emotional maturity in her screen debut, 1993's "Ruby in Paradise." And Charlotte Gainsbourg ("Jane Eyre") made her first English-language turn with another 1993 October entry, "The Cement Garden," a British film about brother-sister incest that also showed October was willing to tread controversial ground. Stephen Rea came to prominence with 1992's Miramax smash "The Crying Game," but his performances in October fare—1991's "Life Is Sweet" and 1993's "Bad Behavior"—were equal artistic successes for the actor. "Life Is Sweet" also firmed director Mike Leigh's standing with American critics and introduced actor David Thewlis ("The Island of Dr. Moreau").



Lars von Trier's "Breaking the Waves" was the Grand Prix winner at Cannes and is October's latest release.

"You know how hard it is to get independent films released, and released successfully, in the States. It's a minefield."

As to what sets October apart from the competition, John Schmidt says he thinks it's "our way of dealing with people, our particular passion for films, and our eye for films. We're quite a straightforward company and very accessible, and we are now the only true independent in the market. The others are doing very good work, but they're all part of big studios with deep pockets, and that sort of makes them think and act a little differently."

Schmidt says October plans to average 12-15 films in the marketplace yearly. "We don't want to grow it to 25 or 30 like some of our competitors, because I don't think we can handle them right. And [those 12-15 titles] will be a mix, from the larger films like the David Lynch to the smaller films that we'll see at festivals and want to buy. And then we will be expanding into the sale of foreign rights as well."

October won't be getting involved with the production end, however. "We believe that there's a business in distribution, and those are our roots, and that's where we're going to stay," says Schmidt.

And the business of distribution is not always an easy road, by any means. "You know how hard it is to get independent films released, and released successfully, in the States. It's a minefield," says Ray. "And there are a million pitfalls. I take a lot of pride in just being able to survive amongst such formidable competition as Miramax and Sony [Classics] and Fine Line and Gramercy and the others. I take pride that we get up every day and we're still here.

"We love film. We have great passion for movies here. Now, I know that's really kind of easy to say. But we really do care about movies. We wouldn't be in this business if we didn't care about it. And it's a great privilege to do it. I've always felt that way.

"When I was working [at New Yorker] back in the early '80s, seeing a film by Luchino Visconti at 11 in the morning, when other people were actually working for a living, I thought that was the greatest single thing in the world. I have not really gotten over that. Because movies are movies! They're just pieces of light and shadow, you know? And it's an amazing business to be in. You get to deal with so many bright people, and so many different kinds of personalities, and you're dealing in a business where decisions have to be made, and rightly or wrongly, you've got to live by those decisions, and you can't let fear or any other emotion or outside indicator dictate what you have to do. And ultimately, if you are even remotely successful, you'll do pretty well. Some people are wrong all the time and still are incredibly famous and powerful and wealthy beyond any kind of reason. A business like that, you gotta love it."

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Response No. 116

NATO GOES ONLINE

NATO and Hollywood Online Partner to Make Exhibition A Major Roadside Attraction on the Information Superhighway

by Christine James

To exhibitors, the phrase "going online" has always conjured images of patrons standing in a queue, excitedly waiting to be let in for the feature attraction. Now it means powering up the Powerbook and surfing the Internet. More and more, modern-day moviegoers are turning on their computers and seeking out that ubiquitous http:// prefix to find the information that they need to decide where and when they're going to see the latest Hollywood blockbuster.

With approximately 8,000 theatres nationwide, it would be an ambitious undertaking indeed for each theatre to set up its own website. And most theatre owners are too busy running their cinemas to look into what's entailed in building a home page. Plus, there's still a good number of exhibitors out there who only use their computers to stick post-it notes on (you know who you are). Fortunately, the National Association of Theatre Owners' marketing committee, led by Cineplex Odeon's executive vice president of marketing and communications Howard Lichtman, has initiated a plan to take all of exhibition into the Computer Age in one fell swoop, through an alliance with Times Mirror Corp.-owned website Hollywood Online.



The NATO/Hollywood Online venture is the brainchild of Howard Lichtman, head of NATO's marketing commitee.

"Exhibitors in general were receiving phone calls at the rate of a dozen a week suggesting that they set up websites in and unto themselves," says Lichtman of the genesis of this project. "I believe there's power in numbers, and I felt the best thing for us to do would be to direct all of our customers to one movie information website, because in doing so, we would be certain that the information that was being disseminated was accurate, and we wouldn't spend our lives servicing dozens of websites."

"The matter was brought to our attention initially by Howard Lichtman and some of his colleagues on the NATO Marketing Committee," recalls NATO president Bill Kartozian. "This was at least a year and a half ago. And they explained to the rest of us how explosive the Internet was, how many people were looking at the Internet every day, and what the rate of growth was, and that they thought it would be advisable for the theatre industry to secure a place on the Internet on terms that we can negotiate more or less as equal partners rather than being late in catching the train and buying a ticket on terms dictated by someone else. They certainly convinced us that their thoughts were right, that they were well ahead of the curve, that this was something we needed to do. We began negotiations and ultimately concluded an agreement with the Times Mirror Corp. and Hollywood Online."

One of the seminal and most complete entertainment-themed sites on the web, Hollywood Online was a logical partner for the project Lichtman envisioned. "We went through a process of receiving proposals from a number of websites, and we felt from a content and business viability perspective that Hollywood Online would provide the best product for the consumer," explains Lichtman. Founded in 1993 by executive vice president Stuart Halperin and CEO Steven Katinsky (who were later joined by Anthony Farwell as president, Bruce Cameron as CFO, and, most recently, Michael Rollens as chairman), Hollywood Online was purchased in January 1996 and now has a powerhouse of a parent company in the Times Mirror Corp.

Once Hollywood Online was selected, the next step was to negotiate a definitive agreement, which had to be signed by each exhibitor who was to be a part of this endeavor. Lichtman and the marketing committee spoke at NATO board meetings and met one-on-one with many of the exhibitors during the sign-up process.

Due to be ready by early February, the NATO home page and website network will be accessible through Hollywood Online's website (http://www.hollywood.com), which has "information about films and movie ratings, chat lines with stars, and everything you would expect from a Hollywood web page," says Lichtman. The NATO section will have detailed movie theatre listings, as well as

a wide assortment of information specific to each individual theatre. "It'll have what's playing, in which theatre, on which screen; it'll have information on the sound systems in the theatres; it'll have information on wheelchair accessibility; there'll be maps as to how exactly to get to the theatres and so on and so forth." The information can be accessed by area, by chain, by theatre, by film, or numerous other criteria, thanks to a search engine that can seek out practically any form of data request a user types in.

Hollywood Online and NATO have collaborated on a design for a standard template into which all the above-mentioned information is plugged in for each theatre's individual website. But for exhibitors who already have a website or want to build one with different features, they can still be a part of the project by linking their site. "The individual exhibitor can either have a basic website, which Hollywood Online is providing, or they can create their own souped-up website and be hot-linked to [the Hollywood Online/NATO page]," says Lichtman. "The nice part about this is it offers the same opportunity both to small circuits and big circuits. A person who's got two or three theatres or is in a small town will have the same accessibility [as a major chain]."

"The nice part about this is it offers the same opportunity both to small circuits and big circuits. A person who's got two or three theatres or is in a small town will have the same accessibility [as a major chain]."

The benefit that Hollywood Online gets out of the arrangement is mass-promotion, with exhibitors displaying Hollywood Online posters, screen advertisements and other forms of publicity. "Theatres throughout America will be telling all their customers, the millions and millions of patrons who walk through their doors, 'Go to the Hollywood Online movie site for movie listing information,'" says Lichtman. "And you can't buy that kind of exposure or promotion for money."

Advertising-supported Hollywood Online benefits from the high traffic this alliance promises to generate. The more hits they get, the more advertising impressions they can report to their clients—as valuable a statistic as a magazine's circulation is in the non-virtual reality world. According to Hollywood Online executive vice president Stuart Halperin, the site currently receives a very impressive six to seven million page impressions per month.

But the burgeoning business of the Internet is still in its formative stages, and most major websites are operated under the given assumption that it will be a while till the industry solidifies to the point that they're in the black. "Hollywood Online is not making money yet," admits Hollywood Online supervisor Harry Chandler, who's also the (Times Mirror owned) L.A. Times' Director of New Business Development. "But it's growing rapidly as user traffic is growing rapidly, and advertisers are increasingly coming to Hollywood Online as a place to advertise."

And NATO plans to turn some "'Net" profits too, in addition to getting exposure to millions of Internet users. "Websites are very similar to newspapers, in that what newspapers do is they utilize the traffic that the movie theatre listing information generates to create revenue for themselves," explains Lichtman. "So in other words, people read newspapers to get the movie theatre listings information as to where and when a movie is playing, and the newspaper in turn sells that traffic to the studios and other parties in the form of display advertising. And I feel that the same situation will occur with respect to the website. Exhibition in general should benefit from the revenue that is being generated. So NATO is receiving marketing funds [from Hollywood Online] on behalf of all of exhibition, in return for providing them with our movie theatre listings."

The most difficult thing about pulling off this proposition, agrees Lichtman, Kartozian and Chandler, was working out the deal with all the exhibitors. "Every exhibitor had a little different perspective on it, and we finally now have a pattern contract that they're signing," says Chandler. "That was a long, laborious process, but we're there. [Concerns included] how they would deliver their data to us, how much promotion would be involved. It seems like a simple deal, but [the contract] is 40 or 50 pages." But ultimately, a united goal was reached, and a new medium of showmanship will soon be born. Says Chandler, "It's a brand new way to reach out to the theatre audience and excite them about the experience of moviegoing. It allows them to sample clips and games about the movies, celebrity profiles, and then ultimately [enables them] to find where a film is playing near them and hopefully one day to also buy tickets." (Online ticketing, which is currently not available, is on the boards for the future.)

Lichtman says that exhibitors have been "very positive" about the project, and excitement is mounting as the completion date nears. "People realize that it's the technology of the next millennium, and they're pleased that NATO as an organization is taking a leadership role in guiding them through the confusion.

"That's what a national association is all about. Can you gain more by working together than working on your own? And I believe so."



NATO president Bill Kartozian.



L.A. Times Director of New Business Development Harry Chandler.



Hollywood Online chairman Michael Rollens.

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CDP: JUST THE FACTS

by Dr. Richard Vetter

Some misleading information has appeared recently in film industry publications that concerns the Compact Distribution Print, or CDP. Unfortunately, the quoted sources have not seen CDP demonstrations, so the opinions expressed are speculation and have no factual basis. The purpose of this brief article is to state the facts and set the record straight.

CDP has been demonstrated widely, in split-screen comparison, to studio executives, the creative community, and projection and audio members of SMPTE. A leading independent testing laboratory evaluated CDP picture and sound performance in July 1996. A summary of the 21-page Evaluation Report appears here in a table on P. 53. Fact: *All* of the original print-negative information reaches the screen via the compact print process, and picture and sound performance meets or exceeds current SMPTE standards.

Fact: All of the original print-negative information reaches the screen via the compact print process, and picture and sound performance meets or exceeds current SMPTE standards.

Fact: A compact print is 37.5 percent shorter than a current print. Its advantages and impact are obvious; they include substantially reduced costs for film stock, printing, shipping, and handling in the theatre. Also, wider release of major films becomes possible without affecting distribution budgets.

Fact: The compact print does not affect production or post-production, which are performed according to standard practice. At the time of release, as is customary, a standard timed interpositive is made from the completed production original. From that point forward, the compact print process is applied.

CDP is a simple three-step process:

- ***Step 1***. Making a compact picture internegative.
- ***Step 2***. Making a compact sound negative.
- ***Step 3***. Making a retrofit to a standard projector.

Let's take those step by step, fact by fact:

1. A compact internegative is made from a standard timed interpositive. Fact: The practical limit of image resolution in original photography is, at best, 40 line pairs per millimeter (80 lines), and the new resolution limit using the new Eastman intermediate film (5244) is greater than 130 line pairs per millimeter (260 lines). Fact: All of the original negative picture elements (pixels) are resolved on the compact print, as confirmed by independent laboratory tests. Step 1 requires new state-of-the-art computer-designed printing lenses compatible with the new high-resolution intermediate film stock. Fact: These are the first new computer-designed printing lenses expressly for the release printing process in over a decade. Fact: No print will exhibit better quality than the quality of the original element from which it is derived.

2. A compact sound negative is made from the completed sound master. Fact: Sound negative film stock has the capacity to resolve greater than 20 kHz, although the standard in theatre reproduction is 12.5 kHz. Fact: Frequency response of CDP extends from 31.5 Hz to 12.5 kHz, again as confirmed by independent lab tests. The compact print demonstrates both analog and digital sound in accordance with SMPTE audio performance standards.

3. A standard projector is equipped with a new retrofit permitting projection of current and compact prints. Fact: Once the retrofit is made, a projection attendant can convert from one mode of operation to the other in less than 20 minutes. Fact: With CDP, picture steadiness is improved and print life is extended due to the physical dynamics of 56 ft./min. vs. the current 90 ft./min.

COST OF IMPLEMENTATION

Although a final draft of the CDP Business Plan is pending, it appears that cost of implementation in North America will be recouped within the third quarter of the first year of majority use of the compact print process. According to the present business plan, it is not contemplated that exhibitors will be required to make any investment.

CDP AT 30 FRAMES PER SECOND

Fact: The superiority of a frame rate of 30 per second has been demonstrated for decades, yet the film industry has been reluctant to financially embrace it as a new standard. Fact: At 30 fps, flicker is eliminated and motion, definition and brightness are substantially enhanced. It is proposed that CDP can serve as the catalyst for adopting the higher frame rate. Fact: At 30 fps, a compact print is 22 percent shorter than a current print at 24 fps. Presentation of movies at the elevated frame rate will favorably affect boxoffice revenue and patron satisfaction.

According to the present business plan, it is not contemplated that exhibitors will be required to make any investment.

CONCLUSION

CDP has passed all technical tests and has been awarded numerous U.S. and foreign patents based on novelty and utility. CDP supports the survival of film over an electronic alternative. Although CDP has developed a new lamp condenser lens system for large auditoriums, it does not replace the need for 70mm prints in ultra-largescreen venues. Wider distribution and superior presentation

SUMMARY OF TEST RESULTS (JULY 1996) BY AN INDEPENDENT U.S. TESTING LABORATORY

	CURRENT 4-PERF.	CURRENT 2.5 PERF.
FILM/IMAGE TESTS		
Film Resolution (line prs/mm)	68 X 56	80 X 126
Screen Image (jump & weave)	Meets SMPTE Std. Class A	Meets SMPTE Std. Class A
Split-Screen Comparison	Increased jump & weave	Less jump & weave; no screen image degradation
Film/Perf. Life (1000 passes)	No damage	No damage
AUDIO TESTS		
Frequency Response	31.5 Hz to 12.5 kHz (+/- 1 dB)	31.5 Hz to 12.5 kHz (+/- 1 dB)
Noise	No measurable difference	No measurable difference
Flutter	0.10 percent	0.09 percent
Channel Separation	-35 dB	-36 dB

coupled with improved economy are what CDP offers the film industry today.

Historically, there has always been a resistance to change. But the music industry discovered ways to progress from 78 rpm records to CDs, and magnetic tape recording has shrunk from 30 ips to 3 3/4 ips and less. Motion picture film speed has remained, unchanged, at 90 ft./min. for more than 60 years, and the four-perforation format dates to 1889! These standards have clearly outlived their usefulness. We at United Artists Theatres and Todd-AO believe it's time for a change for the common good of the film industry and its valued patrons.

Located in Pacific Palisades, Calif., Dr. Vetter is director of research and development for United Artists Theatre Circuit and Todd-AO. During his 45-year industry career, he has invented Dimension 150 (a 70mm widescreen process), Todd-AO's 35mm anamorphic widescreen process (for which the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences awarded him a 1973 technical achievement award), and the Prismalite outdoor screen system. Dr. Vetter, who is the inventor and patent holder for CDP, has also been involved in the development of a xenon projection illumination system and various film systems like StereoSpace 3-D, CineMax 70 and CineCircle 360.

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DEATH OF A *GIANT*

Saved by Sound, Jamaica's Carib Is Doomed by Flames

by John Allen

Longtime readers of my sound columns may recall not one but two separate articles about Jamaica's giant Carib Theatre. The Carib is owned and operated by the Palace Amusement Co. (1921) Ltd., headquarted in Kingston. The first article was published in the October, 1982 issue of BOXOFFICE. The second was published in the February, 1991 issue. Both articles described the theatre as well as its enormous and unprecedented sound system.

At just under 1,000,000 cubic feet, the theatre boasted statistics that made other large theatres seem small by comparison. With an acoustic output equal to 20 symphony orchestras all playing at once, the sound system I designed and built for the Carib Theatre was by far the most powerful of its kind ever built. It was also the first cinema sound system to be completely designed by a computer. To see and hear a film in this place was an incredible experience.

Sadly, this giant of grand old theatres was recently destroyed by fire. Starting in the auditorium's ceiling, the fire spread rapidly throughout the structure and turned the theatre into a smoldering ruin in just three hours. One firefighter was killed and two others injured attempting to save the building.

Palace's managing director, Douglas Graham, was himself hospitalized for nearly a week, suffering from smoke inhalation. Desperate to save his flagship, he spent more than 30 minutes in the burning building helping the fire crews.

At just under 1,000,000 cubic feet, the theatre boasted statistics that made other large theatres seem small by comparison.

Plans are now underway to build new theatres within what can be saved of the original walls of the Carib. Unfortunately, it cannot be rebuilt as a single screen with today's construction costs.

In many ways, the success story of the Carib's last years is one that mirrors the success of many businesses that realize a concentration on quality is a key to the future. In the early 1980s, exhibition in Jamaica was in the doldrums. Competition from video was reducing theatre attendance. In downtown Kingston, two theatres—the Carib and the Regal—fought it out. Both theatres were of similar size, though the Carib was larger. They were located just a few hundred yards apart in one of the city's busiest areas.

Back then, Douglas Graham's father ran Palace. Seeing attendance weak and getting weaker, Graham took it upon himself to seek out ways to turn the situation around. He attended a National Association of Theatre Owners convention. Speaking with several manufacturers and colleagues, he explained the size of his theatre as well as the business situation. Happily, some of them suggested that he visit my booth. Upon hearing of the volume of this room, I decided I needed to visit the Carib myself.

The first time I entered the theatre, I was awestruck. I had never seen such a large auditorium. I wondered how I was going to approach a sound system design for so big a theatre. In addition to requiring a new sound system, the theatre needed just about everything else, from a fresh coat of paint to a new concessions area (all of which came to pass).

During this visit, I learned that Graham had been advised to install only the most minimal of sound systems. The audience, some would say, wouldn't know the difference. All he needed were small speakers, 100-watt amplifiers and an inexpensive stereo processor—all of which would have been inadequate for a screening room, let alone a theatre like his. It turns out that the folks at the Regal theatre were being told the same thing. Graham convinced the directors of his company that, if the Carib were to survive and the company to grow, they had to install the mammoth sound system that I had proposed.

In 1982, we did the installation. It was a powerful system: more than 6,000 watts (increased to 10,000 in 1991). The Regal installed the 100-watt per channel sound system at the same time and opened with the Jamaican premiere of "Raiders of the Lost Ark." The Carib wasn't so lucky: It debuted its new sound system with two "B" pictures, "Seven" and "Dogs," both from the late '70s. But the audience quickly made its choice. The Carib outgrossed the Regal's "Raiders" run and never looked back. The Regal's owners never knew what hit them as audiences deserted their theatre for the Carib and its incredible new sound system.

With an acoustic output equal to 20 symphony orchestras all playing at once, the sound system designed and built for the Carib Theatre was by far the most powerful of its kind ever built.

As time went by, Regal's attendance dropped so low that its owners approached Douglas Graham and asked if his company would run the theatre for them. He agreed, but it was too late. Nothing could save the Regal. Perhaps the most telling sign was the refusal of the audience to go to the Regal even when it was playing the same film as the Carib. If the Carib was sold out, people waiting in line would be told that they could see the same film, at a lower price, starting in a few minutes at the Regal. They wouldn't budge—choosing instead to wait more than two hours, in the rain if necessary, to see the film in the Carib.

Not long after, the Regal was closed and became a shopping center.

The Carib soon became the highest-grossing theatre in the entire West Indies. Palace now had such a successful theatre on its hands that it was able to expand its circuit for the first time in years. Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, we also upgraded the Carib's sound system at every opportunity. First it was Dolby SR; later it was more modern amplifiers; and finally came digital sound. Even though the theatre had regained its former glory and had eliminated its competition, Graham and Palace's directors refused to rest on their laurels. To avoid a repetition of the conditions in 1980, their customers would not be taken for granted.

During one of my visits, I was asked to join the board of directors for lunch. In recounting the story of the Carib's rebirth, it was said that the company had come to realize the importance of the presentation and sound quality. "We realized that we are not in the movie business," said Douglas Graham. "We are not in the concessions business. We are in the sound business!"

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Plans are now underway to build new theatres within what can be saved of the original walls of the Carib. Unfortunately, it cannot be rebuilt as a single screen with today's construction costs.

John F. Allen is the founder and president of High Performance Stereo, headquartered in the Boston suburb of Newton, Mass. He is also the inventor of the HPS-4000 cinema sound system and in 1984 was the first to bring digital sound to the cinema.

BOXOFFICE

REVIEWS

February 1997

★★★★★ OUTSTANDING
★★★★ VERY GOOD
★★★ GOOD
★★ FAIR
★ POOR
(no stars) BOMB

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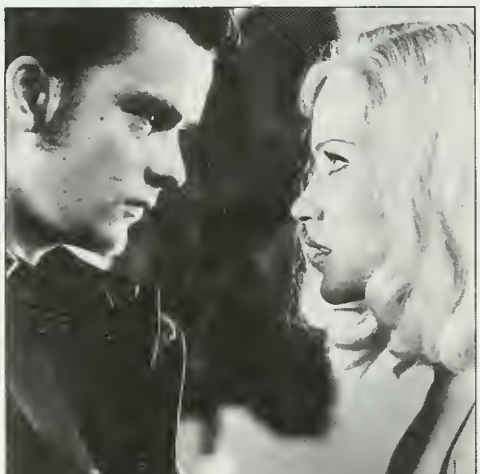
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LOST HIGHWAY ★★★★

Starring Bill Pullman, Patricia Arquette, Balthazar Getty, Robert Blake and Robert Loggia. Directed by David Lynch. Written by David Lynch and Barry Gifford. Produced by Deepak Nayar, Tom Sternberg and Mary Sweeney. An October Films release. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 135 min. Screens at Sundance; opens 2/21.

Shadowy underworld figures and seductive but faithless women are prominent elements in this shadowy work that employs both classic and avant-garde artistic sensibilities. Part film noir thriller and part surreal horror epic, "Lost Highway" could have been concocted only by the slightly deranged mind of David Lynch, its director and co-writer.

The lengthy but engaging film is actually divided into two sections that connect in a haunting and bizarre manner. Initially, moviegoers are introduced to Fred Madison (Bill Pullman) and his wife Renee (Patricia Arquette), both typically oddball Lynchian characters who behave as if they've just popped out of some "Invasion of the Body Snatchers" pod. Their relationship is icy, to say the least, and it's possible that Fred suspects Renee is having an affair. The couple start to show some human life when they begin finding mysterious videotapes on their doorstep. The first tape is simply brief footage of the front of their upscale home. But the following tape shows the couple sleeping in their bed and the third tape finds Renee viciously murdered. As it turns out, the attractive brunette really has been butchered, and Fred is the thoroughly discombobulated prime suspect. These events connect to a strange and patently evil man that Fred had recently met at a party. Looking very much like Death from Bergman's "The Seventh Seal," this pale-faced mystery man (Robert Blake) has a chillingly omniscient view of Fred's life.



Balthazar Getty and Patricia Arquette star in October Film's "Lost Highway."

The second section of "Lost Highway" features Pete (Balthazar Getty), the favorite mechanic of an underworld figure named Mr. Eddy (Robert Loggia). The crime boss treats the young man like a son. But, when Pete can't resist the sexual advances of Mr. Eddy's favorite young mistress Alice, he finds himself being pulled into a sordid world of murder and pornography. This femme fatale is also played by Patricia Arquette in what initially seems like a bit of clever casting; eventually, it's clear that there's some kind of otherworldly link between Alice and Renee and Fred and Pete. Again, the smirking mystery man appears to further tie together the two segments of this outrageous thriller.

"Lost Highway" does possess more baffling loose ends than would be tolerable in a mainstream movie, yet it's unrealistic to expect a David Lynch film to be always conventional or completely understandable. What Lynch does do wickedly well is distort reality and exaggerate human behav-

REVIEWS

ior in a way that's both wryly satirical and disturbing. "Lost Highway's" best moment features Mr. Eddy and his henchmen running a tailgater off the road with their sleek Mercedes. After beating the frightened man to a pulp, the suddenly pious mob boss begins to lecture the driver about the dangers of his motoring habit. This oddly hilarious scene is one that's not likely to be soon forgotten.—*Jon Matsumoto*

"Lost Highway" and "Gridlock'd" are but two of the standout films readying for their Sundance debuts. For more opening coverage of the festival, see pp. 72-74.

GRIDLOCK'D

★★★★

Starring Tim Roth, Tupac Shakur and Thandie Newton. Directed and written by Vondie Curtis-Hall. Produced by Damian Jones, Paul Webster and Erica Huggins. A Gramercy release. Comedy. Rated R for graphic drug use, pervasive strong language, some violence and brief nudity. Running time: 91 min.

"Kickin' it" isn't easy for Stretch (Tim Roth) and Spoon (the late Tupac Shakur). In their unstable world of addiction, there's no such thing as security. Friends like Cookie (Thandie Newton), the female third of their poetic trio, face harm and horror on the streets with a certain omniscience. Making a buck to get by is challenging, especially for Spoon and Stretch, who prefer to engage in comic masquerades. Still, their life is hardly bearable, so why not reform by seeking public assistance? The duo discover, however, that that reformation would mean hours of paperwork so tedious that even needles seem less painful.

"Gridlock'd" includes the best of several movie worlds; it's comic and dramatic, true and adventurous. It also leaves the audience with a message that's deep and exceptional. Different from former films that have portrayed drug abuse as a glamorous way to survive, "Gridlock'd" demonstrates the real side of addiction, where using heroin and cocaine is like toying with a bomb.

A story of guns, drugs, poverty, death but also joviality, "Gridlock'd" provides an evening of excellent entertainment. Roth is exceptional, as always, and even nonfans of the controversial Shakur are likely to find his performance appealing. (In his honor, the film closes with the dedication "For Tupac 'One Love' RIP."—*Heidi Easter*

PREVIOUSLY REVIEWED JAN./FEB. RELEASES

In light of our continuing commitment to bring you reviews as early as possible, we now provide a reader guide to upcoming releases we've already critiqued. The alphabetical list below notes the issue of BOXOFFICE in which the review appeared, gives its star rating, and provides updated distributor and release date information.

"Albino Alligator" ★★: Miramax, 1/17 exp; see **Nov. 1996**.
"Angel Baby" ★★★★: CFP, 1/24 NY, 1/31 exp; see **April 1996**.
"Citizen Ruth" ★★★★: Miramax, 1/1 exp; see **Nov. 1996**.
"The Crucible" ★★★★1/2: Fox, 1/1 wide; see **Jan. 1997**.
"Daytrippers" ★★★1/2: CFP, 2/12 NY; see **Aug. 1996**.
"Drunks" ★1/2: Northern Arts, Feb. undated; see **Dec. 1996**.
"The Eighth Day" ★★1/2: Gramercy, 2/21 NY/LA; see **July 1996**.
"Everyone Says I Love You" ★★★1/2: Miramax, 1/17 wide; see **Jan. 1997**.
"Farmer & Chase" ★: Arrow, 1/10 NY/SF; see **Dec. 1996**.
"Hotel de Love" ★★★★: Live, 2/14 excl; see **Nov. 1996**.
"I'm Not Rappaport" ★★★: Gramercy, 1/24 exp; see **Dec. 1996**.
"The Jew" ★: First Run, 1/8 NY; see **Dec. 1996**.
"Johns" ★★1/2: First Look, 1/31 NY/LA; see **April 1996**.
"Kama Sutra" ★★: Trimark, 2/21 NY/LA, 2/28 exp; see **Jan. 1997**.
"Kolya" ★★★: Miramax, 1/24 NY/LA; see **Dec. 1996**.
"Margaret's Museum" ★★: CFP, 2/7 NY/LA/Chi; see **Nov. 1995**.
"Mother" ★★★★1/2: Paramount, 1/10 exp; see **Nov. 1996**.
"Nothing Personal" ★★★1/2: Trimark, 2/7 NY/LA; see **July 1996**.
"The Portrait of a Lady" ★★★: Gramercy, 1/17 wide; see **Nov. 1996**.
"Scream of Stone" ★: Roxie, Feb. undated; see **Aug. 1996**.
"Shine" ★★★★★: Fine Line, 1/17 & 1/31 exp; see **April 1996**.
"Sling Blade" ★★★1/2: Miramax, 2/21 exp; see **Nov. 1996**.
"The Substance of Fire" ★★: Miramax, 1/10 exp; see **Nov. 1996**.
"subUrbia" ★★: Sony Classics, 2/7 NY; see **Jan. 1997**.
"A Tickle in the Heart" ★★★1/2: Kino, 1/25 NY; see **Dec. 1996**.
"Unhook the Stars" ★★★: Miramax, 2/14 exp; see **Dec. 1996**.
"Waiting for Guffman" ★★★: Sony Classics, 1/31; see **Nov. 1996**.
"Without Air" ★★1/2: Phaedra, Feb. undated; see **Aug. 1996**.

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FLASHBACK: *JUNE 9, 1969*
What BOXOFFICE *said about...*

KRAKATOA, EAST OF JAVA

[This month, two studios—if they can hit their post-production deadlines—release two competing volcano-in-America movies: Fox's "Volcano" and Universal's "Dante's Peak." In June 1969, Cinerama took audiences overseas and back in time for similar eruptions in the Super Panavision 70 "Krakatoa, East of Java"; originally released at 136 minutes, it was soon cut to 101 minutes and retitled, in cut-to-the-chase fashion, "Volcano." Note: Krakatoa was actually located off the west coast of Java, in the Sunda Strait.]



Based on the factual explosion of the volcanic island of Krakatoa in the 1800s —after which the shock wave circled the globe seven times, the blast was heard 3,000 miles away, and a resulting tidal wave and fires killed thousands—this spectacular roadshow production features some of the most beautiful and awesome sights and sounds ever to grace the huge Cinerama screen. At the same time, the pictures carries a tale of high adventure aboard a fictitious ship, the Batavia Queen. The American Broadcasting Cos./Cinerama Inc. presentation was produced by William R. Forman and Lester A. Sansom and marks the feature film debut of Bernard L. Kowalski as director. The scenes of nature's violence and pyrotechnics—volcanic eruptions, tidal wave, typhoon, fireballs—are so well refined that the use of miniaturization is not readily discernible, thanks to the work of an able technical crew. Throughout the cataclysmic phenomena, the fictional personal stories have been woven into the production with skill and believability by Kowalski and writers Clifford Gould and Bernard Gordon, with the action carried off creditably by the entire cast (which includes Maximilian Schell and Diane Baker.)

EXPLOITIPS

Tie up with White Front stores on TV, radio, store windows and in print. Use ABC Records and New American Library promotions on the soundtrack and paperback novel. Utilize the 16mm featurette, Study Guides and Readers' Digest feature in schools and clubs.

CATCHLINES

The New Cinerama Hurls You Into The Incredible Day That Shook The Earth To Its Core...You Outrun A Raging River Of Molten Lava...You Are Engulfed By The Terrifying Tidal Wave.

REVIEWS

JERUSALEM ★★

Starring Ulf Friberg, Maria Bonnevie and Pernilla August. Directed and written by Bille August. Produced by Ingrid Dahlberg. A First Look release. Drama. Swedish-language; English subtitles. Running time: 166 min. Opens 2/14.

Bille August's latest film, based on a Selma Lagerlof novel, is an epic set in late 19th-century Sweden. The story begins with the death of a father who, before he dies, tells his son Ingmar that he must grow up to be a leader if the local parish is to survive. Grown to young manhood, Ingmar (Ulf Friberg) begins to romance a local preacher's daughter, Gertrud (Maria Bonnevie), even as he tries to revive the family logging business.

One day, a fire-and-brimstone preacher named Hellgum arrives; the effect on the parish inhabitants is immediate. When a showdown with the distrustful Ingmar causes Hellgum to leave, he persuades many followers—including Gertrud and Ingmar's sister Karin (Pernilla August)—to set sail for the holy city of Jerusalem, where they will await the Second Coming. Before she leaves, Karin auctions off the family farm. So that he will eventually possess the property, Ingmar enters into a loveless marriage with the new owner's daughter. For the rest of the film, August parallels Ingmar's life in the parish with the trials of the new colony in Jerusalem.

August (who also helms this month's "Smilla's Sense of Snow") tries to endow each event with monumental significance; as a result, the narrative is a virtual catalogue of catastrophe. The writer/director doesn't allow the audience to emotionally engage with his hero; Ingmar is noble and diligent, but the despair and anguish he feels never comes through.

August fares better with Gertrud, making her religious mania palpable. The performances are strong, and the cinematography by Jorgen Persson is ravishing. Minor characters, including those played by veterans Max Von Sydow and Olympia Dukakis, are mere window dressing, and the 166-minute film could use a good trimming. A film of "Jerusalem's" length should be totally absorbing; instead, it's episodic and rambling, allowing only intermittent interest.—*Craig Vickers*

WHEN WE WERE KINGS ★★★1/2

Starring Muhammad Ali, George Foreman and Don King. Directed by Leon Gast. Produced by David Sonenberg, Leon Gast and Taylor Hackford. A Gramercy release. Documentary. Rated PG for images of violence, brief nudity and some language. Running time: 88 min. Opens 2/14 top 10 markets.

A positive, joyous affirmation of the power to overcome obstacles, "When We Were Kings" is a revealing and balanced documentary portrait of a great fighter and a time in world history when African-Americans began to develop a public sense of identity and individuality. The struggles that Muhammad Ali went through in 1974 to win back his heavyweight championship title in a classic bout against George Foreman in Zaire is chronicled with intense love and devotion by director Leon Gast, without resort to preaching or patronizing.

Gast filmed most of this footage more than 20 years ago; when Taylor Hackford ("Bound by Honor") came into the project in 1995, he shot interviews with Norman Mailer and George Plimpton and helped give the final film a punchy rhythm he earlier displayed in another black-culture documentary, "Hail Hail! Rock 'n' Roll."

Smoothly integrating concert footage of Miriam Makeba, B.B. King and James Brown with sociopolitical views of Africa in the early 1970s, the film gives Ali's life at the time more perspective by placing him in context with the forces that influenced him. Although there's plenty of screen time detailing Ali's trademark humor, charming egomania and boxing skills, the filmmakers wisely let the specter of racism insinuate itself into the structure so that the boxer's victory is made all the sweeter.

Ali's opponent is not given short shrift in the account, but "When We Were Kings" could have been even richer than it is had Foreman been characterized as more than just an adversary. Overall, however, "When We Were Kings" is a most rewarding picture, full of delightful anecdotes and even touches of suspense.—*Dale Winogura*

REVIEWS

THE SADNESS OF SEX ★★

Starring Barry Yourgrau and Peta Wilson. Directed by Rupert Wainwright. Written by Barry Yourgrau and Rupert Wainwright. Produced by David Lancaster and Rubert Maconick. A Tara release. Vignettes. Unrated. Running time: 85 min. Opens 2/14 L.A., March natl.

Writer Barry Yourgrau and music video/commercial director Rupert Wainwright decided to throw all the genres together to come up with "The Sadness of Sex," a collection of 15 vignettes that are part rock video parody, surreal art film, and romantic comedy. It's a shame the end result is too ridiculous to be funny, too pretentious to inspire admiration, and too obnoxious to sustain interest.

Told through a mishmash of visuals—cartoons, home video, noir, '50s TV shows—and narrated by an outrageously dramatic Yourgrau, the film explores the relationship process, from the spark of passion to the inevitable terrible end. Though Yourgrau's prose is often beautifully written, evoking dreams and nightmares with wry insanity, the film has not a thoughtful, subtle moment. Too greedy, Wainwright here tries to have it all, but he winds up with nothing.—*Lea Russo*

PRISONER OF THE MOUNTAINS ★★★★

Starring Oleg Menshikov, Sergei Bodrov Jr., Jemal Sikharulidze and Susanna Mekhralieva. Directed by Sergei Bodrov. Written by Arif Aliev, Sergei Bodrov and Boris Giller. Produced by Boris Giller and Sergei Bodrov. An Orion Classics release. Drama. Russian-language; English subtitles. Rated R for some violence and language. Running time: 99 min.

With "Prisoner of the Mountains," filmmaker Sergei Bodrov has created a stirring drama that brings sharp human and physical dimensions to ethnic tensions that have long plagued Russia and its adjacent republics. The idea for this drama actually preceded Chechnya's current and sometimes bloody quest for independence from Russia; Sergei Bodrov's film is a contemporary version of Leo Tolstoy's "Prisoner of the Caucasus," written 150 years ago. Tolstoy's tale involves a young man captured by an enemy in an eternal war between Russia and its neighboring nations. "Prisoner of the Mountains" finds two Russian soldiers held captive by a Muslim patriarch in the Caucasus; local villagers urge Abdoul-Mourat (Jemal Sikharulidze) to kill his prisoners; he decides instead to try to trade the two for his own son, who has been interned by the Russians.

"Prisoner of the Mountains" doesn't take sides. The source of this seemingly endless conflict appears less important to Bodrov than the fact that people have been dying tragically for years as a result of the mutual ill-will. Audiences might feel a natural tendency to pull for hostages Sacha (Oleg Menshikov) and Vania (Sergei Bodrov Jr.) because they will be killed unless a deal between Abdoul-Mourat and the Russians can be struck. At first, the two prisoners come across like a Russian version of the Odd Couple; Sacha is an officer with an outward toughness and biting sense of humor that belie a basically good heart and a sad past. Vania is a gentle recruit who seems better suited to writing poetry than shooting a rifle. Eventually, the two form a personal bond that is engaging, moving and even funny.

The Muslims are also treated with humanity and dignity. The elderly Abdoul-Mourat is a proud but caring man who is now raising his young daughter Dina (Susanna Mekhralieva) by himself. Sikharulidze gives his character an emotionally searing presence, conveying stoic strength as well as the poignant sorrow of a man who has lost his wife and, possibly, his son.

In "Prisoner of the Mountains," Muslims lead very different lives from urban Russians. Abdoul-Mourat and his fellow mountain dwellers seem to be products of a very uncomplicated pre-industrial era. Moviegoers are left with the feeling that the Muslims' distrust of the Russians in this day and age has just as much to do with lifestyle differences as it does with ethnic or religious chasms.

However, "Prisoner of the Mountains"—which received 1996's best screenwriting Felix award—is ultimately about the similarities and not the differences between such rivals. When Dina and Vania forge a touching friendship, Bodrov exhibits clearly how insane such century-old conflicts really are.—*Jon Matsumoto*

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Review Digest

Story-type key: (Ac) Action; (Ad) Adventure; (An) Animated; (C) Comedy; (D) Drama; (Doc) Documentary; (F) Fantasy; (Hor) Horror; (M) Musical; (My) Mystery; (R) Romance; (Sat) Satire; (SF) Science Fiction; (Sus) Suspense;

TITLE/MPAA DISTRIBUTOR 5 Excellent 4 Very Good 3 Good 2 Fair 1 Poor	RUN TIME	GENRE	REVIEWED IN ISSUE	BOXOFFICE	VARIETY	H. REPORTER	L.A. TIMES	N.Y. TIMES	USA TODAY	AVERAGE	TOTAL BOXOFFICE $*
The Associate **PG-13** (BV)	*114*	C	12-96	3	3	2	3	2	2	2.5	12.3
Big Night (Gol)	*110*	D	9-96	3			4	3		3.4	10.8
Bound **R** (Gra)	*111*	Th	4-96	3	4	4	4	3	4	3.6	3.8
Breaking the Waves **R** (Oct)	*158*	D	7-96	2	3	5	2	4		3.2	0.5
The Chamber **R** (Uni)	*111*	D Th	12-96	3	3	2	2	3	3	2.7	14.3
Citizen Ruth (Mir)	*102*	C	11-96	4		2	3		3	3.0	0.1
The Crucible **PG-13** (Fox)	*115*	D	1-97	4	3	4	3	4		3.7	0.3
D3: Mighty Ducks **PG** (BV)	*104*	C	12-96	2	3	3		3		2.8	21.1
Daylight **PG-13** (Uni)	*114*	Ac D	2-97	2	2	3	2	2	2	2.2	16.7
Dear God **PG** (Par)	*111*	C	1-97	3	3	3	2	2	1	2.3	6.9
English Patient **R** (Mir)	*159*	R	1-97	3	3	4	4	4	4	3.7	16.0
Everyone Says I Love You **R** (Mir)	*100*	MusC	1-97	3	4	4			3	3.5	0.1
First Kid **PG** (BV)	*101*	C	11-96	3	3	3	2	3	2	2.7	25.9
First Wives Club **PG** (Par)	*105*	C	11-96	3	3	4	2	3	3	3.0	101.7
Fly Away Home **PG** (Col)		D	10-96	3	4	4	4	4		3.8	23.7
The Funeral **R** (Oct)	*96*	D	10-96	2	3	4	3	4		3.2	1.0
The Ghost and the Darkness **R** (Par)	*117*	AcAd	12-96	3	3	3	2	4	2	2.8	37.7
High School High **PG-13**	*86*	C	12-96	3	2	2	2	3	2	2.8	20.4
Hunchback... **G** (BV)	*88*	Ani	8-96	3	3	3	3	2	5	3.2	99.3
ID4 **PG-13** (Fox)	*143*	AcSF	9-96	2	3	4	3	4		3.2	306.1
Jack **PG-13** (BV)	*111*	CD	10-96	2	2	2	2	2	2	2.0	58.3
Jerry Maguire **R** (TS)	*138*	D	2-97	4	4	2	3		4	3.4	17.1
Jingle All the Way **PG** (Fox)	*89*	C	2-97	3	2	3	2	2	3	2.5	43.3
Larger Than Life **PG** (UA)	*94*	C	12-96	3	2	2		2	2	2.2	8.3
Lone Star **R** (SPC)	*134*	D	7-96	4	4		4	5	3	4.0	12.1
The Long Kiss Goodnight **R** (NL)	*120*	Ac	12-96	3	3	3	3	3	2	2.8	32.2
Looking for Richard **PG-13** (Fox)	*113*	Doc	7-96	4		2	2	4	3	3.0	1.3
Losing Chase **R** (CFP)	*94*	D	2-97	2		3	3	3		2.8	0.1
Mars Attacks! **PG-13** (WB)	*104*	C	2-97	3	3	4	3		3	3.2	9.4
Michael Collins **R** (WB)	*132*	D	10-96	4	3	4	4	3	2	3.3	10.8
Microcosmos (Mir)	*74*	Doc	10-96	3	4	3	4			3.5	0.9
The Mirror Has Two Faces **PG-13** (TS)	*126*	R C	1-97	2	2	4	2	3	3	2.6	39.1
The Nutty Professor **PG-13** (Uni)	*96*	C	9-96	3	4	4	3	3	4	3.5	128.8
101 Dalmatians **G** (BV)	*103*	C	2-97	3	3	3	2	2		2.6	75.6
Preacher's Wife **PG** (BV)	*124*	RC	2-97	3	3	3	3		3	3.0	7.6
Ransom **R** (BV)	*121*	Th	1-97	3	4	4	3	4	3	3.5	117.5
Ridicule **R**	*102*	CD	8-96	4	4	4	4	3		3.8	0.4
Romeo + Juliet **PG-13** (Fox)	*120*	D	1-97	3	3	3	3	2	3	2.8	42.7
Secrets & Lies **R** (Oct)	*142*	D	7-96	4	4	4	4	4		4.0	4.9
Set It Off **R** (NL)	*121*	Ac D	1-97	3	3	2	3	2		2.6	33.3
Shine (FL)	*104*	D	4-96	5	5	4	4	3	3	4.0	0.9
Sleepers **R** (WB)	*146*	D	12-96	3	4	2	2	2	3	2.7	51.8
Space Jam **PG** (WB)	*88*	F C	1-97	3	3	3	3	3	3	3.0	76.5
The Spitfire Grill (Col)	*117*	D	4-96	4			3	3		3.7	12.6
Star Trek: First Contact **PG-13** (Par)	*110*	SF	2-97	3	4	4	4	3	3	3.3	76.7
Surviving Picasso **R** (WB)	*124*	D	11-96	3	4	2	3	3		3.0	2.0
Swingers **R** (Mir)	*96*	C	11-96	3	3	4	3	3	3	3.2	3.4
That Thing You Do! **PG** (Fox)	*105*	D	11-96	3	4	3	3	3	3	3.2	25.2
Trainspotting **R** (Mir)	*93*	D	7-96	4	4	3	4	3		3.6	16.5

** Total boxoffice, in millions, as of Dec. 18, 1996*

REVIEWS

INSIDE ★

Starring Nigel Hawthorne, Eric Stoltz and Louis Gossett Jr. Directed by Arthur Penn. Written by Bima Stagg. Produced by Hillard Elkins, Louis Gossett Jr., and Dan Paulson. A Strand release. Drama. Unrated. Running time: 94 min. Screened at the Toronto fest.

Arthur Penn once built his career on making the kinds of daring and ambiguous films that constantly shifted our expectations and moral values—movies like "The Left-Handed Gun," "Bonnie and Clyde," "Alice's Restaurant" and (at least parts of) "Little Big Man." Who'd have thought that, with the political drama "Inside," Penn would make the kind of narrow-minded movie his earlier work transcended?

This apartheid-themed film rests on black/white parallels, but the whole lays out each side so methodically it's like "Death and the Maiden" on quaaludes. As the racist Kruger, Nigel Hawthorne is pure hambone evil (he needs only a moustache to twirl). As a changed man, Eric Stoltz is thoughtful, but his scenes are conceived in one dimension.—***Kevin Courrier***

SCREWED ★★★

Directed by Alexander Crawford. Produced by Todd Phillips and Andrew Gurland. A Cinema Village Features release. Documentary. Unrated. Running time: 85 min.

"Screwed," by underground documentarian Alexander Crawford ("Hated: GG Allin and the Murder Junkies"), is an unflinching look at the life of Screw Magazine publisher Al Goldstein. Launched in 1968, Screw and its weekly mix of graphic sex, editorial rant and callgirl/massage adds (in tandem with Goldstein's other magnum opus, the raunchy cable show "Midnight Blue") have landed Goldstein in jail 19 times, made him wealthy, and given him the pleasure of beating a federal obscenity rap.

Following Goldstein through his working day—at editorial meetings, photo shoots, the TV studio, and the set of his latest porn film—this documentary (subtitled "Al Goldstein's Kingdom of Porn") intercuts interviews of Goldstein with fans and nonfans. But a good deal more could have been done with the film (which marks the first release of New York exhibitor-turned-distributor Cinema Village). Several stretches of "Screwed's" 85 minutes bog down; a more aggressive editorial approach could have made this good movie great.—***Alex Albanese***

THE PEOPLE VS. LARRY FLYNT ★★★

Starring Woody Harrelson, Courtney Love, Edward Norton, Brett Harrelson and James Cromwell. Directed by Milos Forman. Written by Scott Alexander and Larry Karaszewski. Produced by Oliver Stone, Janet Yang and Michael Hausman. A Columbia release. Drama. Rated R for strong sexual material, nudity, language and drug use. Running time: 126 min.

Hustler Magazine publisher Larry Flynt is one of the unlikeliest heroes imaginable for a mainstream Hollywood movie, but the biggest surprise about "The People vs. Larry Flynt" is how mild and inoffensive this Ixtlan/Phoenix production manages to be. One might expect that, with a protagonist who gleefully labels himself a "scumbag" and spends his life behaving as outrageously as possible, his biopic would be equally provocative and disturbing. Instead, the filmmakers use Flynt's strange career for an overly earnest preachment about the First Amendment.

The movie's heart might be in the right place, but the movie itself seems inappropriately timid, pussyfooting around Flynt's demented world. Moviegoers get little sense of what it was that made Hustler so offensive, and Woody Harrelson's engaging performance as Flynt makes his battles with the Establishment seem more endearing than threatening. Screenwriters Scott Alexander and Larry Karaszewski ("Ed Wood") enjoy the irony of portraying Flynt as an ostracized champion of American freedoms, but the film never rises to its declared level of ambition.

"The People vs. Larry Flynt" focuses on legal battles over obscenity and other free-

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speech issues, with Flynt gradually finding a sense of purpose in court for his otherwise rampantly hedonistic life. His antagonists include such well-known figures of smarmy hypocrisy as Charles Keating Jr. ("Star Trek: First Contact's" James Cromwell) and the Rev. Jerry Falwell (Richard Paul), as well as a legal system that Czech emigre director Milos Forman (who won Oscars for "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" and "Amadeus") portrays as mostly farcical. Forman's satirical bent sometimes enlivens the proceedings, but not enough to overcome the feeling that this is an HBO movie escaped to the big screen.

Flynt's relationship with his drug-addicted, AIDS-infected wife Althea Leasure, played by rock singer Courtney Love ("Feeling Minnesota"), is treated as the stuff of romantic tragedy. But, despite her harrowing portrayal of Leasure's final years, Love starts out looking so wasted that there's little room for modulation in her performance.—*Joseph McBride*

HAMLET ★★★★

Starring Kenneth Branagh, Derek Jacobi, Julie Christie and Kate Winslet. Directed and written by Kenneth Branagh. Produced by David Barron. A Columbia release. Drama. Rated PG-13 for some violent images and sexuality. Running time: 242 min.

"There is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow," says the Danish prince Hamlet near the *all exeunt* end of this four-hour, full-length version, and actor/adapter/director Kenneth Branagh gives the words a fragilely melancholic understanding that makes it one of the film's most finely delivered lines from a play fraught with many famous utterances. (Among them, "To be or not to be," here done passably, and "Alas, poor Yorich," done so perfectly—with the aid of, believe it or not, Billy Crystal as the Gravedigger—it might be called the platonic form of all its renderings). Toiling in classical terrain he clearly "gets"—his best films have been retellings of Shakespeare's "Henry V" and "Much Ado About Nothing")—Branagh makes that simple sentence read like a sentencing of life and the world. Indeed, his achievements in this sixth sound-era screen version of Shakespeare's 1602 tragedy return Branagh to the levels of that best work, which has always been powered by an existentialism that comprehends both a "sparrow's" rise and fall.

Like its complex lead, however, "Hamlet" is not without flaws. An updating to a 19th-century setting seems inconsequential, and certain cameos (notably Robin Williams as Osric and Jack Lemmon as Marcellus) feel like stunt casting. As the Dane, Branagh occasionally slips into the onanistic overplaying—call it trumpet torture—that sank "Mary Shelley's Frankenstein" and "A Midwinter's Tale." Elsewhere, Branagh makes Hamlet's complaints almost whiny and his grief far too made of anger.

In the end, though, it's unlikely that the film's probable upscale audiences will leave the multiplex feeling defeated joy, as "Hamlet" boasts too many rewards. Those include a topnotch supporting cast, longtime Branagh collaborator Patrick Doyle's symphonic score, and the grand yet precise 65mm cinematography of Alex Thomson. Standing apart from virtually all other movie fare this season, "Hamlet" makes for a fertile promontory.—*Kim Williamson*

EVITA ★★★★

Starring Madonna, Antonio Banderas and Jonathan Pryce. Directed by Alan Parker. Written by Alan Parker and Oliver Stone. Produced by Robert Stigwood, Alan Parker and Andrew G. Vajna. A Buena Vista release. Musical. Rated PG for thematic elements, images of violence and some mild language. Running time: 136 min.

Alan Parker's extravagant screen adaptation of the Andrew Lloyd Rice/Tim Rice stage musical "Evita" is a feast for both eye and ear. Superbly staged and choreographed (dance sequence editing is especially impressive) and beautifully lit and shot by Darius Khondji (who lensed last year's "Seven"), the Hollywood Pictures release also benefits from exceptionally fine performances by both Madonna and Antonio Banderas.

Madonna portrays Eva Peron, the ambitious small-town girl who rose from poverty to the top echelons of Argentine society as the mistress and, later, wife of the country's fascist president Juan Peron ("Carrington's" Jonathan Pryce). A calculating woman who used people—usu-

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ally men—to get what she wanted, Peron also evinced great sympathy for her nation's impoverished masses.

Helping to guide the audience through both Peron's life and Argentina's complex political situation in this Cinergi production is Banderas as a kind of one-man Greek chorus, providing a strong singing voice and smoldering good looks. In fact, all the film's voices are fine, yet they suffer from seeming disembodied. All screen musicals are lipsynched, but here the songs don't seem to be emanating from the characters.—*Jean Oppenheimer*

EVA PERON ★★★1/2

Starring Esther Goris, Victor Laplace and Pepe Novoa. Directed by Juan Carlos Desanzo. Written by Jose Pablo Feinman. Produced by Hugo Eduardo Lauria. An Aleph S.A. production; no distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 120 min.

An illuminating biography that provocatively grapples with complex polemics, "Eva Peron" makes the connections between a leader's personal life and political convictions with forceful intelligence and cinematic acuity. Argentina's eminently worthy entry for this year's foreign-language Oscar eschews historical spectacle, providing a perfect companion piece to Alan Parker's overpowering revolutionary canvas "Evita."

The cerebral, densely structured screenplay by Jose Pablo Feinman centers on Argentina's beloved first lady, Eva Duarte de Peron (Esther Goris), in her 1951 election bid for vice president. The gloriously magisterial and gutsy performance that Goris delivers begins as a hard-nosed, defiant demagogue, but her charismatic and sympathetic qualities later emerge; when Eva is diagnosed with cancer, her tragic vulnerability and earthy saintliness take over.

The handsomely modest, resourceful production is directed by Juan Carlos Desanzo with focused, graceful intimacy. Though the film sometimes bogs down in verbose intellectualism and TV soap-opera melodrama, overall it's handled with sharp, incisive artistry.—*Dale Winogura*

THE EVENING STAR ★★

Starring Shirley MacLaine, Bill Paxton, Juliette Lewis, Miranda Richardson, Marion Ross and Jack Nicholson. Directed and written by Robert Harling. Produced by David Kirkpatrick, Polly Platt and Keith Samples. A Paramount release. Comedy/drama. Rated PG-13 for some sexual situations and brief strong language. Running time: 129 min.

An unenthusiastic sequel to 1983's multi-Oscar winning "Terms of Endearment," this Rysher production suffers from one key drawback: It's unneeded. There's no way, or reason, to improve on the original. Robert Harling (who wrote "The First Wives Club") makes his directing debut, but it's the script that seems unseasoned.

The story is fragmented, following the indomitable Aurora Greenway (Shirley MacLaine) willy-nilly as she scrapes against a variety of antagonists. Among them are her three troubled grandchildren (an underused but still diverting Juliette Lewis, plus Mackenzie Astin and George Newbern). They have been in Aurora's (one would argue questionable) care—they might prefer the word incarceration—since their mother Emma (played earlier by a much-missed Debra Winger) died. As astronaut Garrett Breedlove, Jack Nicholson has a too-little, too-late cameo.

Like a retiring baseball player taking a last circle toward home, "The Evening Star" seems engineered to touch all the old bases. Characters are shuffled onstage and off as their bows are deemed needed; the Aurora-Garrett drive along the beach is even reprised. Experienced trouper she is, MacLaine at least keeps matters admirably afloat, even if the narrative zing is gone; powered by her performance, "The Evening Star" is likely to keep audiences mildly entertained for its 129-minute run (which feels longer). But this is a pale copy; when "The Evening Star" and Aurora meet their end together, none will wish for a part three.—*Kim Williamson*

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REVIEWS

MICHAEL ★★1/2

Starring John Travolta, William Hurt, Andie MacDowell and Robert Pastorelli. Directed by Nora Ephron. Written by Nora Ephron and Delia Ephron. Produced by Nora Ephron, Sean Daniel and Jim Jacks. A New Line release. Romantic comedy. Rated PG for a mild barroom brawl, some language and sensuality. Running time: 105 min.

This saccharine heart-warmer isn't without its moments, 98 percent of which are John Travolta's. Travolta plays the title character, an archangel whose visit to earth causes quite a stir. Smoking, drinking, carousing and gluttonizing, Michael seems more terrestrial than celestial, but he has charisma—an aura of joy and the aroma of home-baked cookies. When a trio of tabloid reporters (William Hurt, Andie MacDowell and Robert Pastorelli) are sent to get a story on Michael, even these cynics are (inevitably) all affected by him.

It's obvious from the onset that the contentious relationship between Hurt and MacDowell will turn into romance. But, despite the players' talents, their roles' shallowness makes their interaction uninteresting. Pastorelli's character, though comic, is almost extraneous. Though Travolta gives a winsome portrayal of an atypical angel, even he can't perform a miracle large enough to give this Nora Ephron film its necessary magic.—*Christine James*

GHOSTS OF MISSISSIPPI ★1/2

Starring Alec Baldwin, Whoopi Goldberg, James Woods, Craig T. Nelson, William H. Macy and Susanna Thompson. Directed by Rob Reiner. Written by Lewis Colick. Produced by Rob Reiner, Frederick Zollo, Nicholas Paleologos and Andrew Scheinman. A Columbia release. Drama. Rated PG-13 for a strong scene of violence and for racial dialogue. Running time: 123 min.

Thirty-one years after civil rights activist Medgar Evers was felled by an assassin's bullet on the front porch of his Mississippi home, his killer was finally convicted for the crime. Although justice has been done in the sentencing of white supremacist Byron De La Beckwith, the same can't be said of Evers' life and work. With "Ghosts of Mississippi," director Rob Reiner has once again taken Hollywood's easy way out in telling a tale of racism and injustice. As did Alan Parker with "Mississippi Burning," Reiner has fashioned a film seen through the eyes of a white protagonist. Consequently, although certainly unknowingly, he has done a disservice to the legacy of a great humanitarian leader. Also, unlike Parker's similarly themed 1988 effort, "Ghosts of Mississippi" isn't compelling in the least. Reiner lacks Parker's talent as a filmmaker and, as a result, his movie could well be nicknamed "Mississippi Boring."

With prodding by Evers' widow Myrlie Evers (Whoopi Goldberg), assistant D.A. Bobby DeLaughter (Alec Baldwin) decides to reopen the Evers case. Despite public and private pressures to let the past lie (his seething racist wife leaves him), DeLaughter makes it his duty to bring Beckwith (James Woods) to justice not only for his own conscience but for the pride of his native state as well.

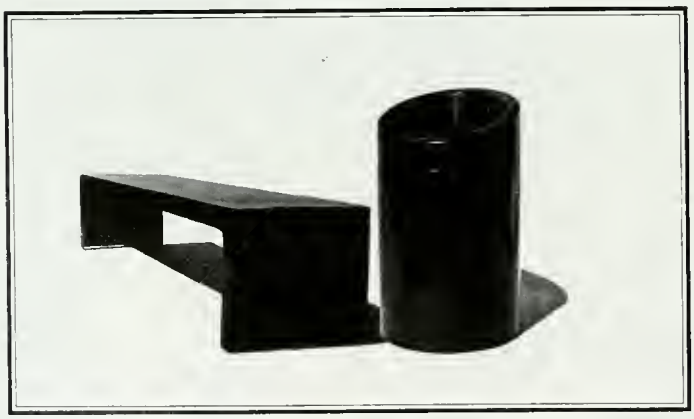
It's scary to think that Reiner is already stealing from himself after directing only a half-dozen movies. Reiner gives the relationship between DeLaughter and Evers as much depth as a silly romance ("When Bobby Met Myrlie..."?), with Goldberg delivering one of the worst performances in memory. Her acting is dreadfully mannered, and with no orgasm-in-a-deli jokes to save her she flounders. Baldwin is sufficient, but his extended courtroom climax (see "A Few Good Men") makes Chris Darden look like Clarence Darrow. Woods is great, but he's given such a ridiculously slight role that he is relegated to choking on scenery. As a consequence, his caricature becomes laughable (a la "This Is Spinal Tap"), not menacing.

Three decades after Ever's death, his killer finally rests in the jail where he has so long belonged. Unfortunately, the activist's story still has not been properly put onscreen.—*Alex Demyanenko*



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REVIEWS

ONE FINE DAY ★★★

Starring Michelle Pfeiffer and George Clooney. Directed by Michael Hoffman. Written by Terrel Seltzer and Ellen Simon. Produced by Lynda Obst. A Fox release. Romantic comedy. Rated PG for language and mild sensuality. Running time: 109 min.

"I have a dark chocolate layer," says curmudgeonish newspaper columnist Jack Taylor ("From Dusk Till Dawn's" George Clooney) to his psychiatrist. And why shouldn't he feel dark: his ex-wife is off on a new honeymoon, he's left to uncomfortably care for their five-year-old daughter Maggie (Mae Whitman), and Jack will soon learn he'll be fired if he doesn't find new corroboration for his printed allegations against City Hall. But audiences of this Fox 2000 production well know that there's sweet chocolate in him too—and so eventually too does single mom Melanie Parker (Michelle Pfeiffer), a struggling architect who in "One Fine Day's" 18-hour narrative span struggles to complete a new building plan, parent her five-year-old son (Alex D. Linz) and ultimately decide whether the not-so-cutely-met Jack is a nightmare or the man of her dreams.

Fox made a bold but wise move in advancing "One Fine Day's" planned 1997 opening into a crowded Christmas. Director Michael Hoffman, who failed to get the tone right in his most recent "Restoration," here weaves together laughs and love as if making a pleasing taffy, ably assisted by a script by Terrel Seltzer ("Chan Is Missing") and Ellen Simon ("Moonlight & Valentino") that continually draws its two leads together for comic contretemps—Jack and Melanie frequently bicker like couples in '40s films—and the gradual rise (of course) of irresistible romance.

Clooney proves he has the charm to hold the big screen even when sharing that silver with a seasoned knockout like Pfeiffer. The actress is hardly challenged here in the way "Love Field," "Dangerous Liaisons" and "The Russia House" brought out her best, but "One Fine Day" has an innate enchantment that raises it above programmer status.—*Kim Williamson*

IN LOVE AND WAR ★★★

Starring Sandra Bullock, Chris O'Donnell, Ingrid Lacey, Emilio Bonucci and Mackenzie Astin. Directed by Richard Attenborough. Written by Clancy Sigal, Allan Scott and Anna Hamilton Phelan. Produced by Richard Attenborough and Dimitri Villard. A New Line release. Romantic drama. Rated PG-13 for graphic war injuries and some sensuality. Running time: 115 min.

If the central character of "In Love and War" weren't Ernest Hemingway, this would seem a rather ordinary and predictable, if beautifully rendered, wartime romance between a wounded Red Cross ambulance driver and his nurse. Although director Richard Attenborough ("Shadowlands") and his staff have compellingly recreated the atmosphere of Italy during

REVIEWS

World War I, the story can't help being a pallid imitation of Hemingway's novel "A Farewell to Arms," for which this true-life love story served as raw material.

Chris O'Donnell ("The Chamber") is the teenaged Hemingway, a callow Midwesterner with a disturbing compulsion for proving his manhood under fire. His recklessly brave actions put him into an American-run hospital under the care of nurse Agnes von Kurowsky, played by Sandra Bullock ("A Time to Kill"). The story of Hemingway's largely unrequited passion for the comely, more experienced woman was transformed into the tragic romance of "A Farewell to Arms," and it's an odd concept to film the writer's actual experience rather than his imaginative reshaping of it.

But Attenborough's sensitivity with actors gives the story more weight than it otherwise might have sustained. The sparks between Agnes' emotionally reserved but deeply empathetic character and "Ernie's" impetuous, unformed nature make for some touchingly nuanced scenes of courtship between Bullock and O'Donnell. Attenborough also explores Hemingway's caddish, brutal streak and, although O'Donnell is barely able to suggest Hemingway's potential as a writer, he believably captures the warring sides of the character.

"In Love and War" is most impressive in its vision of wartime Italy, from the nightmarish battlegrounds and field hospitals to the bustling streets and contrastingly tranquil palazzi. Cinematographer Roger Pratt, production designer Stuart Craig and costume designer Penny Rose have done a marvelous job of transporting the viewer back into the period. If the pacing seems too languid for a war movie, that problem unfortunately is inherent in the story.—*Joseph McBride*

MY FELLOW AMERICANS ★★★

Starring Jack Lemmon, James Garner, Dan Aykroyd and John Heard. Directed by Peter Segal. Written by E. Jack Kaplan & Richard Chapman and Peter Tolan. Produced by Jon Peters. A Warner Bros. release. Comedy. Rated PG-13 for salty language and innuendo. Running time: 101 min.

This "Grumpy Old Presidents" scenario involves two voted-from-office Chief Executives—stingy Republican Russell Kramer (Jack Lemmon) and womanizing Democrat Matthew Douglas (James Garner)—who find themselves the targets of an attempted frameup concocted by the current Prez (Dan Aykroyd), who hopes to shunt responsibility for a brewing kickback scandal onto Kramer's head. Next thing the crotchety chaps know, the helicopter in which they were supposed to continue traveling together on state business explodes. To prove Kramer's innocence and save their skins, the dueling duo head cross-country to where Kramer's presidential library has his official (and hopefully exonerating) papers.

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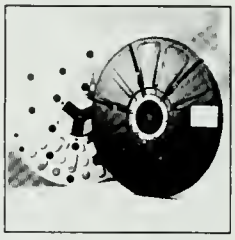
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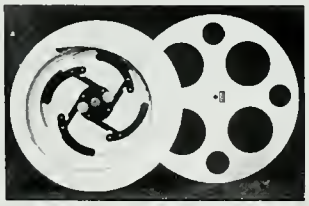


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REVIEWS

Along the way, giving "My Fellow Americans" its title and its theme, they encounter "real America" and its various denizens along the way. Moviegoers who loved Lemmon's two "Grumpy" pairings with Walter Matthau are most likely to appreciate the goings-on here, and Garner's customary charismatic turn will make even the grumpiest fans not miss Matthau's natural curmudgeonry. Taking matters down a notch in this latest from director Peter Segal ("Tommy Boy") is a played-too-broad subplot involving the evil machinations of secret government operatives.—*Kim Williamson*

MARVIN'S ROOM ★★★

Starring Diane Keaton, Meryl Streep and Leonardo DiCaprio. Directed by Jerry Zaks. Written by Scott McPherson. Produced by Scott Rudin, Jane Rosenthal and Robert De Niro. A Miramax release. Drama. Rated PG-13 for thematic elements and brief language. Running time: 97 min.

Although "Marvin's Room," adapted by Scott McPherson from his play, does tug pretty hard on the more kleenexy heartstrings, it avoids bathos by virtue of a powerful cast and a slightly offbeat sensibility. When the film opens, Bessie (Diane Keaton) for years has been caring for her bedridden father (Hume Cronyn) and dotty aunt Ruth (Gwen Verdon). When she herself falls ill, Bessie must call upon her estranged sister Lee (Meryl Streep) and Lee's troubled son Hank (Leonardo DiCaprio) for help—opening old wounds and forcing both sisters to confront the difficult choices they've made in their lives.

"Marvin's Room" is a sudser for sure, with a plot contrived to give everyone his or her Big Emotional Moment. But the situation is a plausible one, and Keaton and Streep are such powerhouses that moviegoers aren't likely to mind the sappier flourishes. Although this is an adapted play being helmed by a theatre director with no prior cinematic experience, "Marvin's Room" never feels stagebound or static. The theatre version was applauded for its humor, an element lacking here. Still, audiences seeking a fine character drama are likely to overlook a few pat moments and a certain basic predictability. And they'll hit the hankies.—*Cathy Thompson-Georges*

SCREAM ★★★

Starring Neve Campbell, David Arquette, Courteney Cox, Skeet Ulrich and Drew Barrymore. Directed by Wes Craven. Written by Kevin Williamson. Produced by Cary Woods and Cathy Konrad. A Miramax release. Horror/comedy. Rated R for strong graphic horror violence and gore, and for language. Running time: 111 min.

Although Kevin Williamson's script for this Dimension release—which tells the story of the efforts of a female teenager ("The Craft's" Neve Campbell) to evade the bloody fates of various schoolmates when serial killings being to ravage their quiet California town—doesn't make for classic horror fare, it provides enough bounces, chills and chuckles to entertain its target moviegoers. Although being sold almost as a satire of the genre's usual rules ("don't answer the door," "don't have sex," "don't go back in the house"), the spoofing appears only intermittently throughout the narrative, giving the film a fractured quality; do they mean it, or not?

Indeed, "Scream's" most effective scenes are those involving the most dire peril, as when one young lovely asks a malevolent male phone caller "What do you want?" and is answered with "To see what your insides look like." (Regardless of line reading, there could never be any yucks there.) Cast members, even the most temporary, do a good job during all the screaming, scramming and slaughtering; although she's a goner early, Drew Barrymore plays an important role by getting matters off to proper hysterics, and Courteney Cox (one of TV's uber-"Friends") provides a possible crossover draw for tube-prone youth audiences. Nonetheless, male slasher aficionados are the likely demo here.—*Kim Williamson*

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REVIEWS

BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD DO AMERICA ★★★

Voices by Mike Judge, Robert Stack and Cloris Leachman. Directed by Mike Judge. Written by Mike Judge and Joe Stillman. Produced by Abby Terkuhle. A Paramount release. Animation. Rated PG-13 for continuous crude sex-related humor and language, and for a drug-related scene. Running time: 80 min.

"Uh, huh huh huh. This movie is cool because our, uh, fans can see us on the wide screen."

"Hey, Butt-head! You said 'wide.' Heh heh heh."

"Shut up, butt-munch! I'm trying to review our movie!"

"Oh. Heh heh. Sorry. Heh heh heh."

"There's these, uh, dudes who take our TV, which really sucks."

"Yeah. That sucks. Not having a TV totally sucks."

"And then Beavis and me are looking for it when we meet this other dude who wants to pay us to 'do' his wife."

"Yeah, heh heh heh. He wants to pay us to score with his wife!"

"Huh huh huh. That was cool."

"Yeah, heh heh. That was cool."

"But when we find the chick in Las Vegas, she, uh, puts this, uh, unit in Beavis' pants..."

"Heh heh heh. You said 'unit.' Heh heh heh heh."

"And first she wants to pay us more money to 'do' her husband."

"Doing a dude would suck!"

"Yeah. That would suck. But then she says we can 'do' her if we meet her in Washington. So we travel, like, uh, about a hundred miles across the country with these cops looking for us, but we keep running into this old chick with lots of candy and, uh, stuff."

"I am Cornholio! I need t.p. for my bunghole!"

"Shut up, Beavis!"

"Are you threatening me? I am a Gringo! I am Cornholio!"

"Huh huh huh. That was cool."

"You will give me t.p.?!"

"So, uh, huh huh, our movie is really cool because it doesn't suck. And anyone who doesn't like it is some kind of butt-monkey."

"Yeah, heh heh heh. They're just a bunch of butt-monkeys!"—*Wade Major*

JERRY MAGUIRE ★★★★

Starring Tom Cruise, Cuba Gooding Jr., Renee Zellweger, Bonnie Hunt and Regina King. Directed and written by Cameron Crowe. Produced by Bruce S. Pustin and John D. Schofield. A TriStar release. Drama. Rated R for language and sexuality. Running time: 138 min.

"Jerry Maguire" scores a touchdown for all parties involved, with star Tom Cruise and writer/director Cameron Crowe ("Say Anything," "Singles") taking home the lion's share of the credit. Feeling considerably shorter than its nearly 2 1/2-hour running time, "Jerry Maguire" ranks among the precious few films that manage to invoke the full spectrum of human emotion while appearing neither contrived nor insincere.

Centering around a successful sports agent (Cruise), the story focuses less on the politics of professional athletics than on Maguire's tumultuous personal struggle to retain both integrity and reputation after a sudden indulgence of conscience gets him fired from a prestigious agency. Following Maguire on his uncertain journey is his one remaining client, a talented but temperamental wide receiver named Rod Tidwell (Cuba Gooding Jr.), and a doe-eyed single mother and former agency accountant named Dorothy Boyd (Renee Zellweger). Bouts of pain and exultation ensue and, between the two, Maguire discovers a hidden capacity for love, friendship and commitment that forces him to finally confront his demons and find true happiness.

Armed with Maguire's stockpile of insecurities and inadequacies, Cruise has what may well be the best role of his career, and Gooding exploits his meatiest part since "Boyz N the Hood." Zellweger's



Response No. 202

enchantingly lovable ingenue seems certain to vault the up-and-comer to instant A-list status. More than a triumph for the actors, though, "Jerry Maguire" is Crowe's. Witty, touching and meaningful, "Jerry Maguire" marks the filmmaker's coming-of-age as an American auteur, whose storytelling here ranks among the best of this or any year.—*Wade Major*

MARS ATTACKS! ★★★

Starring Jack Nicholson, Glenn Close, Pierce Brosnan, Sarah Jessica Parker, Martin Short, Annette Bening, Jim Brown, Michael J. Fox, Lukas Haas and Natalie Portman. Directed by Tim Burton. Written by Jonathan Gems. Produced by Tim Burton and Larry Franco. A Warner Bros. release. SF/comedy. Rated PG-13 for sci-fi fantasy violence and brief sexuality. Running time: 104 min.

While "ID4" was an overblown, special effects-driven, factory-generated formula blockbuster playing on patriotism and America's kick-ass mentality, "Mars Attacks!" is a Tim Burton-brand dark satire freakshow, overall much more interesting and entertaining, but likely with much more limited appeal as well. It's also a somewhat unsettling film, with extreme violence comically depicted and the "Ak! Ak!" barking of the cartoonish Martians quickly getting under one's skin. The aliens' experimentations are hilarious but also unapologetically jaw-droppingly sick and twisted. Major characters are wantonly decimated, bringing the tension up much higher and for much longer than "ID4" was able to. Yet sympathy and a rooting spirit are only vaguely evoked for a few characters.

Visually compelling with superior computer animation, great use of color and a fantastic opening credit sequence depicting a formidable armada of '50s-style flying saucers advancing on earth in perfect formation, "Mars Attacks!" is a bizarre combination of eye candy, warped humor, social satire and comedic ultraviolence. Added to that is an all-star ensemble cast, all sporting outlandishly over-the-top roles. But the lack of any message (even a sardonic one), the diffuse storyline and the done-before solution combine to leave a certain emptiness.—*Christine James*

THE PREACHER'S WIFE ★★1/2

Starring Denzel Washington, Whitney Houston, Courtney B. Vance and Gregory Hines. Directed by Penny Marshall. Written by Nat Mauldin and Allan Scott. Produced by Samuel Goldwyn, Jr. A Buena Vista release. Romantic comedy. Rated PG for brief mild language. Running time: 124 min.

Other than the decision to change the race of the principal characters from white to black in this Nat Mauldin/Allan Scott script (adapting the work of Robert E. Sherwood and Leonardo Bercovici), there's relatively little in "The Preacher's Wife" to distinguish it from Henry Koster's original 1947 Cary Grant/David Niven favorite "The Bishop's Wife." Much like its forebear, "The Preacher's Wife" is a sweet, sentimental, well-intentioned spoonful of holiday cheer that's pleasant enough as long as one doesn't take too close a look at how little of it really makes any sense.

Assuming the formidable mantle of Grant, Denzel Washington is charming as an exuberant angel sent to earth to help a discouraged preacher (Courtney B. Vance in the Niven role) and his beautiful wife (Whitney Houston in the Loretta Young role) salvage their neighborhood church. Romantic tension develops between angel and wife, but it's never clear why an angel would be detoured by such earthbound emotions (other than to give the film some romance).

On the plus side, audiences will appreciate this Touchstone effort for its positive portrayals of both religion and black family life—two institutions that have taken more than a fair beating from Hollywood of late. Neither Houston nor Vance is ever less than engaging, and Penny Marshall provides direction that consistently attains genuine sentiment without the usual melodramatic excess. Fans of Houston's singing, too, will thrill to the singer's return to her gospel roots.—*Wade Major*

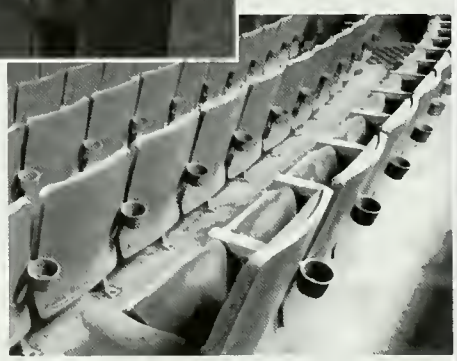
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REVIEWS

DAYLIGHT ★★1/2

Starring Sylvester Stallone, Amy Brenneman and Viggo Mortensen. Directed by Rob Cohen. Written by Leslie Bohem. Produced by John Davis, Joseph M. Singer and David T. Friendly. A Universal release. Action/drama. Rated PG-13 for disaster-related peril, death, and destruction. Running time: 114 min.

For audiences that enjoy action-packed films reminiscent of "The Poseidon Adventure," in which the stuntpeople outnumber the actors and dramatic music and camera angles outweigh the strength of the plot, "Daylight" will be on the money. In making their movie for that demo, though, director Rob Cohen ("Dragonheart") and writer Leslie Bohem have left little to the imagination, giving "Daylight" a feeling of being formulated for mass consumption.

In this latest Stallone actioner, an underwater commuter tunnel in New York City is the scene of a horrific incendiary explosion that traps a handful of survivors in its depths. As death nears for them, former emergency-services veteran turned cab driver Kit Latura (Stallone) decides to attempt the impossible. By saving the survivors, he hopes to redeem himself from a past mistake that cost precious lives.

The plot is predictable, but the supporting cast provides colorful moments, notably from the film's romantic interest, Madelyne ("Heat's" Amy Brenneman). "Daylight's" effects are complex and amazing, with Industrial Light & Magic providing two grand explosions.—*Pat Kramer*

LOSING CHASE ★★

Starring Helen Mirren, Beau Bridges and Kyra Sedgwick. Directed by Kevin Bacon. Written by Anne Meredith. Produced by Milton Justice. A CFP release. Drama. Rated R for brief language. Running time: 94 min.

In "Losing Chase," actor Kevin Bacon's directorial debut, necessity is the mother of insanity. Chase, a middle-aged married woman (Helen Mirren), goes crazy in order to avoid dealing with her deep unhappiness. Unable to ease her pain, her husband (Beau Bridges) hires Elizabeth (Kyra Sedgwick), a psychology student, to spend the summer with them on Martha's Vineyard and take care of the children. But Elizabeth has her own demons to contend with.

At first, "Losing Chase" (which already played on Showtime) seems an honest and sensitive portrait of women bound together by their identity crises; neither of them are sure of who they are or what they want. Yet, in order to provide a quick solution to their characters' problems—a catalyst for change—the filmmakers sexualize the relationship. It's a cheap way out for a film that had promise.—*Lea Russo*

101 DALMATIANS ★★1/2

Starring Glenn Close, Jeff Daniels, Joely Richardson and Joan Plowright. Directed by Stephen Herek. Written by John Hughes. Produced by John Hughes and Ricardo Mestres. A Buena Vista release. Comedy. Rated G. Running time: 103 min.

Aptly enough, John Hughes' script is based on the Dodie Smith novel "The One Hundred and One Dalmatians," and not on the original animated version. That Disney classic still has the fifth biggest boxoffice (in adjusted dollars) of any film ever, and one reason for that moviegoer response was an appreciation of the wonderfully personal voices that the puppies, their dad Pongo and mom Perdy, and sundry other animal participants possessed. Here, in their most questionable decision, director Stephen Herek (working closer to his "The Mighty Ducks" territory than that of his recent "Mr. Holland's Opus") and writer/producer John Hughes (who again provides numerous "Home Alone" moments) have decided that their critters won't speak. In de-animating "101 Dalmatians," its creators have also significantly lowered its emotions.

Not helping matters is a tedious second half (this film version runs 103 minutes, telling the same story that fit perfectly before in 79) that concludes with a climax

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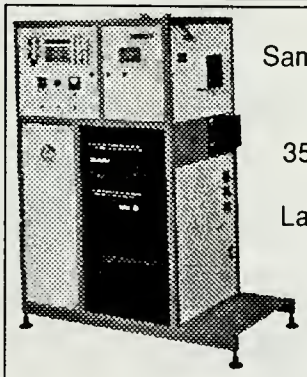
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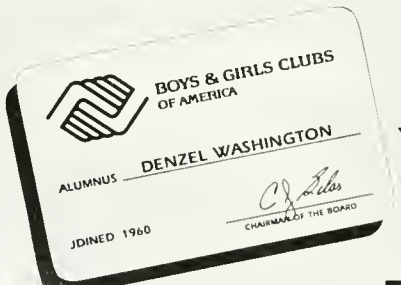
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REVIEWS

so underpowered only its placement at movie's end clues the audience in to its nature. Whereas the first portion begins with a bang—the character setups are perfect for Cruella DeVil (Glenn Close, right on target with her society-woman evil, wanting the pups' fur for a coat) and the dog-loving couple who (too quickly) become husband and wife, Roger (Jeff Daniels) and Anita (Joely Richardson)—in the latter section the three human leads, plus Pongo and Perdy, virtually disappear. In their wake are mostly indiscriminate puppies, nameless barnyard denizens and bumbling burglars Jasper (Hugh Laurie) and Horace (Mark Williams), an inept duo that undergo a sequence of bonk, slip and splash catastrophes.

Nonetheless, youngsters are likely to find the ongoings more on than off, although the littlest among them—unlike their parents, who can fill in the animals' vocal blanks from their memories of the original—might become lost when "101 Dalmatians" becomes almost a silent movie. For adults, this "101 Dalmatians"—even if it's more library asset maximization than real moviemaking—provides a fitfully entertaining cruise across three decades back to their own childhoods.—*Kim Williamson*

STAR TREK: FIRST CONTACT ★★★

Starring Patrick Stewart, Brent Spiner, James Cromwell and Alice Krige. Directed by Jonathan Frakes. Written by Brannon Braga & Ronald D. Moore. Produced by Rick Berman. A Paramount release. SF. Rated PG-13 for some sci-fi adventure violence. Running time: 110 min.

This eighth film in the "Star Trek" franchise borrows heavily from James Cameron's "Alien" and "Terminator" series, which should come as no surprise to anyone who watches television. TV shows routinely take their best ideas from the feature film arena. Even "Trek" creator Gene Roddenberry appropriated good stuff from "Forbidden Planet." But Roddenberry's handpicked heir, producer Rick Berman, can't quite generate the scope its central cyborg/human conflict (and a first-class theatrical film) demands.

The story takes off from a two-part episode of the "Next Generation" series, in which Captain Picard (Patrick Stewart) was captured and almost "assimilated" into the semi-robotic, quasi-Communist Borg, an imperialistic race of "Terminator"-type creatures. In this new outing, Picard uses his knowledge of the Borg to combat their latest strategy for universal domination: going back in time to change (for the worse) human history.

There's a slightly desperate feeling in "First Contact's" patched-together script that writers Brannon Braga and Ronald D. Moore are making up the rules as they go along, and there are signficant cheats at the end involving Data (Brent Spiner) and Picard. There's also a slow, ill-conceived sequence outside the ship with Picard and

REVIEWS

crew members battling the somnambulant Borg, and an opening attack scenario wouldn't be out of place in an old "A-Team" episode on the small tube.

In fairness, producer Berman and his writers were probably hamstrung by their own "prime directive": not to upset the delicate balance of the "Trek" star egosystem. Only Alice Krige's dominatrixy Borg Queen suggests the full-throated passion required of a feature film. Yet "First Contact" is never less than watchable for non-Trekkers, and it will positively delight the legions of Trek fans.—*Rick Schultz*

JINGLE ALL THE WAY ★★★

Starring Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sinbad, Rita Wilson and Phil Hartman. Directed by Brian Levant. Written by Randy Kornfield. Produced by Chris Columbus, Mark Radcliffe and Michael Barnathan. A Fox release. Comedy. Rated PG for action violence, mild language and some thematic elements. Running time: 89 min.

A zany, cartoonish romp in the proud tradition of such concept-driven holiday comedies as John Hughes' "Plains, Trains & Automobiles" and the Hughes/Chris Columbus collaboration "Home Alone," "Jingle All the Way" won't win any awards for believability, but as purely escapist family entertainment on a grand scale it's a tough act to beat.

Essentially little more than a parade of slapstick set pieces, each more outrageous than the last, "Jingle All the Way" stars Arnold Schwarzenegger as Howard Langston, a loving but neglectful Minneapolis father whose devotion is put to the test when he has to find his little boy (Jake Lloyd) the season's hottest toy on Christmas Eve; on the same quest is a borderline-lunatic mail carrier (Sinbad). With time running out, the two desperate fathers run a seemingly never-ending gauntlet of celebrity cameos and wacky obstacles.

Aided by an excellent supporting cast, including Rita Wilson as Howard's wife and Phil Hartman as his overly libidinous neighbor, the Schwarzenegger/Sinbad pairing proves an inspired one. Although director Brian Levant (recovering from the leaden "The Flintstones") deserves ample due for his able helming of yet another technically challenging project, it is producer Chris Columbus' trademark blend of shameless sentiment and madcap wackiness that is most evident throughout.—*Wade Major*

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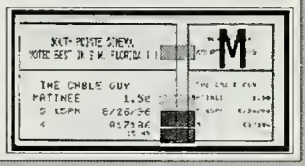
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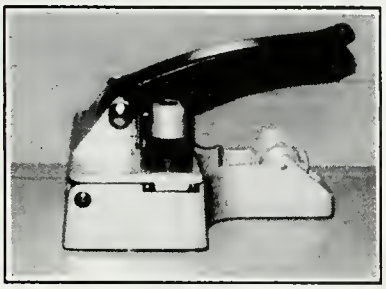


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SUNDANCE REVIEWS

WHEN THE CAT'S AWAY ★★★★

Starring Garance Clavel, Sinedine Soualem and Renee Le Calm. Directed and written by Cedric Klapisch. Produced by Aissa Djabri, Farid Lahoussa and Maunuel Munz. A Vertigo/France 2 production; no distributor set. Comedy. French-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 95 min.

Writer/director Cedric Klapisch has made a winning and thoughtful film with "When the Cat's Away." Its plot concerns Chloe, a dissatisfied modeling agency assistant whose life revolves around work and her only friend, gay roommate Michel. She decides to take a vacation and leaves her cat with Mademoiselle Renee, a neighborhood eccentric. When Chloe returns, she finds that her cat has disappeared. Mme. Renee alerts others in the neighborhood and instigates an exhaustive block-by-block search. Along the way, Chloe meets a host of culturally diverse characters; suddenly, her life is filled with adventure, intrigue and romance.

This French production is charming without being cloying, funny without being cute. Klapisch effortlessly entertains his audience but at the same time addresses such serious concerns as poverty, homelessness and racial prejudice. There's also a sense of foreboding as characters are evicted from apartments, and buildings stand vacant. The film's deft combination of comedy and social awareness is a rarity.—*Craig Vickers*

BUDDHA BLESS AMERICA ★★★★

Starring Lin Cheng-sheng and Chiang Shu-na. Directed and written by Wu Nien-jen. Produced by Yang Teng-kuei and Yeh Wen-li. A Taiwan Film Center production; no distributor set. Comedy. Mandarin- and Cantonese-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 111 min.

In a Taiwanese village in the 1960s, there are rumors that the American military is coming to carry out a series of maneuvers. This suits a former schoolteacher nicknamed Brain, because he believes in all things American, including NASA and Elvis. Brain's brother has lost his fingers (which he preserves in a pickle jar), and Brain is convinced that American doctors will be able to reattach them.

"Buddha Bless America's" premise is comic, but the tone that director Wu Nien-jen sets for his second feature is one of wry amusement rather than broad belly laughs. He gently pokes fun at the U.S. military, local government and village inhabitants. A complicated plot, which culminates with an accidental theft of a soldier's corpse, is handled deftly by Wu; the film is complex without being confusing.

A tender and touching portrait of an educated man and his illiterate brother, "Buddha Bless America" with hilarity and devastation demonstrates the enormous misunderstandings that can result from cultures clashing.—*Craig Vickers*

SNAKES AND LADDERS ★★

Starring Pom Boyd, Gina Moxley and Sean Hughes. Directed and written by Trish McAdam. Produced by Lilyan and Chris Sievernich. Drama. A Miramax release. Not yet rated. Running time: 92 min.

Much ado about nothing, "Snakes and Ladders" is the kind of bad movie that isn't trying to say anything, so it therefore just ambles along innocuously. With this film, moviegoers just mark time, which luckily isn't long.

Jean (Pom Boyd) and Kate (Gina Moxley), roommates in Dublin, are also street performers. Their mettle as friends and entertainers is tested when Jean's hangdog boyfriend (Sean Hughes) proposes marriage. All goes awry when Jean panics, has an affair, and gets a job on TV, while the boyfriend stews, gets Jean pregnant after a drunken one-night stand, and eventually makes his way back to Jean. And that's about all there is to it.

Director Trish McAdam seems to be aiming for an amiable farce about the trials of romance between women who are close friends as well as artistic competitors. But she doesn't develop the heat that their competitiveness could generate. Her temperament won't allow her to just let the fur fly; she wants us to feel cozy with these two women, which wipes out any potential tension that could inspire any interest in them. (Even their music act is played for cuteness.) With McAdam flattening the drama as if it were a made-for-TV picture, the actors look like they're trying out for a sitcom. And none of the actors do anything that you probably haven't seen on an episode of "Friends." McAdam knows how to tell a story but she doesn't yet know how to develop one. In that vein, "Snakes and Ladders" is a romantic comedy without a romantic impulse or comic spark.—*Kevin Courrier*

ARISTOTLE'S PLOT ★★★

Starring Seputla Sebogohi and Albee Lesotho. Directed and written by Jean-Pierre Bekolo. Produced by Jacques Bidou. A JBA production; no distributor set. Drama. French-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 72 min.

Jean-Pierre Bekolo was invited to make Africa's entry for a British Film Institute series commemorating the centenary of cinema, and this French/Zimbabwean coproduction is the result. Rather than make a straightforward documentary, Bekolo opts for a postmodern hybrid of satire and fantasy that evokes Jean-Luc Godard. "Aristotle's Plot" is an often puzzling, sometimes entertaining and occasionally delightful film, but moviegoers might find a knowledge of African cinema necessary.

The story: A group of trash-talking, would-be gangsters sporting names like Van Damme and Bruce Lee hang out at their local moviehouse. A cineaste tries to enlist them in his cause to replace Hollywood fare with native productions. When they resist, he becomes a kind of vigilante.

SUNDANCE REVIEWS

The film is mostly a series of contradictory ideas about cinema, which Bekolo dramatizes playfully and often satirically. The photography is striking, and the film is challenging, but confusion will reign for all but art-housers.—*Craig Vickers*

JOE'S SO MEAN TO JOSEPHINE ★★★★

Starring Eric Thal, Sarah Polley and Don McKellar. Directed and written by Peter Wellington. Produced by Susan Cavan. An Alliance production; no distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 89 min.

Josephine (Sarah Polley), a bright college student, spots Joe (Eric Thal) in a bar one night, and romance follows. Unfortunately, Joe—a surly tough trapped in a life of petty crime and illegal wiretaps—has more than his share of emotional problems. When she tries to break up with him, it's too late; Joe is hooked and refuses to let Josephine go.

The plot sounds like a dreary erotic thriller, but in fact the film is surprisingly heartfelt, spilling over with a sense of promise in the early scenes (told mostly from Josephine's perspective) and bristling with frustration and loneliness as the film moves on (and assumes Joe's point of view). Deservedly, it recently won a Genie for best first feature.

First-time director Peter Wellington is a deft technician—it runs in the family; brother David Wellington made "A Man in Uniform"—but he never permits pyrotechnics to obscure the story or characters. The two leads do some excellent work; in particular, Polley (best known for her work on the PBS series "Road to Avonlea") shows startling range and charisma.—*Steve Gravestock*

DAY AND DATE: MARCH 28

ALL OVER ME ★★★1/2

Starring Alison Foland, Tara Subkoff, Pat Briggs and Cole Hauser. Directed by Alex Sichel. Written by Sylvia Sichel. Produced by Dolly Hall. A Fine Line release. Drama. Rated R for sexuality and drug use involving teen girls, and for language. Running time: 89 min. The film debuts at Sundance and opens 3/28 NY/LA/SF.

Unlike both "Foxfire" and "The Craft," which depict a group of teenage girls battling against society's strict confines, "All Over Me" explores the more personal, internal struggle two best friends face as their relationship slowly begins to disintegrate. Compelling, gritty and sincere, the Sichel sisters' debut feature melds the rawness of Larry Clark's "Kids" with the angst of the '90s riot grrl scene.



Tara Subkoff and Alison Foland star in Fine Line's "All Over Me."

A stocky wannabe guitar player with hair the color of red-tinted copper, easygoing Claude ("To Die For's" Alison Foland) mostly hangs out in her room with her best friend Ellen ("Freeway's" Tara Subkoff), a petite, mercurial blonde. But as their world becomes larger—Ellen gets a boyfriend ("Higher Learning's" Cole Hauser) and Claude makes friends with a gay rocker (Pat Briggs of the band Psychotica)—the girls change, altering their friendship forever.

With the exception of a cool soundtrack, which features Babes in Toyland, Patti Smith and Ani DiFranco, "All Over Me" often seems like a documentary due to its realistic portrayal of the girls' friendship. They might fight one moment and hug the next, but they always speak the truth to each other—hard as that might sometimes be. Even when Claude betrays Ellen, she tells her immediately.

Not always lovable or even sympathetic, "All Over Me's" characters are human, easy to wound and quick to attack. Foland and Subkoff are naturals, registering a mass of conflicting emotions at once—desire, love, revulsion, fear. "All Over Me" reveals the adolescence most everyone went through (or witnessed) but no one talks about.—***Lea Russo***

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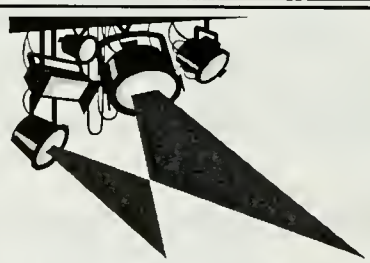
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SUNDANCE

JOHN HENRIK CLARKE ★★★1/2

Directed by St. Clair Bourne. Written by Lou Potter. Produced by Kimiko Jackson. A Black Dot Media production; no distributor set. Documentary. Not yet rated. Running time: 90 min.

Wesley Snipes is the narrator and executive producer of this fascinating documentary, subtitled "A Great and Mighty Walk," about pre-eminent African-American historian John Henrik Clarke. Directed with an assured, confident style by veteran documentarian St. Clair Bourne ("Making Do The Right Thing"), the result is not only entertaining but also enlightening.

Now in his 80th year and blind, Clarke provides a crash course in African history from ancient Egypt on. Drawing from his personal experiences, he adds anecdote to objective history; Clarke was a participant in the Harlem Renaissance and knew the likes of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. He doesn't shy from criticism: King's passive resistance comes under fire, and the Million Man March draws particularly scathing mention from Clarke.

Boume wisely lets the man talk, inventively orchestrating the film with archival footage. A welcome addition to black history, "John Henrik Clarke: A Great and Mighty Walk" is an intriguing and elucidating mix that's as thoughtful and gracious as its subject.—***Craig Vickers***

ALL OF THEM WITCHES ★1/2

Starring Susana Zabelata, Alejandro Tommasi and Delia Casanova. Directed by Daniel Gruener. Written by Gabriel Gonzalez Melendez and Daniel Gruener. Produced by Ignacio Sada Madero. A Televicine production; no distributor set. Horror. Spanish-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 100 min.

"All of them witches" is a quotation from Roman Polanski's masterpiece of paranoia and black magic, "Rosemary's Baby," and this film attempt to be a playful yet suspenseful Mexican update. The film opens with Dolores, an attractive young housewife who lives in an apartment, hearing her best friend being murdered. For her own safety, her husband Andres forbids her to investigate. One day, though, she sneaks out to do just that, and before you can say conspiracy Dolores becomes caught in a plot involving slaying and a cult of witchcraft.

The main problem is the narrative: It's often incomprehensible, which makes it hard for an audience to feel suspense. On the plus side, the art direction is stunning; indeed, the film seems more to have been art-directed than written. Also, the music is appropriately moody, and the cinematography is excellent. As a horror film, though, "All of Them Witches" fails, because it baffles rather than frightens.—***Craig Vickers***

NATIONAL NEWS

DISNEY REVS UP

While many of the studios did well in their third quarter (which ended Sept. 30, 1996), the Walt Disney Co. surprised the Wall Street execs who had predicted the company would increase revenues up to 50 percent. When the reports were totaled, Disney had raised revenues 68 percent, bringing net profit to $354 million, up $133 million from last year. The growth was due in large part to Disney's film and television production arms, which increased 31 percent in operating income, helped by the domestic and international success of movies such as "The Rock," "Phenomenon" and "The Hunchback of Notre Dame." Disney's theme parks and resorts also contributed to the company's growth, rising 16 percent.

Perhaps Disney's fourth quarter earnings are not so surprising, considering that Disney had already beat its record for North American boxoffice before the quarter figures were announced. From 1994 to 1995, Disney was the only company to gross $1 billion in a year from U.S. and Canadian boxoffices. In 1995, Disney beat their 1994 $1 billion record by a day. In 1996, Disney beat their record by five weeks.

Hot on the heels of this success, Disney's vice chairman Roy E. Disney announced plans to build a $77 million, 14-stage studio complex in Manhattan Beach, Calif. Roy Disney's Shamrock Holdings Inc. will team with CFN/Flesch & Neuhauser Llc. development group to form Shamrock Entertainment Investors II Inc. Designed by architect Gary Bastien, who worked with Ronald Flesch of CFN/Flesch & Neuhauser on the CBS Studio Center's 250,000-square foot expansion project, Manhattan Beach Studios will be built on 22 acres of land, bought from TRW Space & Electronics for an undisclosed seven-figure amount. The facilities will include 225,000 square feet for offices, parking, and a commissary; three 25,000-square-foot soundstages, ten 18,000-square-foot sound stages, and one 30,000-square-foot soundstage when it is completed. Beginning construction on the development this July, Shamrock Entertainment Investors plan to be partly operational by the summer of 1998.

"KUNDUN" CONUNDRUM

Despite smooth national planning, Disney may run into expansion problems in China because of the turmoil over Martin Scorsese's "Kundun," a film about the fourteenth Dalai Lama, Tenzingyatso. "Kundun" takes a sympathetic view of Tibet's struggle for independence and of the Dalai Lama, who was exiled in 1951. Officials at the China Film Bureau professed their strong opposition to the making of the film, believing that it would exalt the Dalai Lama and consequently disrupt national affairs. Chinese officials have threatened that if Disney releases the film, the government could destroy the company's chances of developing a theme park in China (Disney currently owns over 130 Mickey's Corner stores in China). Despite China's warning, Disney is standing its ground and plans to distribute the film domestically and in the U.K. through its Miramax label. UGA, a French film company, owns the rest of the international rights, which they bought at Cannes last year.

WIRED WORLD

ONLINE FILM INVESTMENT

What started out as an internet game called the "Hollywood Stock Exchange" may turn out to be a golden opportunity for independent filmmakers. Conceived of by former Wall Street stockbroker Max Keiser and Prudential Securities media group managing director Michael Burns, the game (http://www.hsx.com) gives each player $1 million to invest in actors, films, studios, and scripts. Information HSX gains from players, such as development ideas, will be placed in a database that Hollywood execs can access.

But in March, the game will become a real business venture, in which anyone will be able to invest money in an actual film via HSX. For example, Burns plans to find a million investors on the web, charging $40 per person, in order to raise $3 million to make a film. HSX is currently developing a picture called "Atomic Highway," and has plans to produce four others.

While HSX is gearing up for the virtual to reality transition, entertainment company Netter Digital Entertainment Inc. has already posted its public offering on the net via the IPONet World Wide Web site (http://www.zanax.com/iponet). In late October of last year, Netter Digital, producer of TV's "Babylon 5," offered up $5 million of its stock over the web at nine dollars per share.

IT'S TURNER TIME, BUT WHAT'S MY LINE?

After two years as a standalone label, Turner Pictures absorbed into Warner Bros. as part of the mammoth Time Warner/Turner merger just one month before its first picture, "Michael" starring John Travolta and Andie MacDowell, was released. So far, Warner Bros. has committed to release a number of Turner Pictures projects, among them, "Edwards and Hunt: The First American Road Trip," starring Chris Farley and Matthew Perry; "Fallen" featuring Denzel Washington; and "City of Angels," which headlines Meg Ryan and Nicolas Cage. Four other Turner projects are also likely to be picked up by Warner. Turner president of production Amy Pascal will return to Columbia Pictures as president of that studio early next year.

Time Warner has certainly seen some changes in the last couple of months. In addition to the absorption of Turner Pictures, New Line, a sister company, may be up for sale, and at least 10 potential buyers have signed nondisclosure agreements to view its financials. At the same time, Warner may consider a joint venture with the right company or they might sell their majority stake of the studio's shares. Despite a not-so-healthy year ("The Long Kiss Goodnight," "Last Man Standing"), New Line is not in a precarious position, and Warner may not sell if the price and buyers aren't right. Indeed, things may be picking up for New Line, as Jim Carrey, who has already made millions for the company, signed a deal to star in the remake of 1947's "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," which originally starred Danny Kaye and Virginia Mayo. Babaloo Mandell and Lowell Ganz ("City Slickers") are set to write the comedy.

HOLIDAY B.O. SEES SPOTS

The eighth film in the franchise, Paramount's "Star Trek: First Contact" took first place over the weekend of November 23, 1996 with an estimated $30.5 million at the boxoffice, up $7.4 million from 1994's "Star Trek: Generations," which grossed $23.1 million on its opening weekend. The film broke the series record, as Star Trek fans showed their loyalty in boxoffice dollars.

Even a successful series can't beat a remake of a children's classic on a holiday weekend. Over Thanksgiving, Buena Vista's live-action re-creation of the 1961 cartoon "101 Dalmatians" broke the $43 million 1989 record set by Universal's "Back to the Future II" with a gross of $46 million in five days. On the art-house front, Fine Line's "Shine" dominated over Thanksgiving, taking in $156,673, followed by Miramax's "Swingers" at $86,928. But a boxoffice plunge one week later (led by the disappointing opening of the Stallone disaster flick "Daylight" which grabbed a measely $10 million on over 2,000 screens) left the ultimate status of the holiday play period in doubt.

SAG AFTRA MERGER EMERGING

There may be a single national actors union if the proposed merger between SAG and AFTRA is completed. In a meeting between boards of directors for both unions, a new constitution and a five-year budget were approved, though some SAG execs denounced the plan by walking out. The merger will require $50 million to operate in its first year, a cost that will force the organization to substantially increase dues. The combined 120,000 members can expect their dues to rise to a $200 a year minimum (up from $85) and $2,400 maximum (up from SAG's $2,260 and AFTRA's $1,585 L.A. rate and $1,650 N.Y. rate) based on income. The new union would also require a percentage of members' profits—1.3 percent of $100,000 annually, and 0.3 percent over $100,000 up to $400,000 annually. The dues structure would most affect low-income members who will face a 135 percent increase. For the merger to transpire, 60 percent of combined membership of each union must vote for it.

EXHIBITION BRIEFINGS

UATC TOPPER BLAIR RESIGNS

Stewart Blair has resigned as the chairman, CEO and president and as a member of the Board of Directors of United Artists Theatre Circuit Inc., effective immediately, the company announced. Management of the company will be overseen by an operating committee of senior management and members of the Board of Directors until Blair's replacement has been selected. The reason for Blair's departure was not revealed.

MANN TO OPEN 76 NEW SCREENS BY THE END OF 1997

Mann Theatres has announced plans to open 76 new screens in seven locations over the course of 1997, which will increase the circuit's screen count to 475 in 73 locations. Scheduled to open this spring is Mann's largest facility to date—a 16-screen megaplex in southeast Denver. Other new theatres and screen expansions are planned in several northern and southern California cities. All auditoriums in the new complexes will be built to THX specifications and will feature multi-channel digital stereo sound and giant curved screens.

WEHRENBERG EXPANDS ST. CHARLES 10 TO A 22-PLEX

Wehrenberg Theatres will add 12 screens to its existing St. Charles 10 Cine, located in St. Charles, Mo. The 22-plex is scheduled for completion in the fall of 1997. The project is part of an aggressive building plan in the works for St. Louis-based Wehrenberg, which currently has 252 screens in Missouri, Illinois and Arizona and recently celebrated its 90th anniversary.

HOORAY FOR CINEMA HOLLYWOOD: NEW COMPANY BUILDS SIX-PLEX

Cinema Hollywood LLC, a new Bloomfield Hills, Mich.-based company, has finalized plans to construct a six-plex in Birch Run, Mich. All auditoriums will have stadium seating, high-backed rocker seats, extra-wide row spacing and digital sound. The company plans to expand the theatre to 10 or more screens in the future.

MARCUS BUILDS 12-PLEX IN WISCONSIN

Marcus Theatres Corp. will be building a 45,000-square-foot 12-screen theatre in Kenosha, Wis., that will have seating for more than 2,500 people. The state-of-the-art facility will offer stadium seating, THX-certified auditoriums and digital sound. The Kenosha theatre, due to open in mid-'97, will be part of a 100-acre retail center currently being constructed.

TORU OKUYAMA, TONY MANNE, SHAW ORGANIZATION HONORED AT CINEASIA

After 72 years in exhibition and distribution, the **Shaw Organization** was chosen to receive CineAsia's 1997 **Exhibitor of the Year Award.** The pioneer company was founded in 1924 by two brothers, the late Tan Sri Runme Shaw and Sir Run Run Shaw, who built Asia's largest studio and ran a chain of over 200 theatres, covering territory from Singapore and Malaysia to Hong Kong.

Under the current management team—Vee Meng Shaw, Harold Shaw, and Vee King Shaw—the Shaw Organization instituted the first multiplex in Singapore, and in the '80s built a 22-story complex housing retail stores, restaurants, offices and an eight-screen theatre. The company has several new projects under construction, including two single-screen cinemas.

President and CEO of Shochiku Company Unlimited since 1991, **Toru Okuyama** is the recipient of CineAsia's 1997 **Lifetime Achievement Award.** Okuyama began working for Shochiku in 1964, after obtaining his degree from the Law Department of Kyoto University. Four years later, he joined the Board of Directors.

Now, after 32 years with Japan's oldest motion picture company, Okuyama oversees distribution, the operation of Shochiku's 70 theatres, its amusement park (Kamakura), satellite TV channels, and home video division. Recently, Okuyama created Shochiku Multiplex Theatres, a company which will develop and operate multiplex theatres.

CineAsia's **Distributor of the Year Award** goes to **Tony Manne,** executive vice president of Columbia TriStar Film Distributors International. A veteran of international sales, Manne started working at Columbia in 1963, operating out of the company's various offices in Rio de Janeiro, Rome, Paris, and Lisbon.

Nine years later, Manne decided to create his own distribution company in Brazil and left Columbia. After becoming a partner in New York's JAD Films Inc. and serving as a vice president for United Artists, Manne returned to Columbia in 1981. Since then, he has worked for Columbia as the vice president and supervisor of Europe, Africa, and the Middle East; the executive vice president of international sales; and the executive vice president of distribution.

REGAL REACHES NEW HEIGHTS

Regal Cinemas Inc. has opened the Middleburg Heights Cinema 12 in Middleburg Heights, Ohio. All 12 auditoriums have giant wall-to-wall screens and DTS, Dolby Digital, SDDS, and Dolby surround sound, and selected theatres have stadium seating. Regal's Cafe Del Moro offers an alternative to traditional concessions, with freshly-baked cookies, muffins and soft pretzels, as well as cappuccino, espresso, hot chocolate and tea.

CINEPLEX ADDS TUCSON SCREENS

Cineplex Odeon has announced plans to add eight screens to its 7-plex in Tucson, Ariz.'s Foothills Mall. The 15-plex will also feature a new Cinescape multi-media entertainment center, which will offer the latest in inteactive game technology. The renovated complex is scheduled for completion this summer.

MAGIC JOHNSON ATLANTA OPENING DRAWS 20,000 PATRONS

The newest Magic Johnson Theatre, located in Atlanta, Ga.'s Greenbriar Mall, celebrated its grand opening with $1 movie admissions, a promotion that drew more than 20,000 patrons to the state-of-the-art 12-plex. Opening weekend festivities also included the "Sprite Playground at NBA Jam Session," an interactive basketball-themed family attraction. The 60,000-square-foot complex has a total of 3,200 seats, and each auditorium features stadium seating, oversized rocking chair seats with cupholder armrests, and SDDS sound.

GCC INTRODUCES CARTOON "MATOONAYS"

General Cinema Theatres, in a partnership with the Cartoon Network and Kraft Foods Inc., has kicked off a year-long schedule of cartoon matinees, or "MaTOONays." MaTOONays, which are comprised of 20 minutes of Cartoon Network entertainment, hope to recapture the success of the animated shorts that years ago regularly preceded feature films. The program, which started Jan. 11 in 50 General Cinema theatres throughout the country, shows a different MaTOONay each Saturday morning, followed by a feature-length family-oriented film.

GCC also recently unveiled its new opening trailer, featuring state-of-the-art animation from Digital Domain. It tells the story of "Popcorn Man," who meets his "Pepsi" movie date to see a film that's introduced by a rock band of candy musicians.

NATIONAL AMUSEMENTS' CURTAIN RAISER "USHERS" IN A NEW PROMOTIONAL CHARACTER

National Amusements wowed moviegoers this Christmas season with its elaborate new curtain raiser, which the company claims is the first ever curtain raiser to integrate live-action with animation. The two-minute film celebrates 100 years of cinema and introduces the "National Amusements Usher," a new corporate figure who will be incorporated into future advertising and promotions. The live-action usher is transported through the past century, encountering an antique arcade of turn-of-the-century mutascope movie machines; a 1930s Busby

Berkeley-style refreshment center with dancing hot dogs; a film noir vignette delivering a "no smoking" message; '50s flying saucers; the psychedelic Yellow Submarine; and a futuristic spaceman movie usher.

EDWARDS UNLEASHES 505 DALMATIANS AT METRO POINTE

Edwards Theatres Circuit Inc. had 505 Dalmatians at the opening of its new Metro Pointe Stadium 12 in Orange County, Calif.—that is, five prints of "101 Dalmatians," the largest number of "Dalmatian" prints released to a single theatre complex in the country, according to the circuit. Also featured at the theatre's debut was 12-cent popcorn, music, mimes, caricatures and giveaways. Edwards Metro Pointe, which offers DTS, Dolby Digital and SDDS sound systems, is Orange County's first all stadium-style seating theatre.

ON THE MOVE

Loews Theatres (formerly Sony Theatres) has promoted **Travis Reid** to president, a post that has been vacant for the past three years. Reid joined Loews five years ago as head film buyer and was promoted to executive vice president in 1995...**Wood Dickinson,** president and CEO of **Dickinson Theatres,** announced that **Bill Burnett,** VP of operations, has been promoted to executive vice president...**Chris Hollebone** has been named director of operations of **Digital Theater Systems'** European branch, **DTS SA.** Hollebone, who has 25 years of experience in the pro-audio field, previously served at TimeLine Vista Inc. as director of European Operations, and worked for 15 years in sales and marketing at Sony Broadcast and Professional Europe...**Cherise McVicar** has been upped to the position of vice president, national promotions, for **Buena Vista Pictures Marketing.** She will oversee the development and execution of national promotions for all motion pictures released under the Walt Disney, Touchstone and Hollywood Pictures banners...**Mark Ward** has been appointed marketing manager for Toronto-based simulation attraction company **SimEx.** Ward, who will be working out of SimEx's Orlando, Fla. office, will primarily focus on establishing a stronger presence for the company in the United States...**Regal Cinemas'** COO **Greg Dunn** announced a restructuring of the circuit's operations department, which includes Northern Region VP **Mike Kivett's** move to VP of the Southern and Western regions; Director of Marketing **Mike Levesque** to VP, Northern Region; VP South **Leon Hurst** to VP of Security and Quality Control; FunScape Operations Supervisor **Robin Levesque** to FunScape Director of Operations; Assistant Booker **Rosemarie Melomo** to Director of Film Reporting Systems; and Film Assistant **Joel Curnell** to Assistant Booker. Regal also reported two new hirings: **Phil Zacheretti** is the circuit's new Director of Marketing and Publicity, and **Fred Buffum** takes on the position of District Manager of the Northeast.

Q&A: MUY CALIENTE: CINEMEX BURNS UP MEXICO CITY MARKET

New chain on the block Cinemex is hot, hot, hot. Having already established a strong foothold in one of exhibition's most dynamic new markets, this Mexico City-based circuit has become a major player in its mere 15 months of existence. Boasting 65 screens in seven theatres, with 38 more screens currently under construction, Cinemex is rapidly closing in on Mexico's top circuit, Ramirez, in terms of both attendance and boxoffice. A recent deal with Hoyts Cinemas, under which the Australian-based chain is investing US$22 million for a 35 percent interest in Cinemex, further cemented Cinemex's ambitious plans to build many more state-of-the-art multiplexes in screen-starved Mexico City. BOXOFFICE ***spoke with Matthew Heyman, Cinemex's 34-year-old co-founder and director of programming & strategic planning, about Cinemex's experiences as a new company on the rise.***



BOXOFFICE: How did Cinemex come to be?

HEYMAN: In 1991 I [met Cinemex partners Miguel Angel Davila, director of operations and finance, and Adolfo Fastlicht, director of real estate development] at Harvard Business School. We actually did our business plan on Cinemex. And it won both the business plan awards of Harvard Business School. On April 12, 1993, we finished the business plan and began trying to raise money. It was tough, but by Oct. 8, we had a commitment from J.P. Morgan, who put several million dollars into the company.

BOXOFFICE: And you recently sealed a $22 million deal with Hoyts. How did that come about?

HEYMAN: We had a fair number of theatre chains looking around Mexico, and I think several of them decided that the right move was to do something with us versus doing something alone. And basically Hoyts was the most persistent and seemed to be the most in line with the way the company operated, and we seem to have a good rapport with those guys.

BOXOFFICE: How much input are they going to have into the running of your business?

HEYMAN: They're our largest investor, so clearly they're going to have something to say about things. I think they're going to really be more involved in the way we operate the business through the back office than through the front. I think they're going to provide us a lot of support, and they're going to hopefully expedite the learning curve that we're going up. They do have a thousand screens—they've been through these growing pains before. I'm sure they're going through them even now, because they're growing pretty fast.

BOXOFFICE: What do you think accounts for the sudden interest in the Mexican market?

HEYMAN: [When we were first entering the market in 1994], everyone thought Mexico was going to become a first-world country in the next three or four years. The numbers were extremely high on attendance per screen. The opportunity appeared very large, with a very stable economy. I think now what's happened is Cinemark has a fair number of buildings, and their new builds open very successfully. And ours have pretty much all opened successfully. The numbers we're generating are extremely large, and the interest is very high because of our success.

BOXOFFICE: What is Cinemex's advantage over other circuits looking to enter Mexico?

HEYMAN: I believe that my two Mexican partners are an incredible advantage in this market, because we operate to government, to the real estate community, and to any area that is indigenous to Mexico, like a Mexican company, 100 percent. But to distributors, to the equipment suppliers—we have to buy things out of the U.S.—to all those types of interests, I handle all those, and I operate just like any old gringo you meet in the U.S. We act extremely Mexican, and we are extremely Mexican, but we have all the benefit of the U.S. experience. And I live here and my two partners live here. If somebody needs to see me, they can see me. I don't need to fly down. I am here.

BOXOFFICE: The consensus seems to be that Mexico needs about 3,000 screens.

HEYMAN: That seems to be the consensus. That's about double what [Mexico has], by the way, at this existing time. My view is Mexico City can support a good 600 screens. As far as the whole country supporting 3,000, I'll leave it to my competitors to give you a more cogent reading on that. Our goal basically is to get 350-400 screens in Mexico City.

BOXOFFICE: What differentiates Cinemex from other chains?

HEYMAN: We try not to use the American exhibitors as our benchmark, because we believe that we can do better. In every way. And it's nothing against American exhibition. It's more a matter of the opportunity to really show yourself in a big way. [People think], "When it's dark, [all theatres are] the same place." When you're in a Cinemex, you know you're in a Cinemex. The sound's rockin', we spent a *lot* of money on our sound, and our real goal is to try and really deliver the goods to whoever comes in, and we have a real customer service focus.

We used to be little Cinemex sneaking up on everybody. Now everybody's watching us. And it's getting harder. When you're number two, it's easier. And by number two, I don't mean in size or anything other than quality. Nobody really kind of recognizes that you're floating around. It's kind of easy. But all of a sudden, when you're viewed now as a big monster who's trying to change things or introduce new stuff and trying to be cutting edge and invoke a whole new philosophy of operation, all of a sudden, all those guys who thought "These are just three guys running around, they don't know anything," all of a sudden, their attitudes change, and they're saying "Hold on, hold on, hold on, we'd better start watching Cinemex!"

EUROVIEWS

European News Notes *by Melissa Morrison*

LEAD STORY: BUDAPEST'S BOOM

BUDAPEST—Three multiplexes opened within a month of each other in Budapest at the end of 1996, profoundly altering Hungarians' moviegoing habits. On December 12, Cineplex Odeon launched its first overseas cinema, opening the gate for the Toronto-based company's wider development in Europe. The Polas Center 'plex has six screens and Dolby digital sound. Allen Karp, the company's CEO and president, said Hungary was chosen for Cineplex's first European foray because of its strong post-communist economy, stable government and linchpin location as a relatively new market whose potential has yet to be fully plumbed. Hungary is also centrally located to Cineplex's next intended sites: Germany, Austria, Poland, Italy and the Czech Republic. Cineplex Odeon worked in partnership with Hungary's Granit Polas Ltd. and Canada's Trizec Corporation on the venture.

The Polas Center opened hot on the heels of Village Roadshow International's nine-screen Hollywood Multiplex, a collaboration with Hungarian distributor and exhibitor InterCom that reportedly caused Budapest's admissions to rise by 30 percent after its opening. Both multiplexes are part of a stream of Western-style entertainment and commercial ventures in Hungary. Both opened in newly built malls—a recent consumer phenomenon in the country. The Polas Center, for example, is part of a complex that includes an indoor ice rink, a Wild West town, a miniature theme park, and an entertainment complex full of video games and laser shows.

Unlike its fellow multiples, the third theatre, the Koffuth, debuted in the city center. Its owner, local distributor/exhibitor Flamex, plans to add two more screens next year. The Koffuth opened the second week of December. Hungary will soon be seeing even more screens: Village Roadshow announced plans for three more multiplexes within the next two years.

CRASH-LANDING IN LONDON

LONDON—In an unprecedented move, West End theatres will not screen David Cronenberg's "auto"-erotic film "Crash." The decision came as a result of comments by Virginia Bottomley, the government's National Heritage secretary, who has adopted a Bob Dole-like stance calling for cuts in onscreen violence. The Westminster City Council, which covers most of London's West End, responded by invoking the Cinema Act to veto screenings of the film in its jurisdiction. The council, which had requested that three scenes be cut from the film, was unpersuaded by a petition signed by 50 filmmakers, including Mike Leigh, Ken Loach and Bernardo Bertolucci. Right-wing tabloids, including The Daily Mail, aided Bottomley with a campaign criticizing the film, which is chock-a-block with sex scenes, car crashes, and sex scenes in crashed cars.

Columbia TriStar, the film's distributor in the United Kingdom, said at press time it still planned to open the film on 100 screens in January. "Crash," based on the novel by J.G. Ballard and starring Holly Hunter and James Spader, already screened in the city at the London Film Festival Nov. 9. The film was executive produced by British Film Institute chairman Jeremy Thomas through his company Recorded Pictures Co. (It was Thomas who initiated the artists' petition.)

"Crash" has done already done well in Spain, Portugal, Belgium and Canada, although there have been some calls for its ban in Italy. The film has done especially well in France, where it drew a record 700,000 admissions.

SCHLOENDORFF SOUNDS OFF

BERLIN—Eighteen years after "The Tin Drum" won Germany its first foreign film Oscar since 1927, director Volker Schloendorff is back in the news—this time as an advocate of pan-European production to loosen Hollywood's grip on world cinema. Schloendorff, head of Germany's Babelsberg studio for the last five years, has turned up in high-profile periodicals The International Herald Tribune and The Economist railing against Europe's failure to make films of wide appeal.

"The French make films that are so Frenchie-Frenchie French that nobody in Germany wants to see them anymore," he was quoted as saying in the Nov. 30, 1996, issue of The Economist. He also bemoaned his country's inability to make a significant artwork about Germany's reunification following nearly 50 years of the Iron Curtain. "Here we are, seven years after the wall came down, and we still do not have a book or a movie or even a television series that has captured the emotional turmoil of the event that had the greatest impact on Europe since the war. Can you imagine if in 1952 there had still been no great book or film produced about World War II?" Schloendorff blames a lack of good scripts and a German tendency to block out the memories of their past for the lack of a worthy reunification film to appear.

Cynics might ask Schloendorff to practice what he preaches. His latest offering, "The Ogre," met with scathing reviews at the 1996 Venice Film Festival, where it premiered.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION...

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has what seems to be an especially rich choice of 40 films from which to choose its five nominees for the best foreign-language film of 1996.

From the Czech Republic, Jan Sverak's "Kolya" is a comedy-drama about a confirmed bachelor who reluctantly takes in a 6-year-old Russian boy on the eve of Czechoslovakia's Velvet Revolution. "Kolya" has been a runaway success in its homeland, one whose crowd-pleasing numbers have brought hope to the flagging post-communist domestic industry. Although barely in his 30s, Sverak is no stranger to the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion: his 1991 film "Elementary School" was nominated for an Oscar.

Israel's "Saint Clara," a satire, has also been credited with reviving boxoffice at home. The story of a 13-year-old clairvoyant in one of Israel's prefab high-rise neighborhoods was made by Ari Folman and Ori Sivan. France's entry, Patrice Leconte's 18th-century comedy of manners "Ridicule," started its screen life with a prominent debut–it was chosen to open the 1996 Cannes Film Festival—and has lived up to its hype with positive reviews all over the world. "Ridicule" has already received limited release in Europe and America.

Srdjan Dragojevic's "Pretty Village, Pretty Flame" from Serbia was described by the Washington Post as "one of the most significant cultural developments in the Balkans" since the recent war because its Serb director depicts Serbs killing Muslims, and is "more or less objective." "In Full Gallop," Krzystof Zanussi's remembrance of his childhood in Stalinist Poland, is complete with reflective bookends in which the esteemed director himself addresses the audience while surrounded by his cast. And the nominees are...?

Q&A: MEDIA II's JACQUES DELMOLY

As Europe looks toward unification and a single monetary system, Europe's film industry hopes there will be similar unity between the various European production and distribution entities, which have been losing more and more European market share to U.S. product. France's Jacques Delmoly is head of the EEC's Media II, a program launched in 1996 to help support the development of films with cross-border appeal and to facilitate their distribution outside their home countries. He spoke to **BOXOFFICE** *about the EEC's plans for pooling resources and blending talents via Media II.*

BOXOFFICE: What kind of filmmakers is Media II aiming at?

JACQUES DELMOLY: This program is for the benefit of European professionals—producers, distributors and so on. The most important rule is to make different programs and films that circulate in all of Europe. Today, there is a tiny proportion of [European product] that circulates in all Europe.

BOXOFFICE: Why is that?

DELMOLY: The absence of a global strategy for the distribution of movies. Why the absence of a global strategy? Because there is no major company in Europe, except maybe PolyGram. We will fund the expenses for the release of the films in Europe between several distributors. And we will be encouraging the [original projects]. We don't intervene at all in the filmmaking. We just help with the development, the production and the distribution. We just focus on the management, and the business planning, financing, and the [use of] new technologies.

BOXOFFICE: Besides broader distribution, what will be some other results of the union?

DELMOLY: Europe produces as many movies as Hollywood, but there is a problem of showing them. So this is why we want to support and encourage the promotion and the exhibition of the films. This is the reason why we want to grant money to theatres that commit themselves to [exhibiting] a certain proportion of European movies. So the final result is to have more European movies which can find an audience— and, at the end of the chain, more movies which are distributed across Europe.

BOXOFFICE: How will you judge whether a subject has transnational appeal in order to fund it?

DELMOLY: We will have technical assistance through external organizations made up of experts to screen the projects. The film may in fact be [focused on] quite a national subject. For instance, we supported Lars von Trier's "Breaking the Waves" through the development support scheme. This film is quite a local national subject, about a very typical community in Scotland. [The movie had] good international success.

BOXOFFICE: How much of an impetus for Media II's goals is Europe's desire to counter the influence of Hollywood on the continent?

DELMOLY: Well, Hollywood is the kind of model everybody wants to copy, but I'm not sure this is a good model for Europe. There is the problem of culture. As you know, even in Hollywood you have the indies on one part and the studio system on the other, and most of the independent movies don't make a lot of money, especially compared with a studio production. So we don't try to make global projects as global productions as such. Every country must have its own inspiration.

CONTACT MELISSA MORRISON IN CARE OF THE PRAGUE POST AT: NA PORICI 12, 115 30 PRAGUE 1, CZECH REPUBLIC
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NORTHERN EXPOSURE

Canadian News Notes *by Shlomo Schwartzberg*

LEAD STORY: FAMOUS PLAYERS HITS 500 SCREENS

Famous Players opened its 500th Canadian screen recently with a new eight-plex in Burlington, Ontario. The latest screen additions, which include a four-screen expansion to Famous' Sarnia, Ontario multiplex and a new eight-plex in Moncton, New Brunswick, are part of the company's aggressive growth plan, which will see the chain hit 750 screens over the next two to three years, according to Roger Harris, vice president of marketing for Famous Players. "We've still got a way to go," says Harris.

The Moncton Famous Players Eight multiplex has some unique features, including a bilingual program, with at least one screen devoted to showing films in French for Moncton's sizeable Francophone community. All the auditoriums in Moncton have curved screens with wall-to-wall picture and DTS sound. Four cinemas also include surround sound. Audex Infrared systems for the hearing impaired are also in place. And for the first time, Famous will offer a Pizza Hut operation inside one of its theatres. The 2,040 seat Famous Players Eight will be the largest theatre in Moncton.

Famous also announced it will maintain its Paramount theatre, which will now show second-run movies at a low admission price of C$2 (US$1.50).

GENIE AWARDEES' WISHES GRANTED

David Cronenberg's controversial "Crash," which has yet to open in the States, won five awards at Canada's Genie ceremonies, including Best Adapted Screenplay and Best Director for Cronenberg. But the Best Picture award went to John Greyson's "Lilies," an artfully directed drama about a gay love triangle in 1912 Quebec, which also won three other technical awards.

Unlike in other years, no one film dominated the ceremonies, though Robert Lepage's "Le Polygraphe," the follow-up to his debut film "Le Confessional," which won the Best Picture Genie in 1995, was completely shut out of the awards, despite multiple nominations. The fact that it was shown without English subtitles to Genie voters may have had something to do with that.

David Wellington's acclaimed adaptation of the Stratford production of Eugene O'Neill's "Long Day's Journey Into Night" swept all the acting awards with William Hutt (Best Actor), Martha Henry (Best Actress), Martha Burns (Best Supporting Actress) and Peter Donaldson (Best Supporting Actor) going home triumphant.

Other winners at the Genies included Pierre Gang's debut film "Sous-Sol," which won Best Original Screenplay. It's also Canada's submission to the Best Foreign language Oscar category. Bruce McDonald's "Hard Core Logo," which opens stateside in the spring, won just one award for Best Original Song for "Who The Hell Do You Think You Are?" And "Crash" also copped The Golden Reel award for highest-grossing Canadian film. It's picked up more than US$1 million at the Canadian boxoffice since its early October opening.

GOVERNMENT SET TO REJECT POLYGRAM'S BID TO DISTRIBUTE IN CANADA

The Canadian government is set to reject Netherlands-based Polygram Filmed Entertainment's bid to distribute its films directly in Canada. Unnamed government sources told Canadian newspapers that the deal would be rejected, even though Polygram promised to invest almost US$15 million in Canadian productions if they were allowed to distribute their films, a Hollywood studios are currently allowed to do i Canada. (Currently, Hollywood studios, whic make up 84 percent of the Canadian theatrical film distribution market, are allowed to release film directly in Canada, while independent film dis tributors are not.)

Darryl Iwai, president of Polygram, repor tedly refused to confirm the government rejec tion, claiming that talks were ongoing, thoug he did say that the government was sending him mixed signals regarding the proposal. A official government announcement should b forthcoming.

TELEFILM GAINS ALLIES IN BATTLE TO COMPETE WITH HOLLYWOOD FILMS

Canada's largest film funding body, Telefilm Canada, has joined forces with four othe English-speaking film agencies to fight U.S dominance of their movie screens.

The agencies, representing Canada, the Unite Kingdom, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand plan to finance eight to 12 films a year that ca be co-produced between two or more of th countries. Its initial fund is set at US$500,000 Bill House, Telefilm's director of operations for the funding body' Toronto office, said about the deal, "It's been a long time i negotiating." The English Language Cinema Plan, House con tinued, will produce "development money to further specific co productions." And while it's difficult to convince one country to help fund another country's film production, says House, th ELCP will ensure that "a couple of projects per year will b furthered in consort with one or two countries. It's an interestin initiative."

NEW BOOK CITES CANADIAN CONNECTIONS IN FILM

Question: What do "Roxanne," "Nowhere to Hide" and "The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms" have in common?

Answer: They all have a Canadian connection of some sort and they all pop up as entries in "Canada and Canadians i Feature Films: A Filmography—1928-1996," which cross-ref erences more than 600 films that are either Canadian, filmed i Canada or have characters, actors or references that ar Canadian. It's arguably the most comprehensive Canadian guid of its sort, and one that Ian K. Easterbook, who compiled th book with Susan Waterman MacLean, considers indispensable to researchers and local film buffs.

He points out, however, that the compendium, which wa released by the Canadian Film Project and the University o Guelph, is careful to avoid any opinions on the quality of th selections listed in the book. "This [book] identifies the films Someone else can make the judgment calls."

DO YOU HAVE AN EXHIBITION-RELATED NEWS ITEM ABOUT THE CANADIAN MARKET? CONTACT SHLOMO SCHWARTZBERG IN CARE OF OUR CANADIAN NEWS BUREAU AT: 416-638-6402

Boxoffice Magazine presents



MovieFone's Moviegoer Activity Report

For the Month of November 1996

MovieFone® (777-FILM®) and its sister service, MovieLink® Online, are now the single largest source of movie showtime information in the country, providing information to over 12 million moviegoers each month. The following information represents the most requested theatres and exhibitors on MovieFone.

Top 10 Exhibitors & Theatres

Most Requested Exhibitors

Rank	Exhibitor	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
1	United Artists	679,374	1
2	Sony	574,536	3
3	AMC	562,308	4
4	Cineplex Odeon	541,253	2
5	General Cinema	348,771	5
6	Century	175,130	6
7	National Amusements	134,416	9
8	Cinemark	121,619	8
9	CinAmerica	114,978	7
10	City Cinemas	108,513	15

Most Requested Theatres

Rank	Market	Theatre	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
1	NY	Sony Lincoln Square	58,373	1
2	BO	Sony Cheri	39,779	4
3	LA	AMC Century 14	39,310	2
4	NY	CO Chelsea	39,276	5
5	NY	Sony 84th St. Sixplex	31,639	22
6	NY	Sony Orpheum	31,628	3
7	NY	Sony Village 7	28,314	7
8	PH	UA Cheltenham	28,069	21
9	NY	CityCin Village East	27,483	14
10	PH	UA Sameric	26,964	29

Most Requested Theatres Per Screen

Total Requests	Rank	Theatre (# screens)	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
New York	1	CityCin 86th St. East (2)	19,808	38
1,148,140	2	CO Ziegfeld (1)	10,792	1
	3	Embassy (1)	8,118	49
Los Angeles	1	GCC Avco (3)	17,520	5
563,191	2	Pacific Cinerama Dome (1)	5,513	9
	3	CinAm Festival Westwood (1)	4,598	6
Dallas	1	GCC Northpark 1 & 2 (2)	4,156	5
466,693	2	AMC Forum (6)	11,388	3
	3	AMC Highland Pk Village (4)	7,501	1
San Francisco	1	Blm Regency I (1)	5,845	3
293,529	2	UA Stonestown Twin (2)	10,359	1
	3	UA Coronet (1)	4,529	7
Philadelphia	1	UA Sameric (4)	25,365	1
272,535	2	UA Cheltenham (8)	28,069	4
	3	UA 69th Street (9)	26,964	7
Miami	1	GCC Riviera (4)	8,227	1
264,753	2	Cobb Miami Lakes (10)	17,685	6
	3	AMC Kendall T & C (10)	17,564	5
Boston	1	Sony Cheri (4)	39,779	2
244,367	2	NA Circle Cinema (7)	22,779	3
	3	Sony Janus (1)	3,142	5
Chicago	1	CO Biograph (3)	9,056	2
224,885	2	CO Broadway (1)	2,621	8
	3	Sony Esquire (6)	12,674	3
Toronto	1	Famous Eglinton (1)	3,500	2
148,203	2	Famous Uptown (3)	8,387	1
	3	Famous Centerpoint (3)	6,154	4
Phoenix	1	Hark Christown (5)	5,564	2
143,021	2	Hark Cine Capri (1)	1,041	1
	3	AMC Lakes (6)	6,011	8
Houston	1	CO Spectrum (9)	10,505	3
133,990	2	CO River Oaks Plaza (12)	11,196	2
	3	Landmk Greenway (3)	2,750	4
San Diego	1	CinAm Cinema 21 (1)	2,494	1
114,358	2	Pacific Clairemont (2)	1,935	25
	3	Pacific Sweetwater (6)	3,569	15

Total Requests	Rank	Theatre (# screens)	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
Atlanta	1	AMC Galleria (8)	3,564	1
84,630	2	UA Midtown Cinemas (8)	3,286	4
	3	UA Southlake (8)	3,152	10
Kansas City	1	Dksn Glenwood (4)	5,809	1
80,742	2	AMC Oak Park (6)	5,588	13
	3	Dksn Plaza (3)	2,134	5
Seattle	1	CO Northgate (1)	1,313	6
70,668	2	Landmk Broadway Mkt (4)	3,881	11
	3	Landmk Neptune (1)	771	4
Minneapolis	1	UA St. Anthony Main (5)	3,048	3
64,064	2	CO Knollwood (4)	2,302	11
	3	GCC Shelard Park (5)	2,510	9
Cleveland	1	GCC Ridge Park Square (8)	7,383	3
63,258	2	Sony Cedar (2)	1,573	1
	3	Regal Severance (8)	5,709	7
Denver	1	UA Continental (1)	2,872	1
55,375	2	AMC Colorado Plaza (6)	4,730	4
	3	UA Cooper Arvada (6)	3,555	7
Las Vegas	1	Century Las Vegas D-I (6)	5,851	12
52,783	2	Century Redrock (11)	7,749	8
	3	Century Rancho (16)	11,090	2
Sacramento	1	Century Century 21 (2)	4,286	1
44,344	2	UA Laguna Village (12)	4,850	26
	3	Century Cinedome Sacr. (9)	6,066	3
Detroit	1	Star Taylor (10)	3,719	2
40,548	2	Star Lincoln Park (8)	2,406	1
	3	AMC Abbey (8)	1,995	14
Washington, DC	1	CO Uptown (1)	1,027	1
26,211	2	CO Embassy (1)	240	7
	3	AMC Courthouse (8)	1,618	3
Cincinnati	1	SupSav Forest Fair Mall (8)	6,540	7
24,463	2	SupSav Bigg's Center (8)	4,063	12
	3	NA Tri County Cinemas (5)	970	5
Tampa	1	Cobb Northdale Court (6)	2,596	1
23,702	2	Fun-Lan D-I (3)	1,006	3
	3	Carmike University Collection (6)	1,679	5

Top 3 Actively* Requested Theatres:

1. CO Worldwide New York, NY
2. Sony Lincoln Sq. New York, NY
3. CO Chelsea Cinemas New York, NY

*Caller specifically requested theatre

Key to Exhibitors

AMC	AMC Theatres, Inc	CityCin	City Cinemas	General	General Theatres	Muvico	Muvico Theatres
Act III	Act III Theatres	CO	Cineplex Odeon Corp.	Hark	Harkins Theatres	Pacific	Pacific Theatres
Blm	Blumenfeld Theatres	Cobb	Cobb Theatres	Hollywood	Hollywood Theatres	Regal	Regal Cinemas
Carmike	Carmike Cinemas, Inc	Dksn	Dickinson Theatres	Landmk	Landmark Theatre Corp	Sony	Sony Theatres
Century	Century Theatres	Famous	Famous Players	Mann MN	Mann Minneapolis	Star	Loews-Star Theatres
CinAm	CinAmerica Theatres, LP	GCC	General Cinema Theatres	Mel	Metropolitan Theatres Corp	SupSav	Super Saver Cinemas
						UA	United Artists Theatre Circuit

777-FILM

BOXOFFICE

	November	December	January	FEBRUARY (Current)
Buena Vista (818) 567-5000 (212) 593-8900	**Ransom**, 11/8, Thr, R, 121 mins., SR, SR-D, SDDS; Flat. Mel Gibson, Rene Russo, Gary Sinise, Lili Taylor. Dir: Ron Howard. **101 Dalmatians**, 11/27, Live Act Com, G, 103 mins., SR, SR-D, SDDS Anamorphic. Glenn Close, Jeff Daniels. Dir: Stephen Herek. **The War at Home**, 11/22 ltd., Dra, R, 125 min., SR, SR-D, Anamorphic. Emilio Estevez, Martin Sheen, Kathy Bates. Dir: Emilio Estevez.	**The Preacher's Wife**, 12/13, Rom/Com, PG, 124 mins., SR, SR-D, SDDS, Flat. Denzel Washington, Whitney Houston, Gregory Hines. Dir: Penny Marshall. **Evita**, 12/25 NY,LA, 1/11/97 wide, Mus./Drama, 130 mins., PG-13, SR, SR-D, SDDS, Anamorphic. Madonna, Antonio Banderas, Jonathan Pryce. Dir. Alan Parker.	**Metro**, 1/17, Dra, R, SR, SR-D, SDDS, Anamorphic. Eddie Murphy, Carmen Ejogo, Michael Rapaport. Dir: Thomas Carter. **The Shadow Conspiracy**, Dra, R. Charlie Sheen. Dir: George P. Cosmatos. 1/31 **Pretontaine**, Dra, PG-13. Jared Leto, Amy Locane. Dir: Steve James.	**That Dam Cat**, 2/14, PG, Flat. Christina Ricci, Doug E. Doug, Dyan Cannon. Dir: Robert Spiers. **Grosse Pointe Blank**, 2/21, Com, R. John Cusack, Minnie Driver, Dan Aykroyd, Joan Cusack. Dir: George Armitage.
Columbia (310) 280-8000 (212) 833-8500		**Ghosts of Mississippi**, 12/20 ltd, 1/3 exp., Dra. 123 min., PG-13, Dolby A, Sr, SDDS, Flat. Alec Baldwin. Dir: Rob Reiner. **Hamlet**, 12/25 ltd, 1/24 exp. Dra, PG-13, Dolby A, 242 mins.Dir/Star: Kenneth Branagh. **Some Mother's Son**, 12/26 ltd., SR, Flat Dra, R, 112 min.	**People Vs. Larry Flynt**, 12/27 ltd, 1/10 exp, Dra, R, 130 min. Dolby A, SR, SDDS, Scope. Woody Harrelson, Courtney Love. Dir: Milos Forman.	**Absolute Power**, 2/7, Act/Thr, Dolby A & SR SDDS. Anamorphic. Clint Eastwood, Gene Hackman, Scott Glenn, Ed Harris, Judy Da- Dir: Clint Eastwood. **Fools Rush In**, 2/14, Rom/Com, Dolby A, S SDDS, Flat. Matthew Perry, Salma Hayek, John Tenney. Dir: Andy Tennant. **Booty Call**, 2/26, Com. Jamie Foxx, Vivica Fox. Dir: Jeff Pollack.
MGM/UA (310) 449-3000 (212) 708-0300	**Larger Than Life**, 11/1, Com, PG, 93 min, Flat, Dolby A, DTS. Bill Murray, Janeane Garofalo, Linda Fiorentino, Keith David, Matthew McConaughey. Dir: Howard Franklin		**Turbulence**, 1/31, Act/Dra. Ray Liotta, Lauren Holly, Hector Elizondo. Dir: Robert Butler.	**Touch**, Dra. Tom Arnold, Bridget Fonda, Christopher Walken, Gina Gershon, Janear Garofalo.Dir: Paul Schrader.
Miramax (212) 941-3800 (213) 845-4200	**The English Patient**, 11/15, ltd., 11/22 wide, Dra. Ralph Fiennes, Juliette Binoche. Dir: Anthony Minghella. **Sling Blade**, 11/22, 12/13 exp. Dra, R, Dolby SR, Flat, 140 min. Dir/Star: Billy Bob Thornton. **Ridicule**, 11/27, Dra, 102 min. Fanny Ardant. Dir: Patrice Leconte.	**Everyone Says I Love You**, 11/1, Mus, R, Dolby A SR, Flat, 107 min. Dir: Woody Allen **Marvin's Room**, 12/18, R, Dolby SR, Flat,93 min. Meryl Streep, Diane Keaton, Leonardo DiCaprio. Dir: Jerry Zaks. **Scream**, 12/20, Hor/Com. Drew Barrymore, Courteney Cox, David Arquette. Dir: Wes Craven.	**Citizen Ruth**, 12/13 ltd, 1/1exp, Com, R, Dolby SR, Flat, 102 min. Laura Dern, Swoosie Kurtz. Dir: Alexander Payne. **Albino Alligator**, 12/13 ltd, 1/17 exp, Dra, R, Scope, 96 min. Dir: Kevin Spacey **Kolya**,1/24, Dra, R, Dolby A, Flat, 111 min. Zdenek Szerak Dir. Jan Szerak **The Substance of Fire**, 12/6 ltd, 1/10 exp, Dra, R, Dolby SR, Flat, 101 min. Sarah Jessica Parker. Dir Daniel Sullivan	**Nightwatch** (remake), 2/14, Dra. Nick Nolte Ewan McGregor. Dir: Ole Bornedal. **Cosi**, 2/21. Toni Collette, Barry otto. Ben Mendlesohn. Dir Mark Joffe.
New Line (310) 854-5811 (212) 649-4900	**Set It Off**, 11/6, Dra, R, Flat, Dolby SR & SRD, SDDS. Jada Pinkett, Queen Latifah, Vivica Fox, Kimberly Elise. Dir. F. Gary Gray	**Michael**, 12/25, Rom/Com,PG. SR, SR-D, SDDS, Flat. John Travolta, Andie MacDowell, William Hurt. Dir: Nora Ephron. **In Love and War**, 12/25 ltd, 1/24/97 wide, Rom/Dra, PG-13. SR, SR-D, SDDS, Anamorphic. Sandra Bullock, Chris O'Donnell. Dir: Richard Attenborough.	**Jackie Chan's First Strike** 1/10, Act, PG-13. SR, SR-D, SDDS, Anamporphic. Jackie Chan. Dir. Samo Hung.	**Love Jones**, R. SR, SR-D, SDDS, Flat. Lar Tate, Nia Long. **Trial and Error**, 2/14, Com, PG-13. Anam phic. Michael Richards, Jeff Daniels. Dir: J athan Lynn. **Dangerous Ground**, 4/18, Act/Dra., R, SR SDDS, Flat. Elizabeth Hurley, Ice Cube. Dir Darrell James Roodt
Paramount (213) 956-5000 (212) 373-7000	**Dear God**, 11/8, Com. Greg Kinnear, Laurie Metcalf, Hector Elizondo, Tim Conway Dir. Garry Marshall. **Star Trek: First Contact**, 11/22, SF. Patrick Stewart, Brent Spiner, Jonathan Frakes, LeVar Burton, Michael Dorn. Dir: Jonathan Frakes.	**Beavis and Butt-Head Do America**,12/20, Ani. Voices. Mike Judge. Dir: Mike Judge. **Night Falls on Manhattan**, 12/20 NY, LA, Dra. Andy Garcia, Richard Dreyfuss. Dir: Sidney Lumet.. **The Evening Star**, 12/25 ltd, Dra, PG-13 Shirley MacLaine, Bill Paxton, Juliette Lewis, Ben Johnson. Dir: Robert Harling.	**Mother**, 12/25 NY,LA, Com. Rob Morrow, Debbie Reynolds. Dir/Star. Albert Brooks. **The Relic**, 1/17, Thr, R. Penelope Ann Miller, Tom Sizemore, Linda Hunt. Dir: Peter Hyams.	**Howard Stern's Private Parts**, 2/14, Com, Howard Stern, Robin Quivers, Fred Norris, M McCormack. Dir: Betty Thomas. **Kiss the Girls**, Sus. Morgan Freeman, Ash Judd, Richard Timothy Jones, Cary Elwes. Dir: Gary Fleder.
TriStar (310) 280-8000 (212) 833-8500	**The Mirror Has Two Faces**, 11/15. Rom/Com, PG-13, 125 mins. Dolby A & SR, SDDS, Flat. Barbra Streisand, Jeff Bridges, Pierce Brosnan, Mimi Rogers. Dir Barbra Streisand	**Jerry Maguire**, 12/13, Com/Dra, R, Dolby A & SR, SDDS. Flat. Tom Cruise, Cuba Gooding Jr., Kelly Preston, Renee Zellweger Dir. Cameron Crow	**Beverly Hills Ninja**, 1/17, Com, PG-13, 90 mins., Flat, Dolby A & SR, SDDS. Chris Farley, Nicolette Sheridan. Dir: Dennis Dugan.	**Donnie Brasco**, 2/28, Dra. Johnny Depp, Pacino, Anne Heche, Michael Madsen. Dir: Mike Newell. **The Pest**, 2/7 Com, Flat. John Leguizamo Jeffery Jones, Edoardo Ballerini. Dir: Paul Miller.
20th Century Fox (310) 369-1000 (212) 556-2400	**Romeo & Juliet**, 11/1, Rom/Dra, R, Anamorphic, Dolby SR &SRD. Leonardo DiCaprio, Claire Danes, John Leguizamo. Dir: Baz Luhrman. **Jingle All the Way**, 11/22, Com, PG. SR, SR-D, Flat. Arnold Schwarzenegger, Phil Hartman. Dir: Brian Levant.	**The Crucible**, 11/27 ltd, Dra, PG-13, 115 min, Flat, Dolby SR & SR-D. Daniel Day-Lewis, Winona Ryder, Joan Allen.Dir: Nicholas Hytner. **One Fine Day**, 12/20, Rom/Com, PG, 108 min, Flat, Dolby SR & SR-D. Michelle Pfeiffer, George Clooney, Mae Whitman, Alex Linz. Dir. Michael Hoffman.	**Star Wars** (1977 reissue), 1/31, SF, PG, Anamorphic, Dolby SR & SRD, SDDS, DTS. Harrison Ford, Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher, Alec Guiness, Peter Cushing. Dir: George Lucas.	**Volcano**, 2/28, Act/Adv, Dolby SR, SRD, SDD DTS, Flat. Tommy Lee Jones, Anne Heche. D Mick Jackson. **The Empire Strikes Back** (19 reissue), 2/21, SF, PG Anamorphic, Dobly S & SRD, SDDS, DTS. Harrison Ford, Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher, Billy Dee Williams. D Irvin Kershner. **Inventing the Abbots**. Liv T Joaquin Phoenix. Dir: Pat D'Conner.
Universal (818) 777-1000 (212) 759-7500		**Daylight**, 12/6, Act, PG-13, 115 min. Dolby SR, DTS. Sylvester Stallone, Amy Brenneman, Viggo Mortensen. Dir: Rob Cohen.	**Fierce Creatures**, 1/24, Com, PG-13, 98 min, Anamorphic, Dolby SR, DTS. Kevin Kline, Jamie Lee Curtis, John Cleese, Michael Palin. Dir: Robert Young	
Warner Bros. (818) 954-6000 (212) 484-8000	**Bad Moon**, 11/1, Thr, R, 81 min., Dolby SR, Anamorphic. Mariel Hemingway, Michael Pare. Dir: Eric Red. **Space Jam**, 11/15, Ani. PG, 87 min., SR, SR-D, SDDS, DTS. Flat. Michael Jordan, Bugs Bunny. Dir: Joe Pytka. **North Star**, Adv, R, 88 min, SR, Anamorphic. James Caan, Christopher Lambert, Catherine McCormack Dir. Nils Gaup.	**Mars Attacks!**, 12/13, SF/Com,PG-13, 105 min. SDDS, Scope. Jack Nicholson, Pierce Brosnan, Glenn Close. Dir: Tim Burton. **My Fellow Americans**, 12/20, Com, PG-13, 101 min. SDDS, Flat. Jack Lemmon, James Garner, Dan Aykroyd, Lauren Bacall. Dir Peter Segal **Indiscretion**(formerly The Honest Courtesan), 12/20 ltd Catherine McCormack, Moira Kelly, Rufus Sewell. Dir: Marshall Herskovitz,	**Rosewood**, 12/20 ltd, 1/17 wide, Dra. Jon Voight, Ving Rhames. Dir John Singleton	**Incognito**, Thr. Jason Patric. Dir: John Badh **L.A. Confidential**, Dra. Kevin Spacey, Kim Basinger, Danny DeVito, Russell Crowe Dir: Curtis Hanson.**Pre**, Dra. Billy Crudup Donald Sutherland, Monica Potter, Judith Ivey. Dir: Robert Towne.**Trojan War**, Com Will Friedle. Dir: George Huang.**Steele**, 2 Act/Adv, Shaquille O'Neal, Judd Nelson. D Kenneth Johnson.

FEATURE CHART — FEBRUARY 1997

March	April	Forthcoming	
Jungle2Jungle, 3/14, Com, Flat. Tim Allen, Martin Short. Dir: John Pasquin.	**Sixth Man**, 4/4, Com. Marlon Wayans. Dir: Randall Miller. **Hercules**. 6/20, Ani. Voices. James Woods, Danny DeVito. Dirs: Ron Clements, John Musker. **Nothing to Lose**, Summer, Com. Martin Lawrence, Tim Robbins. Dir: Steve Oedekerk.	**Gone Fishin'**, Com, PG. Joe Pesci, Danny Glover. Dir: Christopher Cain. **ConAir**, Spring, Act/Adv, Scope. Nicolas Cage, John Malkovich. Dir: Simon West **Deep Rising**, Act/Thr. Treat Williams. Dir. Stephen Sommers **George of the Jungle**, Summer, Live Act Brendan Fraser. Dir Sam Weisman. **In Pursuit of Honor** (formerlyG.I. Jane), Act., R Demi Moore, Anne Bancroft, Viggo Mortensen. Dir: Ridley Scott **Nothing to Lose**, Com Martin Lawrence, Tim Robbins. Dir. Steve Oedekerk. **Playing God**, Summer, Dra. Timothy Hutton. Dir: Andy Wilson. **Romy and Michelle...**, Com., Summer, Mira Sorvino, Janeane Garofalo. Dir: David Mirkin. **Washington Square**, Dra. Jennifer Jason Leigh, Albert Finney Dir: Agnieszka Holland **Space Cadet**. Harland Williams, Beau Bridges.	**Buena Vista** (818) 567-5000 (212) 593-8900
The Devil's Own, 3/26, Sus/Thr, Dolby A & SR, SDDS, Anamorphic. Harrison Ford, Brad Pitt, Margaret Colin, Treat Williams. Dir. Alan J. Pakula. **Gattaca** (formerly The Eighth Day), SF. Ethan Hawke, Uma Thurman, Jude Law. Dir: Andrew Niccol.	**Anaconda**, 4/18, Adv, Dolby A, SR, SDDS. Jon Voight, Jennifer Lopez, Ice Cube. Dir: Luis Llosa. **The Colony**. 4/4, SDDS, Jean-Claude VanDamme, Dennis Rodman, Mickey Rourke.Dir Tsui Hark.	**AFO** (formerly Air Force One), 8/1, Act, SDDS. Harrison Ford, Gary Oldman, Glenn Close. Dir: Wolfgang Peterson. **Buddy**, Fall, Com. Rene Russo, Robbie Coltrane, Paul Reubens. Dir: Caroline Thompson. **The Fifth Element**, 5/9. Bruce Willis, Gary Oldman. Dir: Luc Besson. **Excess Baggage**,Summer, Act/Adv, Dolby A, SR, SDDS. Alicia Silverstone, Benicio del Toro. Dir: Marco Brambilla. **Men in Black**, 6/6, SF, Dolby A, SR, SDDS. Tommy Lee Jones, Will Smith, Linda Fiorentino. Dir: Barry Sonnenfeld.	**Columbia** (310) 280-8000 (212) 833-8500
Hoods (formerly Hoodlum), 3/28, Dra. Laurence Fishburne, Tim Roth, Andy Garcia, Vanessa Williams.Dir: Bill Duke.		**All Along the Watchtower**, Dra. **All the Pretty Horses**, Dra. Dir: Mike Nichols. **Bond 18**, 11/20. Pierce Brosnan. **The Day After Tomorrow**. Sus.**The Fantasticks**. Mus/Com, PG, 108 min. Joel Grey, Joe McIntyre. Dir Michael Ritchie. **Fireworks**, Dra. Dir. Mark Rydell. **Killer's Kiss**, Act/Thr Linda Fiorentino. **Kiss Me Deadly**, Thr. Dir. Michael Mann.**Sixteen Pleasures**. Dir. Michael Apted **Supernova**, SF/Thr. Dir. Joe Nimziki. **To Brave Every Danger** , Dra. **Warriors of Virtue** Angus MacFadyen, Mario Yedidia, Marley Shelton. Dir: Ronny Yu **Wild Card.** Dir: Robert Altman. **The Fortune Cookie**, Com, Bette Midler, Candice Bergen. Dir.: John Amiel.	**MGM/UA** (310) 449-3000 (212) 708-0300
Wide Awake, 3/14, PG. Dana Delany, Denis Leary. Dir: M. Night Shyamalan. **Mimic**, 3/19, SciFi, Mira Sorvino, Charles Dutton. Dir: Guillermo del Toro. **Chasing Amy**, 3/28. Ben Affleck, Joey Lauren Adams. Dir: Kevin Smith.	**Brassed Off**, 4/25 NY LA, Dra, Dolby SR, Flat. Pete Postlethwaite, Tara Fitzgerald. **Sonatine**. 4/4 NY LA, Takeshi Kitano. **B.Monkey**,4/25, Dra. Jared Harris, Rupert Everett. Dir: Michael Radford **Talk of Angels**, 4/18, Dra, PG-13, Dolby SR, Flat, 97 min. Polly Walker, Vincent Perez. Dir: Nick Hamm. **Temptress Moon**,5/2 Dra. Gong Li, Leslie Cheung Dir: Chen Kaige.	**Office Killer**, 4/23. Molly Ringwald, Carol Kane, Jeanne Tripplehorn. Dir: Cindy Sherman. **Shall We Dance**, 4/11, Com. **Children of the Revolution**, 5/1, Com, Dolby A, Flat, 102 min. Judy Davis, Sam Neill. Dir Peter Duncan.**Copland**, 8/1, Dra. Sylvester Stallone, Robert DeNiro. Dir: James Mangold. **Mouth to Mouth** (Spain), 5/16, Com, R, Dolby SRD, Scope, 110 min. Javier Bardem, Maria Barranco. Dir: Manuel Gomez Pereira. **Operation Condor**, 5/2, Act/Adv. Jackie Chan. Dir Jackie Chan. **Sarajevo**. Dra. Woody Harrelson, Marisa Tomei. Dir: Michael Winterbottom. **She's DeLovely**, 9/12, Dra. Sean Penn, Robin Wright, John Travolta, Gena Rowlands. Dir: Nick Cassavetes. **Wings of a Dove**, 8/15, Dra. Helena Bonham Carter, Linus Roache Dir Ian Softley. **Wishful Thinking**, Fall. Jennifer Beals, James LeGros. Love Serenade, 6/6. **True Blue**, Fall.	**Miramax** (212) 941-3800 (213) 845-4200
B.A.P.s, 3/28, Com, R. SR, SR-D, SDDS, Flat. Halle Berry, Martin Landau. Dir: Robert Townsend.	**Money Talks**, 4/11, Act/Com. Charlie Sheen, Chris Tucker. Dir: Brett Ratner. **Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery**. 4/4, Com. Mike Meyers, Elizabeth Hurley. Dir: Jay Roach.	**America's Most Wanted**, 5/2, Act/Com. Keenan Ivory Wayans, Jon Voight, Mimi Rogers. Dir: David Hogan. **Boogie Nights**, 6/6, Com/Dra. Mark Wahlberg, Julianne Moore. Dir: Paul Thomas Anderson. **Dark City**, 7/4, Thr. William Hurt. Dir: Alex Proyas **Edwards and Hunt**,8/15, Com. Chris Farley, Matthew Perry Dir: Christopher Guest. **One Night Stand**, Dra. 9/97, SR, SR-D, SDDS. Flat. Wesley Snipes, Nastassija Kinski, Robert Downey Jr. Dir: Mike Figgis. **Spawn**, 9/97, SF. Michael Jai White, John Leguizamo, D.B. Sweeney. Dir: Mark Dippe.**Woo**, 9/97. Jada Pinkett, Tommy Davidson, Isaac Hayes. Dir: Daisy Von Scherler Mayer. **The Women**, Summer '98, Com. Julia Roberts, Meg Ryan. Dir: James Brooks.	**New Line** (310) 854-5811 (212) 649-4900
		Beautician and the Beast, Com. Fran Drescher, Timothy Dalton. Dir: Ken Kwapis **Face Off**, Act. John Travolta, Nicolas Cage. Dir: John Woo. **The Flood**, Act. Christian Slater, Morgan Freeman. Dir. Mikael Salomon **Going West in America**, Thr Dennis Quaid, Danny Glover Dir: Jeb Stuart . **Illumination** (formerly One Golden Afternoon), Dra. Peter O'Toole. Dir: Charles Sturridge **In and Out**, Com. Kevin Kline, Tom Selleck, Joan Cusack, Debbie Reynolds. Dir: Frank Oz. **Prince Valiant**, Act/Adv. Stephen Moyer. Dir: Anthony Hickox. **Rainmaker**, Dra. Laurence Fishburne, Claire Danes, Mickey Rourke. Dir: Francis Ford Coppola. **The Saint**, Act/Adv. Val Kilmer, Elisabeth Shue. Dir: Phillip Noyce.**'Til There Was You**, Jennifer Aniston, Dylan McDermott. Dir: Scott Winant. **Titanic**, Rom/Adv Bill Paxton, Kate Winslet, Leonardo DiCaprio. Dir. James Cameron.	**Paramount** (213) 956-5000 (212) 373-7000
		Desperate Measures, 8/8, Act. Michael Keaton, Andy Garcia Dir. Barbet Schroeder. **Kilronen**, Thr, SDDS. Jonathan Schaech, Jessica Lange, Gwyneth Paltrow Dir: Jonathan Darby **My Best Friend's Wedding**, 6/27, Rom/Com, SDDS. Julia Roberts, Dermot Mulroney Dir: P.J. Hogan. **Old Friends** Dra. Jack Nicholson, Helen Hunt, Greg Kinnear Dir: James Brooks. **Peter Pan**, Adv Dir. John Hughes **Starship Troopers**, 7/2, SF, SDDS Neil Patrick Harris, Denise Richards, Dina Meyer. Dir: Paul Verhoeven. **Stinkers**, Com. B.D. Wong Dir: Barnet Kellman.	**TriStar** (310) 280-8000 (212) 833-8500
Return of the Jedi (1983 reissue), 3/7, SF, PG Anamorphic, Dobly SR & SRD, SDDS, DTS. Harrison Ford, Mark Hamill, Carne Fisher, Billy Dee Williams. Dir: Richard Marquand. **Turbo: A Power Rangers Adventure**, 3/21. Jason David Frank, Steve Cardenas. Dir: David Winning.	**Picture Perfect**, 4/25, Rom/Com. Jennifer Aniston. Dir: Glenn Gordon Caron	**Alien 4: Resurrection**, Summer. Sigourney Weaver, Winona Ryder. Dir: Jean-Pierre Jeunet. **Anastasia**, Ani Dirs: Don Bluth, Gary Goldman **Bookworm**, Fall, Act./Thr Anthony Hopkins, Alec Baldwin. Dir: Lee Tamahori. **Firestorm**, Act./Adv., '97 Howie Long, Suzy Amis, Scott Glen. Dir: Dean Semler **Great Expectations**, Fall '97, Dra. Robert De Niro, Gwyneth Paltrow, Ethan Hawke. Dir: Alfonso Cuaron. **A Life Less Ordinary**, Dra. Cameron Diaz, Holly Hunter. Dir: Danny Boyle. **Out to Sea**, Summer, Com. Walter Matthau, Jack Lemmon. Dir: Martha Coolidge. **Speed II: Cruise Control**,7/21, Act. Sandra Bullock, Jason Patric, Willem Dafoe. Dir: Jan De Bont. **Home Alone 3**, Summer, Alex D.Linz. Dir: Raja Gosnell. **Bulworth**, '97, Act/Dir: Warren Beatty. Halle Berry, Paul Sorvino. **Doctor Dolittle**, '97, Eddie Murphy,Vanessa Williams, Vivica Fox Dir: Betty Thoms.	**20th Century Fox** (310) 369-1000 (212) 556-2400
Liar Liar, Spring, Com, Dolby SR, DTS. Jim Carrey, Maura Tierney, Cary Elwes, John Lovitz, Swoosie Kurtz, Jennifer Tilly. Dir: Tom Shadyac.		**Dante's Peak**, Act/Adv. Pierce Brosnan, Linda Hamilton. Dir Roger Donaldson **The Jackal project**, Thr. Bruce Willis, Richard Gere, Sidney Poitier. Dir: Michael Cariton-Jones. **The Fairy Godmother** (or A Simple Wish), Sum'97,Com. Mara Wilson, Martin Short. Dir: Michael Ritchie **Leave it to Beaver**, 8/1, Com. Janine Turner, Christopher McDonald. Dir. Andy Cadiff. **The Lost World**, Memorial Day. Adv SR, DTS. Jeff Goldblum, Julianne Moore Dir: Steven Spielberg **McHale's Navy**, Spr '97, Com. Tom Arnold, David Alan Grier Dir. Rod Daniel **That Old Feeling**, 4/97 Com Bette Midler, Dennis Farina, Danny Nucci. Dir: Carl Reiner. **Reach the Rock**, Spr '97, Dra. Bill Sadler, Karen Sillas. Dir Bill Ryan.	**Universal** (818) 777-1000 (212) 759-7500
Cats Don't Dance, 3/28, Ani. Voices: Scott Bakula, Kathy Najimy. Dir: Mark Dindal. **187**, Dra. Samuel L. Jackson, John Heard. Dir: Kevin Reynolds. **Selena** 5/2 Jennifer Lopez, Edward James Olmos. Dir: Gregory Nava.	**Addicted to Love**. 4/18, Rom/Com. Meg Ryan, Matthew Broderick. Dir: Griffin Dunne. **Murder at 1600**, Thr. Wesley Snipes, Diane Lane, David Benzali, Dennis Miller Dir: Dwight H. Little. **Batman and Robin**, 6/20, Act/Adv. George Clooney, Chris D'Donnell. Dir: Joel Schumacher. **Father's Day** , 5/9, Com. Robin Williams, Billy Crystal. Dir: Ivan Reitman.	**Anna Karenina**, Dra, Sophie Marceau, Mia Kirschner, Dir. Bernard Rose. **Free Willy 3**, Fam/Adv Jason James Richter. Dir: Sam Pillsbury. **Mad City**,9/97, Dra/Thr. John Travolta, Dustin Hoffman. Dir. Constantin Costa-Garvas. **Vegas Vacation**, PG Chevy Chase, Beverly D'Angelo Dir: Stephen Kessler **Incognito**, Thr, Jason Patric, Irene Jacob. Dir: John Badham. **Watch That Man**, 7/97. Bill Murray, Peter Gallagher. Dir. Jon Amiel. **Contact**, 7/18 Jodie Foster, Matthew McConaughey. Dir. Robert Zemeckis **Wild America**, Adv, PG. Jonathan Taylor Thomas. Dir: Bill Dear. **Fire Down Below**. Act/Adv. Steven Segal. **Rescue Me**. Jennifer Love Hewitt. Dir: George Huang. **187** Dra. Samuel Jackson, Kelly Rowan. Dir: Kevin Reynolds.	**Warner Bros.** (818) 954-6000 (212) 484-8000

BOXOFFICE Independent Feature Chart FEBRUARY1997

JANUARY '97

Arrow
212-258-2200

Farmer and Chase, Dra, NR, 97 min. Ben Gazzara, Lara Flynn Boyle. Dir: Michael Seltzman. 1/10 NY

Artistic License
212-265-9119

Troublesome Creek, Doc, 88 min. Steve Ascher. Dir: Jeanne Jordan. 2/6 LA.

Castle Hill
212-888-0080

Unforgotten: 25 Years After Willowbrook, Doc, 60 min. Dir: Jack Fisher. 1/10

CFP
212-995-9662

Angel Baby *(Australia)*, Dra, NR, 105 min. John Lynch. Dir: Michael Rymer. 1/24 NY, 1/31 exp.

Cinema Village Features
212-431-5119

Screwed, 85 min. Dir: Alexander Crawford. 1/97 ltd. 2/97 exp.

Concorde-New Horizon
310-820-6733

Terminal Virus, SF, 86 min. James Brolin. Dir: Dan Golden. 1/8

Filmopolis
310-914-1776

Blue Juice *(UK)*, Com/Dra, 100 min. Dir: Carl Prechezer.

Fine Line
212-649-4800

Nowhere, James Duval, Traci Lords, Heather Graham. Dir: Gregg Araki. 1/24

First Look
310-855-1199

johns, Dra, R, 99 min. David Arquette, Lukas Haas, Keith David. Dir: Scott Silver. 1/31

First Run
212-243-0600

The Jew *(Portugese)*, Dra, NR, 85 min. Dir: Jom Tob Azulay. 1/8 NY

Fox Searchlight
310-369-4402

Blood and Wine, Dra, R, 100 min. Jack Nicholson. Dir: Bob Rafelson. 1/17

Gramercy
310-777-1960

I'm Not Rappaport, Com, PG-13, 135 min. Walter Matthau. 1/24
Gridlock'd, Dra, R. Tupac Shakur, Tim Roth. Dir: Vondie Curtis Hall. 1/29

Kino Intl.
212-629-6880

A Tickle in the Heart, Doc, 83 min. Dir: Stefan Schweitert. 1/25 NY

Saint Clara *(Israel)*, Dra, 85 min. Dir: Ori Sivan and Ari Fulman. 1/29 NY.

Northern Arts
413-268-9301

Angel Dust, Thr, NR, 116 min. Dir: Sogo Ishii. 1/24

Orion
310-282-2948

Prisoner of the Mountains *(Russian)*, Dra, 104 min. Dir: Sergei Bodrov. 1/31

Sony Classics
212-833-8851

Waiting for Guffman, Com, R, 82 min. Eugene Levy, Parker Posey. Dir/Star: Christopher Guest. 1/31

Strand
310-395-5002

Inside, Dra, 94 min. Nigel Hawthorne, Eric Stoltz. Dir: Arthur Penn. 1/10 NY, 1/17 LA

FEBRUARY '97

Artificial Eye
212-255-1922

Le Samourai *(French)*, 103 min. Alain Delon, Natalie Delon. Dir: Jean-Pierre Melville. 2/28 NY, SF.

Artistic License
Sleepover, Dra, 88 min. Michael Albanese, Karl Giant. Dir: John Sullivan. 2/14 NY

CFP
Margaret's Museum *(Canada)*, Dra, R, 118 min. Helena Bonham Carter. Dir: Mort Ransen. 2/7
The Daytrippers, Com, NR, 90 min. Parker Posey, Stanley Tucci. Dir: Greg Mottola. 2/12

Cinema Parallel
410-442-1752

To Have (Or Not), Dra, NR, 93 min. Dir. Laetitia Masson.
Satan Tango, Dra, NR, 450 min. Dir. Bela Tarr.

First Look
The Designated Mourner. Dra/Com. Mike Nichols, Miranda Richardson. Dir: David Hare.
Jerusalem *(Sweden)*, Olympia Dukakis, Max Von Sydow. Dir: Bille August.

First Run
Boyfriends *(England)*, Dra/Com, 82 min. Dirs: Neil Hunter and Tom Hunsinger. 2/14
Fire on the Mountain, Doc, 72 min. Dirs: Beth Gage, George Gage.

Fox Searchlight
Smilla's Sense of Snow, Thr. Julia Ormond, Gabriel Byrne. Dir: Billie August. 2/21

Goldwyn
310-284-9273

Hard Eight *(formerly Sydney)*, Dra, R, 95 min. Gwyneth Paltrow, Samuel L. Jackson. Dir: Paul Thomas Anderson. 2/28

Gramercy
The Eighth Day *(France)*, Dra, 108 min. Daniel Auteuil. Dir: Jaco Van Dormael. 2/1
When We Were Kings, Doc, 90 min. Dir: Leon Gast. 2/14

Greycat
702-737-0670

Parallel Sons, Rom/Dra, R, 93 min. Dir: John C. Young. 2/97 NY
I Was a Jewish Sex Worker, Doc, NR, 74 min. Dir: Phillip B. Roth. 2/97 NY

Live
818-778-3174

Hotel De Love, Rom/Com, R, 96 min. Dir: Craig Rosenberg. 2/14

New Yorker Films
212-247-6110

A Mongolian Tale *(China)*, Dra, NR, 100 min. Dir: Xie Fei. 2/14

Northern Arts
Drunks, Dra, R, 88 min. Richard Lewis, Faye Dunaway. Dir: Peter Cohn.

October
212-539-4000

Lost Highway, Dra/Thr, R, 95 min. Bill Pullman, Patricia Arquette. Dir: David Lynch.

Phaedra Cinema
310-319-5346

Sudden Manhattan, Rom/Com, 85 min. Tim Guinee, Louise Lasser. Dir/Star: Adrienne Shelly.
Without Air, Dra, 88 min. Lauri Crook, Jack May. Dir: Neil Abramson.

Rhino Films
310-474-4778

Plump Fiction, Com, 85 min. Julie Brown, Sandra Bernhard. Dir: Bob Koherr.

Roxie Releasing
415-431-3611

Cobra Verde *(Germany)*, Dra, NR, 110 min. Klaus Kinski. Dir: Werner Herzog.
Scream of Stone *(Germany)*, Adv, NR, 96 min. Dir: Werner Herzog.

Sony Classics
SubUrbia, Com/Dra, 118 min. Jayce Bartok, Arnie Carey, Parker Posey. Dir: Richard Linklater. 2/7
Broken English, Dra. Dir: Gregor Nicholas.

Strand Releasing
The Graduate *(1967 reissue)*, Com/Dra, R, 105 min. Dustin Hoffman. Dir: Mike Nichols. 2/14
Message to Love, Doc, NR, 126 min. 12/25 NY, 2/21 LA

Tara Releasing
415-454-5838

The Sadness of Sex, Com, NR, 86 min. Dir: Rupert Wainwright.

MARCH '97

Artificial Eye
Mon Homme *(France)*, Com/Dra, 95 min. Anouk Grinberg, Gerard Lanvin. Dir: Bertrand Blier. 3/7 NY

Dove
310-786-1600

Flipping, Thr, R, 110 min. Keith David, David Amos. Dir: Gene Mitchell.

East West Film Partners
212-594-3334

Good Luck, 98 min, Gregory Hines, Vincent D'Onofrio, Max Gail. Dir: Richard LaBrie. 3/27

Fine Line
All Over Me, Dra, R, 90 min. Alison Foland. Dir: Alex Sichel. 3/28
Crash, Dra, NC-17, 100 min. Holly Hunter, James Spader, Dir: David Cronenberg.
The Quiet Room, Dra, PG, 93 min. Chloe Ferguson, Celine O'Leary. Dir: Rolf de Heer. 3/21 NY, 4/18 exp.

First Look
A Brother's Kiss, Dra, Nick Chinlund, Michael Raynor. Dir: Seth Zvi Rosenfeld.

First Run
The Watermelon Woman, Com, 85 min. Guinevere Turner. Act/Dir: Cheyrl Dunye.

Fox Searchlight
Love and Other Catastrophes *(Australia)*, Com, 79 min. Frances O'Connor, Alice Garner, Matthew Dyktynski. Dir: Emma Kate Croghan. 3/28

Gramercy
Commandments, Dra. Courteney Cox, Aidan Quinn. Dir: Daniel Taplitz.

Live
Gentlemen Don't Eat Poets, Dra, R, 98 min. Sting, Theresa Russell. Dir: John Paul Davidson.
Dead Men Can't Dance, Act/Dra, 101 min. Michael Biehn. Dir: Steven Anderson.

Northern Arts
Gray's Anatomy, Com, NR, 80 min. Spalding Gray. Dir: Steven Soderbergh. 3/19
Hearts and Minds, Thr, R, 105 min. Danny Keogh, Patrick Shai. Dir: Ralph Ziman. 3/14

October
Female Perversions, Dra, R, 114 min. Tilda Swinton, Amy Madigan, Karen Sillas. Dir: Susan Streitfeld.

Orion
Independence, Dra. Dean Cain, Drew Barrymore. Dir: Tamra Davis.

BOXOFFICE Independent Feature Chart FEBRUARY 1997

Seventh Art
213-845-1455

Salut Cousin *(French Algeria)*, Com, 95 min. Gad Elmaleh, Mess Hattou. Dir: Merzak Allouache.

Sony Classics
Broken English, Dra, 91 min. Dir: Gregor Nicholas.

Strand
Boys Life 2, *(shorts compilation)*, Com/Dra, 90 min. Dir: Four directors. 3/7
Nights of Cabiria *(1957 Italian reissue)*, Dra, 110 min. Giulietta Masina. Dir: Federico Fellini.

Tara Releasing
Mushrooms *(Australia)*, Com, 93 min. Dir: Alan Madden.

APRIL '97

CFP
Hollow Reed, Dra, 106 min. Martin Donovan, Ian Hart. Dir: Angela Pope. 4/4
Bandwagon, Com/Mus, NR, 103 min. Kevin Corrigna, Lee Holmes. Dir: John Schultz. 4/18

Fine Line
Love! Valor! Compassion! Dra. Jason Alexander, John Glover. Dir: Joe Mantello. 4/25, NY, LA, SF, 5/2 exp.
Pink Flamingos, *(1972 reissue)*, Divine. Dir: John Waters.
For the Love of Roseanna, Com, PG-13, 99 min. Jean Reno, Mercedes Ruehl. Dir: Paul Weiland. 4/4

Fox Searchlight
Paradise Road, Dra. Glenn Close, Frances McDormand. Dir: Bruce Beresford.

Goldwyn
Kissed, Dra, 80 min. Molly Parker, Peter Outerbridge. Dir: Lynne Stopkewich. 4/11

New Yorker Films
Flamenco, Doc, 100 min. Dir: Carlos Saura. 4/4

Northern Arts
Schizopolis, Com, 99 min. Steven Soderbergh, Betsy Brantley. Dir: Steven Soderbergh.

October
Traveller, Crime/Dra. Bill Paxton, Mark Wahlberg. Dir: Jack Green.

Orion
Eight Heads in a Duffle Bag, Com/Dra, R. Joe Pesci, Carol Kane. Dir: Tom Schulman. 4/25

Phaedra Cinema
The Next Step, Dra, 90 min. Rick Negron. Dir: Christian Faber

Sony Classics
The Myth of Fingerprints, Dra. Julianne Moore. Dir: B. Freundlich.

Triumph
310-280-8059

Bliss, Rom/Dra. Terence Stamp, Craig Sheffer. Dir: Lance Young. 4/4
Jackal *(working title)*. Act. Aidan Quinn, Ben Kingsley. Dir: Christian Duguay. 4/25

Zeitgeist
212-274-1989

Irma Vep *(France)*, Com, NR, 98 min. Maggie Cheung. Dir: Olivier Assayas.

MAY '97

Artificial Eye
Le Bonheur Dans Lepres *(France)*, Com, 102 min. Michel Serrault. Dir: Etienne Chatiliez. 5/16 NY

CFP
Guantanamera, Com, NR, 124 min. Carlos Cruz. Dirs: Thomas Gutierrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabio Rey. 5/16

Fox Searchlight
Intimate Relations, Dra. Julie Walters, Rupert Graves. Dir: Philip Goodhew. 5/9 ltd.
Paperback Romance *(formerly Lucky Break)*, Rom/Com. Anthony LaPaglia. Dir: Ben Lewin.

New Yorker Films
La Promesse, Dra, NR, 93 min. Dirs: Jean-Pierre Gardenne, Luc Gardenne. 5/2
Gabbeh, Dra, 75 min. 5/23

Strand
The Tit and the Moon, Com, 92 min. Dir: Bigas Lunas.

JUNE '97

CFP
The Pillow Book, Dra, 126 min. Vivian Wu, Ewan McGregor. Dir: Peter Greenaway. 6/6

Fine Line
Winter Guest. Emma Thompson. Dir: Alan Rickman. 6/18

Kino Intl.
M *(1931 German re-release)*, Dra. Peter Lorre. Dir: Fritz Lang. 6/27

New Yorker Films
Deep Crimson, Dra, NR, 114 min. Dir: Arturo Ripstein. 6/20

October
Kicked in the Head. Linda Fiorentino, Lili Taylor. 6/97

Orion
Ulee's Gold, Dra. Peter Fonda. Dir: Victor Nunez.

Strand
Contempt *(1963 reissue)*, Dra/Com, 103 min. Brigitte Bardot. Dir: Jean-Luc Godard. 6/97

FORTHCOMING

Cabin Fever
203-622-3449

The Elevator, Com. Martin Landau, Martin Sheen.
The Secret Agent Club, Act. Hulk Hogan, Barry Bostwick.
Skeletons, Hor. Dir: Ken Russell.

Dove
Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, Com/SF, 92 min. Featuring Douglas Adams. Dir: Neil Davies.
Inside the Goldmine, Thr, 92 min. Josh Evans, Alicia Tully Jensen. Dir: Josh Evans.

Dreamworks SKG
818-733-7000

El Dorado: City of Gold, Ani. Dir: Will Finn.
Mousehunt, Com/Ani. Nathan Lane. Dir: Gore Virbinsky.
The Peacemaker, Act/Adv. George Clooney, Nicole Kidman. Dir: Mimi Leder. Fall/97.
The Prince of Egypt, Ani.
Amistad, His/Dra, Dir: S. Spielberg.
Blue Vision, Dir: Neil Jordan.
Mutiny, Dir: Steven Spielberg.

Fine Line
Head Above Water, Dra/Com, PG-13, 92 min. Harvey Keitel, Cameron Diaz. Dir: Jim Wilson.
The Tears of Julian Po. Christian Slater, Robin Tunney.
Love Letter *(Japan)*, Dra, PG, 116 min. Dir: Shunji Iwai. 3/28

First Look
The Apprentices *(France)*, Com, 97 min.
This is the Sea, Rom/Dra. Richard Harris, Gabriel Byrne. Dir: Mary McGuckian.
Slaves to the Underground, Dra. Marisa Ryan, Jason Bortz. Dir: Kristine Peterson.

Fox Searchlight
The Van, Com, R. Colm Meaney. Dir: Stephen Frears.
Ice Storm, Dra. Kevin Kline, Joan Allen, Sigourney Weaver. Dir: Ang Lee. Fall/97.
Cousin Bette, Dra. Jessica Lange, Elisabeth Shue, Bob Hoskins. Dir: Des McAnuff. Fall/97.

Goldwyn
Napolean, Ani, G, 82 min. Voices: Adam Wylie, Bronson Pinchot. 8/97

Gramercy
How To Be a Player, Com. Bill Belamy. Dir: Lionel Martin. 8/97

Kit Parker
800-538-5838

Day For Night *(1973 French reissue)*, Dra, PG, 120 min. Dir: Francois Truffaut.
Death in Venice *(1971 Italian reissue)*, Dra, PG, 130 min. Dirk Bogarde. Dir: Luchino Visconti.

Live
Critical Care, Dra/Thr. James Spader, Albert Brooks. Dir: Sydney Lumet. 10/97

Milestone Film & Video
212-865-7449

Woman in the Dunes *(Japan, 1964 rerelease)*, 72 min. Dir: Hiroshi Teshigahara.
Antonio Gaudi *(Japan, 1985 rerelease)*, 72 min. Dir: Hiroshi Teshigahara.
Life of Oharu *(Japan, 1952 rerelease)*, 137 min. Dir: Ken Mizoguchi.

Movieworld Ent.
510-244-5590

The Killing Kind, Dra. Kirk Harris.
The Lost Woman, SF, Jennifer Rubin.

New Yorker Films
Forever Mozart, Dra, NR, 84 min. Madeleine Assas. Dir: Jean-Luc Godard.

October
Career Girls, Dra. Catrin Cartlidge. Dir: Mike Lee.

Orion
Gang Related, Dra, R. Tupac Shakur, Jim Belushi. Dir: Jim Kous. 9/10
The Locust, Dra. Kate Capshaw, Ashley Judd. Dir: John Patrick Kelley. 9/97

Shadow Distribution
207-872-5111

Mondo *(French)*, Dra, 87 min. Philippe Petit. Dir: Tony Gatliff

Sony Classics
Call Me Victor *(France)*, Com, PG, 100 min. Jeanne Moreau. Dir: Guy Jacques.

Trimark
310-314-3040

Kama Sutra, Dra, 114 min. Sarita Choudhury. Dir: Mira Nair.
Crimetime, Thr, R. Stephen Baldwin. Dir: George Sluizer.
Underworld, Thr. Denis Leary, Joe Mantegna. Dir: Roger Christian.
Warrior of Waverly Street, SF. Joseph Mazzello. Dir: Manny Coto.
Meet Wally Sparks, Com, PG-13. Rodney Dangerfield, David Ogden Stiers. Dir: Peter Baldwin.
Nothing Personal, Dra, R. John Lynch. Dir: Thaddeus O'Sullivan.
Ripe, Dra. Dir: Mo Ogrodnik.
Sprung, Com., Dir/Star: Rusty Cundieff

Triumph
Smart Alec, Act/Com. Patrick Stewart, Vincent Kartheiser, Brenda Fricker. Dir: Roger Christian. Spr/97
Truth or Consequences, Sus, Kiefer Sutherland, Kevin Pollack, Kim Delaney. Dir: Kiefer Sutherland. Spr/97
Mastermind, Spr/97

THE BOXOFFICE HOME RELEASE CHART

BOXOFFICE

FEBRUARY 1997

HOME VIDEO RELEASE DATE	TITLE	BOXOFFICE GROSS	SCREENS	THEATRICAL RELEASE	THEATRICAL/VIDEO DISTRIBUTOR
February 4	Harriet the Spy	$26,400,000	1,876	July 10	Paramount
February 4	Jack	$58,200,000+	2,232	August 9	Buena Vista/Hollywood
February 11	Feeling Minnesota	$3,100,000	869	September 13	Fine Line/New Line
February 11	First Kid	$25,700,000+	1,878	August 30	Buena Vista/Hollywood
February 11	Trainspotting	$16,500,000+	357	July 19	Buena Vista/Miramax
February 11	A Very Brady Sequel	$22,000,000	2,147	August 23	Paramount
March 1	Fly Away Home	$21,500,000	1,401	September 13	Columbia/Columbia TriStar
March 4	The Hunchback of Notre Dame	$99,200,000+	2,835	June 21	Buena Vista/Walt Disney
March	Alaska	$11,600,000	1,566	August 14	Columbia/Columbia TriStar
March	Courage Under Fire	$59,000,000	2,001	July 12	Fox
March	Emma	$22,000,000	585	August 2	Buena Vista/Miramax
March	Extreme Measures	$17,300,000	2,298	September 27	Columbia/Columbia TriStar
March	First Wives Club	$101,500,000+	2,406	September 20	Paramount
March	House Arrest	$7,000,000	1,623	August 14	MGM/UA
March	Last Man Standing	$18,100,000+	2,574	September 20	New Line
March	Rich Man's Wife	$8,300,000	1009	September 13	Buena Vista/Hollywood
March	The Spitfire Grill	$12,600,000	1,247	August 23	Columbia/Columbia TriStar

March	First Wives Club	$101,500,000+	2,406	September 20	Paramount
March	House Arrest	$7,000,000	1,623	August 14	MGM/UA
March	Lone Star	$11,800,000	189	June 21	Sony Classics
March	Rich Man's Wife	$8,300,000	1009	September 13	Buena Vista/Hollywood
March	The Spitfire Grill	$12,600,000	1,247	August 23	Columbia/Columbia TriStar
March	Supercop	$16,300,000	1,469	July 26	Buena Vista/Miramax
March	2 Days In the Valley	$11,000,000	855	September 27	MGM/UA
April	The Associate	$12,300,000	1,781	October 25	Buena Vista/Hollywood
April	Big Night	$10,500,000+	366	September 20	MGM/UA
April	Bound	$3,600,000	262	October 4	Gramercy/PolyGram
April	Bulletproof	$21,200,000	2,242	September 6	MCA/Universal
April	The Chamber	$14,300,000	2,032	October 11	MCA/Universal
April	The Glimmer Man	$20,300,000	2,236	October 4	Warner Bros.
April	Maximum Risk	$14,100,000	2,358	September 13	Columbia/Columbia TriStar
April	Michael Collins	$10,700,000+	878	October 11	Warner Bros.
April	Sleepers	$51,500,000+	2,080	October 18	Warner Bros.
April	Solo	$5,000,000	1,230	August 23	Triumph
April	Space Jam	$73,400,000+	2,650	November 15	Warner Bros.
April	That Thing You Do!	$25,100,000+	1,887	October 4	Fox
April	Walking and Talking	$1,300,000	60	July 17	Buena Vista/Miramax
May	D3: The Mighty Ducks	$21,000,000	2,060	October 4	Buena Vista/Walt Disney
May	Ghost and the Darkness	$37,600,000+	2,202	October 11	Paramount
May	The Long Kiss Goodnight	$32,100,000+	2,404	October 11	New Line
May	Romeo + Juliet	$41,700,000+	1,276	November 1	Fox
May	Set It Off	$32,400,000+	1,016	November 6	New Line
May	Stephen King's Thinner	$14,800,000+	2,009	October 25	Paramount
May	To Gillian on Her 37th Birthday	$4,000,000	5	October 18	Triumph

Compiled by BOXOFFICE MAGAZINE. Numbers for ***Boxoffice Gross*** represent total domestic boxoffice grosses to the nearest $100,000; + signs indicate that films remain in theatrical release. Number of ***Screens*** indicates the maximum number of screens in widest, simultaneous release. Entries in the ***Theatrical/Video Distributor*** column list two names when the video releasing company is different from (or releases through a subsidiary different from) the theatrical distributor. Exact day-and-date specific entries for ***Home Video Release*** are confirmed; in all other cases, the month indicated for a release is forecast by the editors of BOXOFFICE. BOXOFFICE is not liable for errors or omissions in the chart.

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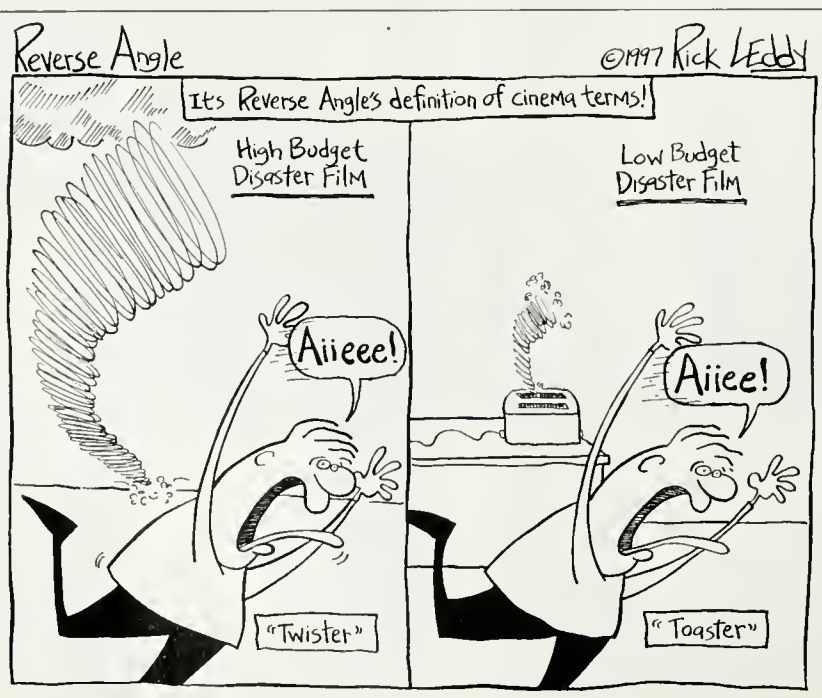
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The Big Picture

You're not looking at a typographical error. The black frame on this page is an intentional gesture, placed where this month's Big Picture should be as our way of dramatizing recent events in communist China which threaten to muzzle free speech by some of the greatest filmmakers of recent times.

The past decade has seen a brace of masterpieces produced in China by the internationally acclaimed "Fifth Generation" filmmakers, whose leading lights include Zhang Yimou and Chen Kaige. As directors who grew up during China's oppressive "Cultural Revolution" under Chairman Mao Tse-Tung, the Fifth Generation shares a sense of pessimism about the totalitarian tendencies of China's communist state—a pessimism their own frustrating history with government censorship validates.



Given China's predisposition for suppressing artistic and philosophical viewpoints it disagrees with, it seemed miraculous when films like Zhang's "Raise the Red Lantern" and "To Live" and Chen's "Farewell, My Concubine" made it off the mainland. These films amazed global audiences with their high level of craft, and are anything but partisan diatribes. Each, in its own way, is a carefully considered study of Chinese culture, expressed in compelling human terms that transcend the immediate Chinese milieu.

While the most famous Fifth Generation films (which have tended to be historical dramas) can be taken in part as measured and careful criticisms of modern Chinese society—incipient fascism in "Raise the Red Lantern;" the oppression of artistic and sexual freedom in "Farewell, My Concubine;" the victimization of the Chinese peasantry by the vast social forces unleashed during the communist revolution in "To Live"—it would be a mistake to view Fifth Generation directors as primarily political in intent. Their main subjects are the most basic of human values—values which transcend ideology, but which are often politicized as a tool for the oppression of individual rights by collectivist, totalitarian states.

Over the course of the last decade, it has been fashionable in some circles to depict mainland China as gradually evolving toward democratic values. Such analysis has tended to focus predominantly on free market reforms which the Chinese government has introduced to reverse the inefficiencies of the Mao era's command economy. The fact, for example, that prison labor is used to produce many Chinese goods has ceased to be an international trade issue—though the practice itself remains widespread. Meanwhile, China is routinely congratulated on its robust domestic economy, and "constructive engagement"—which justifies doing business on the Chinese mainland without bothersome concerns over China's consistent disregard for the most basic human rights—is the international community's *modus operandi* of choice.

For a time, the fact that the Fifth Generation directors were allowed to show their films overseas and even to travel abroad was held up as a sign that the current Chinese regime was easing ideological suppression. Developments in recent months give the lie to such speculation. China's recent attempts to derail Martin Scorsese's "Kundun," a biography of Tibet's exiled Dalai Lama, is one indication of a renewed commitment to stifle views China disagrees with. Tibet, which has lived under Chinese occupation for decades, reveres the Dalai Lama as its rightful spiritual and political leader. To stop his story from being told, China has threatened to deny the Walt Disney Co. (which is financing "Kundun") commercial access to its large and lucrative markets. Disney has held its ground, for which it is to be applauded.

Meanwhile, the Fifth Generation finds itself increasingly under attack, with Zhang and Chen in particular subjected to an ominous brand of nationalist invective. In rhetoric reminiscent of Mao's "Cultural Revolution," the Fifth Generation has been accused of entering "mistaken territory," of making movies with "grand facades that are devoid of content."

With China in the midst of a state-sponsored "spiritual civilization" campaign which analysts believe is designed to deflect attention from the increasingly unpopular Marxist philosophies the Chinese state was founded on, filmmakers like Zhang and Chen have even been accused of undermining Chinese values on the basis of the international acclaim their films receive. "They just concentrate on the judging committees for Cannes and the Oscars... but do not associate with ordinary Chinese people... [Zhang] does not hesitate to offer up the ugly things in our culture to please Western judging panels" are typical comments.

It is important to remember that historically in communist China, when artistic or political figures have been singled out for public criticism, the end results are often the destruction of their works, followed at times by prison sentences and worse. Already, China's censors are cracking down on indigenously-produced movies said to violate "traditional virtues," with some completed titles suppressed, and others taken out of production to remove "mistakes." **Boxoffice** had its own brush with this mentality last year when a scheduled interview with Zhang Yimou failed to materialize because Zhang was denied the right to travel virtually on the eve of his trip abroad. The reason? China was attempting to coerce the New York Film Festival into canceling a screening of "The Gate of Heavenly Peace," a documentary about the current regime's massacre of student protestors in Tiananmen Square.

As it too often has in the recent past, there is a shadow falling over the intellectual life of China. It is that grim prospect we contemplate here. We leave it to our readers to decide which is the more terrifying—the spectacle of a political system that punishes its own citizens for the quality of their ideas, or the darkness we who are free to speak out generate, each time we are made aware of such a situation, and then willfully close our eyes.—***Ray Greene***







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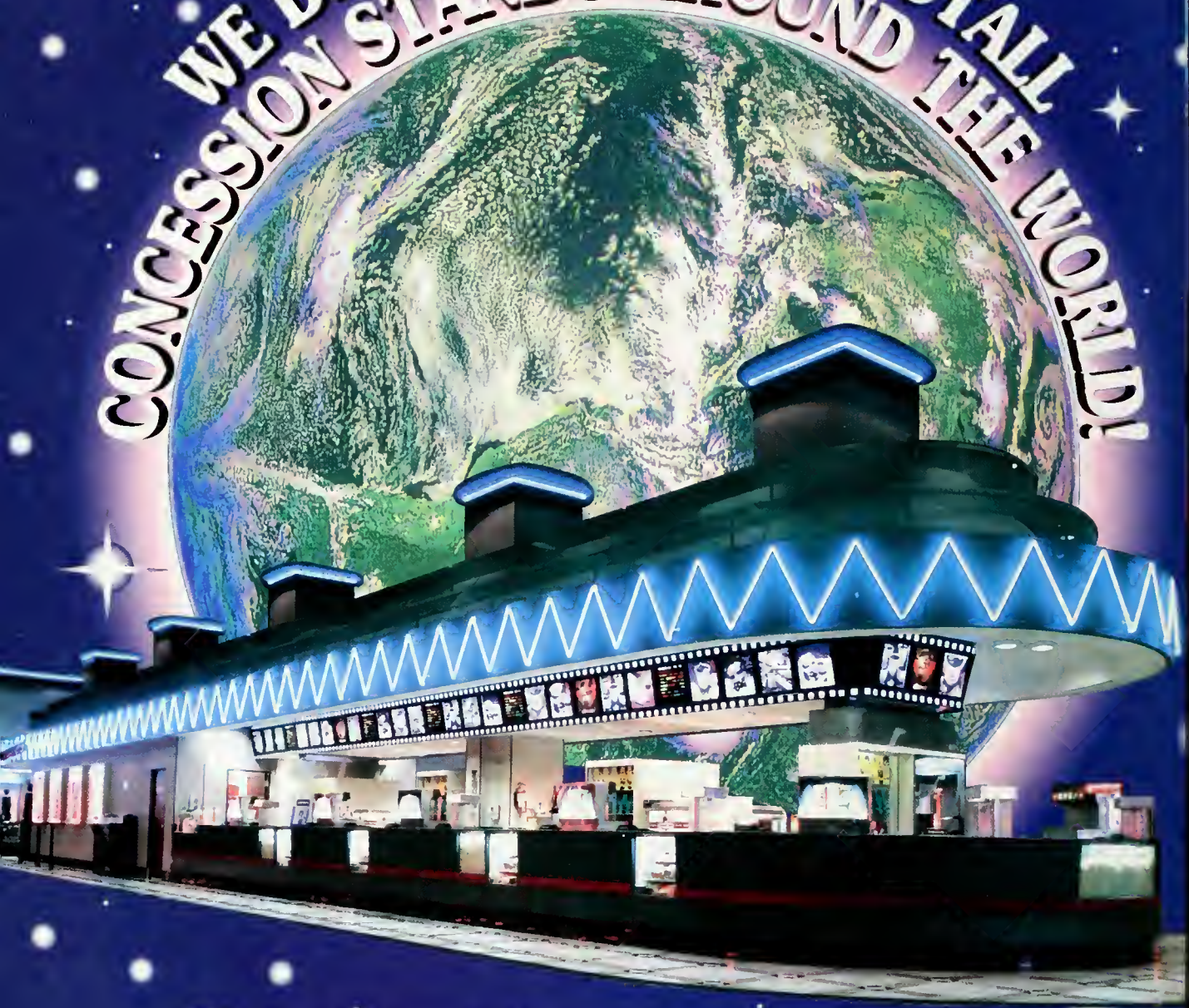
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HOLLY HUNTER COLLIDES WITH *CRASH*

"SAINT" PHILLIP NOYCE • DANA DELANY: "WIDE AWAKE"
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BOXOFFICE
MARCH, 1997 VOL. 133 NO. 3

UNQUOTE: *'Crash' is so threatening because its center is sexuality. It's been tough for people to see the movie for what it is, based solely on the movie itself.*—**HOLLY HUNTER**

SPECIAL REPORT: BAROMETER 1997: 1996 IN REVIEW

BOXOFFICE's *annual summing up of the year in film! Includes statistics on grosses and critical performance for all the year's biggest titles, plus our reader's selections of the top boxoffice stars and a comprehensive review of the year's top entertainment stories!*

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SHOWEST UPDATE

LAS VEGAS—Big and exciting changes are in the works for **ShoWest '97,** the largest convention in the world devoted to the exhibition and motion picture industries. Under the leadership of new ShoWest president **Daniel Wheatcroft,** Exhibition's Show of Shows, which takes place March 3-6 at Bally's Hotel in Las Vegas, will have an extra jolt of fanfare this year: the Awards Ceremony, which will be held in the MGM Grand Hotel, will be telecast live for the first time ever by cable's Turner Network Television (TNT), with comic actor **Sinbad** ("Jingle All the Way") emceeing.

The Coca-Cola Company will sponsor the broadcast editions of this year's ShoWest Awards, which honor actors, directors, producers and screenwriters whose bodies of work represent the best of the motion picture industry. In a new twist to the awards, each winner will be presented with his or her award by a celebrity who is an associate or friend. Awards will include **Actor** and **Actress of the Year, Director of the Year, Producer of the Year, Screenwriter of the Year** and **Lifetime Achievement.** Additionally, there will be three new awards presented this year: **Supporting Actor of the Year, Supporting Actress of the Year,** and **Favorite Movie of the Year.**

In a novel development, the **Favorite Movie Award** will be voted on by moviegoers across America via ballots available through their local movie theatres. Studios have collaborated with theatres nationwide on the production of a trailer promoting the ShoWest Awards and the voting procedure, which will be mounted from Feb. 7 through March 5—just one day before the exciting live cablecast.

ShoWest is also debuting its newly-designed award, the **"Marquee,"** at this year's presentation. The new award features a figure holding a crystal torch. The statue is gold-plated with four layers of 24-carat gold. Encircling the statue is an unspooling film strip carved from a single piece of burnished steel—curving into the shape of an "S" for "ShoWest." The award's foundation is black marble. "We worked on the design for 11 months so that it would reflect not only the importance of the award, but would also be a striking piece of art," says Wheatcroft.

Taking home one of these coveted trophies will be **Denzel Washington,** star of the 1996 hits "Courage Under Fire" and "The Preacher's Wife," who will receive the **Actor of the Year** honor. Washington, who won an Oscar for his performance in 1989's "Glory," says he is "especially honored to receive [ShoWest's Actor of the Year] award, because it represents the feelings of those people who know film and support it—the theatre owners who show my movies and the audiences who go see them." As the recipient of this award, Washington joins an impressive company of superstars, including John Travolta, Mel Gibson, Tom Hanks, Sylvester Stallone and Robin Williams.

In other ShoWest news, **MGM chairman and CEO Frank Mancuso** has been selected to make this year's **ShoWest keynote address**. The keynote speech will be made at 6 pm this year on Monday, March 3, ShoWest's opening day, which will also be devoted to a variety of specialized events for the international exhibition community.

The **Robert W. Selig ShoWester of the Year Award,** given to an individual who has throughout his or her career demonstrated a dedication to the exhibition industry and its causes, will go to **Barrie Lawson Loeks,** co-chairman of Sony Theatres and president of Loeks Star Theatres. In a departure from previous years that's intended to more prominently feature the ShoWester Award, Ms. Loeks will be receiving her trophy in a special presentation, also on Monday, March 3, so attendees will want to save the date...

The NAC's **Bert Nathan Memorial Award** will go to **Bruce Proctor,** president of Proctor Co., in recognition of his 25 years of dedicated service within the theatre concessions industry. The award is given in recognition of the receipient's dedication to professionalism throughout all aspects of concessions.

SHOWEST®
MARCH 3-6
1997

J. Wayne Anderson, R/C Theatres' president of operations, will be the recipient of the **B.V. Sturdivant Award**, which recognizes individuals who have performed extraordinary service to the exhibition industry.

Ann Craft, secretary and general manager of the Theatre Owners of Indiana, will receive the **Ida Schreiber Award**, which honors a woman who has made a significant philanthropic contribution to her community.

John Greiner of AMC's Burbank 28 in Burbank, Calif., will be celebrated with this year's **Customer Service Award** for his innovative 411 Touchpad program.

At press time, additional information on this particularly exciting edition of ShoWest was imminent. We'll have a lot more to tell you in the next issue of **BOXOFFICE,** which, as in years past, will feature wall-to-wall coverage of the show. In the meantime, we'll see you at the show!

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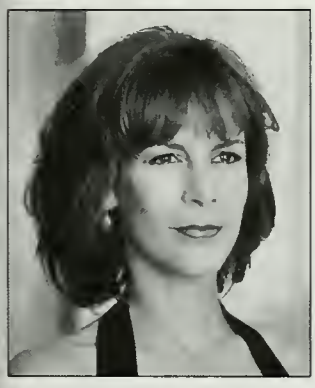
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HOLLYWOOD REPORT



GEOFFREY RUSH

"Miserable" Man



JAMIE LEE CURTIS

Catches "Virus"



EMILIO ESTEVEZ

Takes "Holiday"

HOLLYWOOD EXTRA: LOCAL BORG MAKES GOOD

The Borg have infiltrated the **BOXOFFICE** family! Actor Heinrich James, husband of **BOXOFFICE** Senior Editor Christine James, was assimilated by Paramount to portray one of the evil drones in "Star Trek: First Contact" (which has earned a stellar $90 million to date.) In the film, Borgification takes hold of its victim in a few seconds, but in real life, getting into the Borg make-up and costume took six-and-a-half hours every day—and the shoots lasted anywhere from 12 to 20 hours. "It was very exhausting, and it was nearly impossible to get comfortable between takes because you're in a form-fitting rubber suit with a power unit poking you in the side," Heinrich says. The audition itself was almost as harrowing: Narrowed down from hundreds of photos were about 15 potential Borgs. "They told us to turn around so they could look at our rear ends," he recounts wryly, explaining that because the suit is a very snug fit, you have to have exactly the right body type.



Heinrich (left) and a fellow drone plan to borgify Captain Picard (Patrick Stewart).

Playing a Borg is only one of the unconventional roles on Heinrich's resume. "I usually play Nazis or terrorists," says Heinrich (who is half-British, half-German, and was raised in Canada and the U.S.). His most notable performance in that persona was as a screaming, bespectacled Nazi Agent in "The Rocketeer." Other nationalities he's been called on to play include Swiss, Russian, Finnish and French, though he had the most fun as ruler of Cyberland in the as-yet-unreleased TV show "Cyberkidz." "I played the wizard Zorak, a centuries-old evil overlord of a world in another dimension," says Heinrich, who chewed the scenery as the Richard Burton/Patrick Stewart-esque voiced villain. While seemingly always playing the maniacal fascist, be it on this planet or another, Heinrich assures **BOXOFFICE** readers that his dark side is contained to the soundstage. He doesn't know exactly what it is about him that says 'megalomaniacal power-mad incendiary' to Hollywood, but he's happy to keep playing the antagonist. "A good villain can be the best part of a film," he observes. "And they get to die in the most interesting ways."

"PRIMARY COLORS" Mike Nichols ("The Birdcage") will direct this adaptation of Newsweek columnist Joe Klein's satiric best-seller about the rise of a presidential candidate from the south ("Michael's" John Travolta) and his aggressive, take-charge wife ("Sense and Sensibility's" Emma Thompson)—characters who bear thinly-veiled similarities to President Bill Clinton and First Lady Hillary. (Universal)

"DENIAL" This politically and emotionally charged film, based on the play by Peter Sagal, will star Susan Sarandon ("Dead Man Walking") as a Jewish civil-rights attorney who discovers her client is the leader of a group of people who deny the Nazi Holocaust ever occurred. (Paramount)

"THE NEGOTIATOR" Sylvester Stallone ("Daylight") is set to star as a hostage negotiator who is framed for murder and must clear his name. He takes hostages in a plan to find the real culprit; he gets help when he requests a hostage negotiator who's also a friend. (Warner)

"WAG THE DOG" Dustin Hoffman and Robert DeNiro will reteam with "Sleepers" director Barry Levinson in this satire in which a White House adviser and a Hollywood producer conspire to stage a war in order to take the public's focus off the president's scandalous dalliances. They even fabricate a hero—who turns out to be a mentally deranged soldier. David Mamet ("American Buffalo") wrote the script. (New Line)

"LES MISERABLES" In this screen adaptation of the Victor Hugo novel, Geoffrey Rush ("Shine") will play Javert, the inspector who chases escaped convict Jean Valjean ("Michael Collins'" Liam Neeson) for years to bring him to justice. Uma Thurman ("Gattaca") will play Fantine, a factory worker-turned-prostitute. Bille August ("Smilla's Sense of Snow") directs from a script by Rafael Yglesias ("Fearless"). (Distribution is to be set)

"EATERS OF THE DEAD" Adapted from the 1976 Michael Crichton novel, this thriller, set in 922 A.D., tells the story of an Arab courtier ("Evita's" Antonio Banderas) who must try to save Viking barbarians from a lethal flesh-eating disease. John McTiernan ("Die Hard With a Vengeance") helms. (Buena Vista)

"VIRUS" Oscar-winning visual effects pro John Bruno ("The Abyss") will make his directorial debut with another aquatic/extra-terrestrial adventure. Jamie Lee Curtis ("Fierce Creatures") will star in this thriller as a member of a tugboat crew that's forced to take refuge on a Russian ship when a typhoon hits. It's soon discovered that there's an alien lifeform on board the vessel, and it thinks that human beings are a virus that needs to be eliminated. (Universal)

"WALDO'S HAWAIIAN HOLIDAY" Emilio Estevez and director Alex Cox, who worked together on the 1984 cult hit "Repo Man," will reteam in this sequel to the sci-fi satire. Estevez returns from Mars and must decide if his allegiance lies with his boss or his lover. Willem Dafoe ("Tom and Viv") and Harry Dean Stanton, who starred in the original, co-star. (Distribution is to be set)

"BLADE" Wesley Snipes ("The Fan") will portray the Marvel Comics hero Blade in this actioner, with Steven Dorff ("Blood and Wine") playing Blade's power-hungry nemesis. (New Line)

"PHANTOMS" Peter O'Toole ("My Favorite Year"), Joanna Going ("Inventing the Abbots"), Rose McGowan ("Scream") and Ben Affleck ("Chasing Amy") will star in this adaptation of the Dean Koontz novel about a woman doctor who returns to her hometown to find everyone dead. She thinks it's from a virus, but an evil force is behind the murders. (Miramax)



NIGHT OF THE

In David Cronenberg's Controversial CRASH, Oscar-Winning Actress HOLLY HUNTER Explores Her Dark Side

Holly Hunter has nurtured a reputation as an actress unafraid to delve into unconventional, disturbing subject matter. On television, she has won Emmy awards for her roles in the abortion drama "Roe vs. Wade" and the black comedy "The Positively True Adventures of the Alleged Texas Cheerleader-Murdering Mom." Her Oscar-winning performance as a mute, sexually adventurous musician in Jane Campion's 1993 film "The Piano" proved that audiences are willing to follow her into strange new emotional terrain. Now the boxoffice clout Hunter acquired with "The Piano" has helped make possible her most audacious and controversial film, director David Cronenberg's adaptation of J. G. Ballard's 1973 novel "Crash."

"J. G. Ballard says that he wrote it as a cautionary tale, and, frankly, when I read the book I didn't feel that it was cautionary at all," Hunter says. "As a matter of fact, I found it very erotic and very hot. I see the movie in a completely different way, and I think the access to the movie is very different. There is a cool distance between us and the characters. That comes from David—David keeps all his characters at arm's length."

The bizarre story of people who are sexually obsessed with the deadly thrills they obtain from car crashes, Fine Line Features "Crash" bears an NC-17, one of the rare high-profile films to defy the commercial stigma attached to that rating since it was instituted in 1990. Even before its March 21 release in the U.S. by the New Line subsidiary, "Crash" has become a *cause célèbre* in the debate over artistic freedom and censorship. Although it has been playing in Europe for several months and has been particularly well received in France, the Canadian-made film has been at least temporarily banned in London's West End and almost found itself without a U.S. release.

"Crash" originally was scheduled to open here last October before Ted Turner, head of New Line's parent company, pronounced the film morally objectionable. Although Cronenberg has said "the delay has already done hideous damage to the film," American audiences now will be able to make up their own minds about "Crash," thanks to the sale of Turner Entertainment to Time Warner, a development that has rendered Turner's personal qualms less relevant.

The feisty Hunter has been forthright in her denunciation of "what was going on with 'Crash,' which I really thought was suppressing a right of mine and a right of the movies. It's censorship. This is something that I think is good to speak out about, and to speak out about firmly. Freedom in the arts is imperative to the health of a culture.

"One reason that 'Crash' is so threatening is because its center is sexuality and the exploration of it. If we're not free to explore these extremes in real life, it's an outlet for some anxiety, at the very least. If we can't explore this stuff cinematically, or in literature, or in painting, or in music — it's such a part of being creative, of having ideas, of being able to see where they take you personally."

Although her name may help lure filmgoers, "Crash" is not a Holly Hunter vehicle. She plays the secondary role of Dr. Helen Remington, whose collision with a car driven by a film producer named James Ballard (James Spader) hurls her into a kinky, over-the-top world of violent sexual fetishism. Already embroiled in an anything-goes compact of sexual experimentation with his wife (Deborah Kara Unger), the Ballard character and Dr. Remington join a cult of "auto-eroticism" led by the psychopathic Vaughan (Elias Koteas), a severely scarred car freak who reenacts such famous crashes as those that killed James Dean and Jayne Mansfield.



"What was going on with 'Crash' was suppressing a right of mine and a right of the movies. Freedom in the arts is imperative to the health of a culture."

Obviously, "Crash" is not designed for every taste (the movie "wasn't made to be shown in shopping malls," Hunter wryly notes), and it is sure to provoke heated discussion, both pro and con, when it plays American theatres. Although the little-used NC-17 rating supposedly was devised by the Motion Picture Association of America to accommodate the realm of adult-oriented yet non-hardcore subject matter that "Crash" explores, the film's troubling blend of sex and violence will test the boundaries of artistic tolerance in even some of the most liberal filmgoers.

But for an actress impatient with conventional roles and conventional ways of thinking, that testing process helps drive her choice of material. The "extreme territory" the characters of "Crash" inhabit reminds Hunter of such previous taboo-shattering cinematic landmarks as Nagisa Oshima's "In the Realm of the Senses" and Bernardo Bertolucci's "Last Tango in Paris."

The characters in "Crash" have "made a departure," she notes, to "a place where people normally don't go. These people kiss normalcy goodbye and never refer to it again. And that's one of the things I liked most about the story. There are no real echoes anymore of what their lives used to be. They've entered this new way without regret, without remorse, without even reflection."

Ballard's novel, which has taken on cult status over the years, had often been discussed as a film project. While "incredibly seductive to movie directors," as Hunter aptly puts it, the tale had always seemed too risky, too *outré* to reach the screen. Even after Ballard's World War II-set autobiographical novel "Empire of the Sun" was filmed by Steven Spielberg in 1987, "Crash" languished in the limbo of famous unmade

HUNTER

by JOSEPH McBRIDE

pictures, although Hunter encountered some "virtually unwatchable" student films made from the novel.

"I think 'Crash' is, in a way, my most autobiographical novel, notwithstanding 'Empire of the Sun,' which was actually about my childhood in Shanghai," the author has commented. "'Crash' is about my inner life, my imaginative life. It is true to that interior life, not the life I have actually led. As a novelist...I was exploring this strange hoodlum scientist Vaughan and these extraordinary women."



CRASH COURSE: David Cronenberg, Holly Hunter and James Spader on the set of "Crash."

Filtered through the equally bent personality of Cronenberg—the celebrated auteurist director of such stylish horror and sci-fi films as "Dead Ringers," "Videodrome," "The Dead Zone," and "Scanners"—"Crash" has emerged as a literally appalling cinematic nightmare, with the same mesmerizing quality as a freeway pileup, littered with twisted metal and limbs. The people in the weird world Cronenberg and cinematographer Peter Suschitzky have created seem as mechanical and cold as the automobiles they treat as erotic extensions of themselves.

"All the characters are experiencing acute alienation and trying to find a reference point for how they're alive now," Hunter observes. "And when they find people who have a commonality with them, they're drawn in a really extreme way to each other. The movie can be taken on so many different levels. I think that's what made it so difficult to figure out how it could ever be done.

"I wanted to play Helen because I liked the fact that her transformation [into a car fetishist] happened onscreen. When you meet her, she is having an accident. She crosses the threshold in movie time. You didn't know anything about her before. I liked how mysterious she is. And I thought the world [created by the story] was extremely interesting. I just wanted to be a part of it. It wasn't about how big the part was. I don't count the lines. If I had, I wouldn't have taken 'The Piano.'"

It's been more than a year since Hunter completed her work on "Crash," filmed in and around Toronto during the fall of 1995. Since then, she has played the secondary role of an angel in the upcoming 20th Century Fox release "A Life Less Ordinary," directed by Danny Boyle ("Trainspotting"). "It's a romantic comedy, but it's Danny Boyle's version of romantic comedy, which is slightly more macabre than people may be accustomed to. It's been a priority of mine to work with



interesting directors. That was absolutely the case with 'A Life Less Ordinary.'"

Next on her agenda is a costarring role with Danny De Vito in Jersey Films' "The Kiss." Screenwriter Richard LaGravenese ("The Bridges of Madison County") will make his directing debut this spring with his original screenplay about an Upper East Side Manhattan woman who starts life over after a broken marriage. "This is a woman that I've not played before, and I don't know exactly how it will be done. But I was tremendously drawn toward her, in some of the same ways that I was drawn toward 'The Piano,' in that the woman was such a complete, full human being as written. I don't often encounter that."

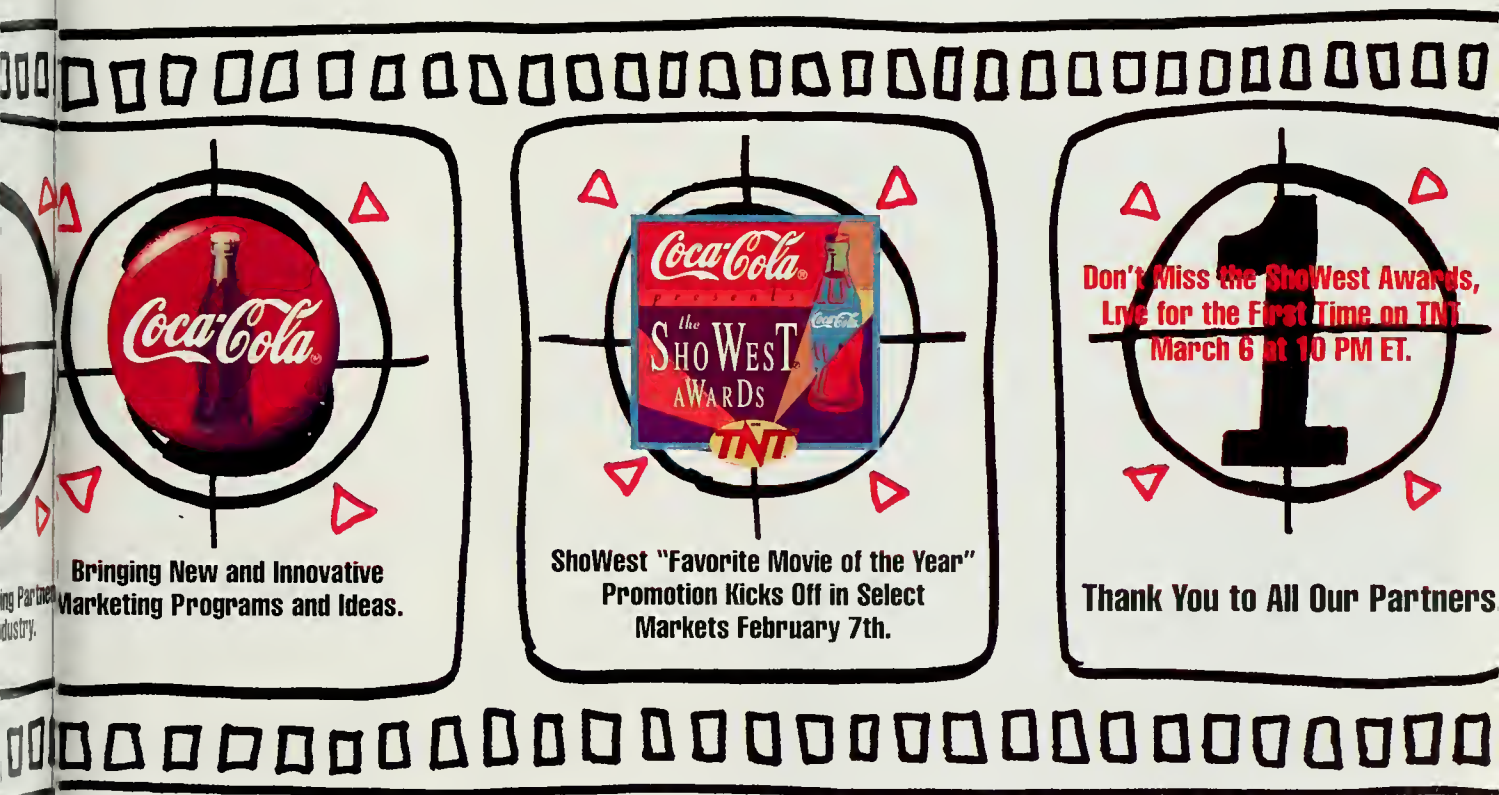
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Although Hunter has been embroiled in the controversy surrounding "Crash" ever since it debuted at last year's Cannes Film Festival (where the press screening provoked a mixture of boos and cheers), she insists she is not bracing herself for possible negative reaction in this country. "That's such a whole other life of a movie, how it's received. After the movie comes out and it is received, that's one thing. But for me to anticipate how I'm going to feel, or the possible repercussions, I can't participate—who can truly anticipate the life of a movie in the eyes of the public? For one thing, I'm almost always wrong.

"It's been tough for people to actually see the movie for what is and walk away from it saying they liked or disliked it based solely on the merits of the movie itself. I think the movie disappeared in the shuffle, because people were getting upset by it without having seen it. And so then when they would see it, it would already be slightly inflammatory. When all is said and done, it's a David Cronenberg movie. He has a loyal following, and those are probably the people who will respond most to 'Crash.'"

Despite Cronenberg's fears that the delayed release will hurt the boxoffice reception, Hunter comments, "Initially I thought it would. But now because there's been such a stir about it, I think probably a few more people are aware that this movie that deals with controversial subject matter is coming to a theatre near you."

"Crash." Starring James Spader, Holly Hunter and Elias Koteas. Written and directed by David Cronenberg, based on the novel by J.G. Ballard. Produced by Robert Lantos. A Fine Line Release. Thriller, rated NC-17. Opens March 21.



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APRIL TRAILERS

All hands on deck as the studios spring into action

The long cold winter is over, and studios are beginning to motor into theatres their bigger blue-sky fare. Summer is still on its way, so this month's likes of "Anaconda," "L.A. Confidential" and "McHale's Navy" (see photo below) won't be the boxoffice equals of such later fare as "The Lost World: Jurassic Park" or "Batman and Robin." But the majors are raising anchor, moving full speed ahead and loading their torpedoes.

On a by-weekend basis, April looks to be an uncruel, if not kind, month. April 4 has three romantic comedies—Fox's "Picture Perfect," Paramount's "'Til There Was You" and Universal's "That Old Feeling"—



and although they'll cut into each other's numbers at least they target different age groups. The two actioners—Columbia's "Double Team" (4/4) and Warner's "Murder at 1600" (4/11)—have openings to themselves and then the month's second half to share.

The third weekend is perfectly played: Columbia's "Anaconda" is for the male adventurers, Buena Vista's "Romy and Michele's High School Reunion" leans distaff and Warner's "Addicted to Love" plays to couples. The final frame finds three thrillers—Paramount's "Kiss the Girls," Miramax's "Office Killer" and Triumph's "The Assignment"—tripping all over themselves, giving 4/25 the makings of a probable potent debut for Warner's "L.A. Confidential."

The specialized labels, though, remain a substantial force, accounting for 25 of 40 releases. Triumph resurfaces with two titles, but the real story is that two indies—Miramax (four debuts, one per weekend) and Fine Line (three debuts, missing only 4/4)—are revving the throttle of nearly a third of that market.

APRIL 4

Double Team

Hong Kong director Tsui Hark directs this high-tech actioner starring Jean-Claude Van Damme ("Maximum Risk") as counterterrorist Jack Quinn, who teams with a wild-haired weapons specialist named Yaz (NBA star Dennis Rodman, making his feature debut). Mickey Rourke and Natasha Lindinger co-star; Paul Mones scripts; Moshe Diamant produces. (Columbia, 4/4)

Exploitips: *Van Damme's success curve has been waning; "Space Jam" showed a hoop star could open a movie. All in all, expect the usual first-weekend action crowd, with the usual fast falloff as that demo heads for 4/11's "Murder at 1600." See our Sneak Preview in our Feb. 1997 issue.*

The Sixth Man

In this comedy, a college basketball star named Antoine Tyler (Kadeem Hardison) dies but returns as a ghost to lead his team to the NCAA finals. Marlon Wayans portrays Antoine's heartbroken brother, who recovers his drive to win with his sibling's return but eventually must ask the "sixth man" to leave the team so he and his squad can play fair. Randall Miller directs; Christopher Reed and Cynthia Carle script; David Hoberman produces for Touchstone. (Buena Vista, 4/4)

Exploitips: *The story seems fraught with emotional possibilities, but "The Sixth Man" plays its plot for laughs, making it a likely bet for urban and youth demos.*

Picture Perfect

Jennifer Aniston ("She's the One") stars as an advertising executive who's the last unmarried among her friends; she decides to pass off a man in a photo as her beau, only to have real romantic complications ensue. Kevin Bacon, Jay Mohr, Illeana Douglas and Olympia Dukakis co-star. Glenn Gordon Caron directs this romantic comedy, and he scripts with Arlene Sorkin, Paul Slansky and Jeffrey Abrams; Erwin Stoff and Molly Madden produce for 3 Arts. (Fox, 4/4)

Exploitips: *While "The Sixth Man" is capturing the comedy crowd, "Picture Perfect" is likely to garner date-nighters, powered by the star turn by Aniston (still best known as one of TV's "Friends"). The key competition would be "'Til There Was You," a '96 holdover that has Aniston in a co-starring role—if Paramount doesn't move that title again.*

'Til There Was You

A hopelessly romantic woman ("Waterworld's" Jeanne Tripplehorn) and a relentlessly practical man ("Miracle on 34th Street's" Dylan McDermott) who've never met are fated for each other. Jennifer Aniston and Sarah Jessica Parker co-star. Scott Winant directs; Winnie Holzman scripts; Penny Finkelman Cox, Tom Rosenberg and Alan Poul produce for Lakeshore. (Paramount, 4/4 tent)

Exploitips: *Writer Holzman created TV's lauded "My So-Called Life," so "'Til There Was You" might play more serious and more mature than demo competition "Picture Perfect." If Paramount holds the date, expect "'Til There Was You" to need a couple weekends to build word-of-mouth among adult moviegoers.*

That Old Feeling

The battle of the sexes comes full circle in this romantic comedy starring Bette Midler and Dennis Farina as a happily divorced couple who, reunited at their daughter's wedding, begin a passionate affair. Carl Reiner directs; Leslie Dixon ("Mrs. Doubtfire") scripts; Dixon produces with Bonnie Bruckheimer. (Universal, 4/4)

Exploitips: *Like "'Til There Was You," "That Old Feeling" is likely to draw older—in this case, the 40-plus folks not often first-nighters. (Both "That Old Feeling" and "'Til There Was You" could benefit on their second weekends from having no new genre competition.) The key ammo here is Midler, who just had a long-running hit with "The First Wives Club." Catchline: What happens when the first wife becomes the new lover?*

Sonatine

Takeshi "Beat" Kitano writes, directs and stars in the story of a yakuza who must battle a rival mob in Okinawa. Aya Kokumai and Tetsu Watanabe co-star; Masayuki Mori, Hisao Nabeshima and Takio Yoshida produce this Rolling Thunder effort. (Miramax, 4/4 NY/LA)

Exploitips: *To attract more than the action/martial arts demo, make sure to tie in the Quentin Tarantino name (via his Rolling Thunder label), which could attract interest from the hip flick set.*

Bliss

In this dramatic love story, Joseph ("Sleep With Me's" Craig Sheffer) learns that his wife, Maria ("Mother Night's" Sheryl Lee) is seeing an unconventional sex therapist. When he confronts the

enigmatic Balthazar ("The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert's" Terence Stamp), Joseph finds himself on a sensual journey of self-discovery. Lance Young directs and scripts; Allyn Stewart produces. (Triumph, 4/4 ltd)

Exploitips: *Triumph did a good job promoting "To Gillian on Her 37th Birthday," though it pulled only $4 mil. despite co-billing for Michelle Pfeiffer. Here, the cast is a bit lower-profile, so expect a similar boxoffice ballpark.*

Flamenco

This documentary is directed by Carlos Saura ("Carmen"). The virtually wordless film is a series of vignettes showcasing its male and female performers (Paco de Lucia, Manolo Sanlucar, Lole y Manuel) playing and dancing to the music of flamenco. Juan Lebron Sanchez produces. (New Yorker, 4/4 excl)

Exploitips: *Although our 1995 Montreal fest critic (see our Nov. '95 issue) was cool toward "Flamenco" in a two-star review ("'Flamenco' pales as one musical number simply follows another"), he said it was "stunningly shot, scored and directed." Expect the most devoted and mature specialized demo.*

APRIL 11

Murder at 1600

Wesley Snipes plays a Washington, D.C. detective investigating a murder at the White House. Soon, he finds himself embroiled in a top-level cover-up. Diane Lane ("Jack") and Alan Alda ("Everyone Says I Love You") co-star. Dwight Little directs; Arnold Kopelson ("Eraser") produces. (Warner, 4/11)

Exploitips: *Originally slated by Warner (which houses Clint Eastwood's Malpaso Prods.) to appear before Eastwood's Columbia effort, "Absolute Power," "Murder at 1600" suffers from similarities in storyline. To compensate, exhibitors should accentuate the action and Snipes' presence to best attract the likely young-male/urban audiences.*

Kissed

A fateful meeting with a young medical student (Peter Outerbridge) develops the obsession of a young woman (Molly Parker) that love can cross over from the living to the dead. Lynne Stopkewich directs; Stopkewich also scripts with Angus Fraser and produces with Dean English. (Goldwyn, 4/11)

Exploitips: *Although an award- (and distributor-) getter at the '96 Toronto fest, our reviewer said Stopkewich steered "a bland course down the middle" in her two-star "necrophilic comedy." This might actually work to the film's benefit, in that its "safe" treatment of a attention-grabbing subject could draw some mainstream moviegoers.*

Schizopolis

In this absurdist comedy, Steven Soderbergh creates a (non-German-language!) send-up of Scientology. Soderbergh stars in two roles; Betsy Brantley and David Jensen co-star. Soderbergh directs and scripts; John Hardy produces. (Northern Arts, 4/11 NY)

Exploitips: *Although our Toronto fest reviewer said that Soderbergh's deliberately "raw" technique—lines on the screen, badly lipsynched sound and no credits other than the film title and The End—eventually grows tiresome, the movie itself is "more entertaining than one would think." Accent the satire.*



Leo Tolstoy's Anna Karenina

Filmed on location in St. Petersburg, Russia, Tolstoy's classic tale follows the heartbreaking, tempestuous romance between the aristocratic Anna Karenina ("Braveheart's" Sophie Marceau) and Count Alexei Vronsky and the contrasting romance and marriage of their friends Levin and Kitty ("The Crow: City of Angels'" Mia Kirshner). Sean Bean and Alfred Molina ("The Perez Family") also star. Bernard Rose ("Immortal Beloved") directs and adapts; Bruce Davey produces for Mel Gibson's Icon Prods. (Warner, 4/4 ltd)

Exploitips: *Rose has a penchant for the classic, and this adaptotion lends itself to bookstore tie-ins to attract the literary. But exhibitors should play up the fire-and-ice aspects of this Russian romance—and should highlight the presences of Marceau and Kirshner to interest the most likely distaff demo. Expect full studio support for this production from the Warner-based Icon.*

Pink Flamingos

John Waters' infamous 1972 film returns for its 25th anniversary. The story: a trailer-house woman (Divine) competes with other unsavories for the title of the world's filthiest person. David Lochary, Mink Stole and Edith Massey co-star. (Fine Line, 4/11)

Exploitips: *Catchline: "After 25 years, this 'exercise in bad taste' tastes even worse."*

APRIL 18

Anaconda

A documentary crew's journey on the Amazon River becomes a fight for survival against the world's largest snake in this adventure film from director Luis Llosa. Jennifer Lopez ("Selena"), Ice Cube, Jon Voight, Eric Stoltz and Owen Wilson ("Bottle Rocket") star; Hans Bauer, John M. Mandel, Jim Cash & Jack Epps Jr., Neal Jimenez and Mark Haskell Smith script; Verna Harrah, Carole Little and Leonard Rabinowitz produce. (Columbia, 4/18)

Exploitips: *"Congo" was an unexpected hit without a big monster; this has one. But the what's-that-again "Anaconda" title recalls one of Murray Hamilton's "Jaws" lines: "You say, 'Barracuda,' people say, 'Huh? What?' You say, 'Shark'—you have a panic on your hands on the Fourth of July." Yet Columbia has been running TV spots since January to build audience awareness, and this has the adventure genre to itself through month's end.*

Romy and Michele's High School Reunion

Best friends and party girls Romy ("Mighty Aphrodite's" Mira Sorvino) and Michele (Lisa Kudrow, another of TV's "Friends") decide to return and reinvent themselves for their 10-year high school reunion by concocting fantasies of wealth and success. But their scheme unravels with the arrival of Heather Mooney ("The Truth About Cats and Dogs'" Janeane Garofalo), who knows their real stories. David Mirkin directs from Robin Schiff's adaptation of her stage play, "The Ladies' Room"; Laurence Mark produces. (Buena Vista, 4/18)

Exploitips: *While the boys are over at "Anaconda," the girls will be here. The distaff-themed "The Truth About Cats and Dogs" did $35 million serving that audience, and this looks to be aiming for similar results.*

Addicted to Love

In this romantic comedy, Meg Ryan and Matthew Broderick star as jilted lovers who team to exact revenge on their former amours, who have moved in together. Kelly Preston ("Jerry Maguire") and Tcheky Karyo ("La Femme Nikita") co-star for Griffin Dunne; Robert Gordon scripts; Bobby Newmyer and Jeffrey Silver produce for Outlaw. (Warner, 4/18)

Exploitips: *Although it's generally true that, while the boys are at "Anaconda" and the girls are at "Romy and Michele's High School*

Reunion," the boys and girls on dates will be at "Addicted to Love," the latter two are likely to suffer more cross-competition. Expect "Addicted to Love" to enlist 30+ moviegoers, while twentysomethings hang with Romy & Michele.

Roseanna's Grave

In this English-language comedy, a husband (Jean Reno) goes to comic lengths to assure his dying wife (Mercedes Ruehl) a burial plot in her Italian village's almost-full graveyard. Polly Walker co-stars. Paul Weiland directs; Saul Turteltaub, Dick Clement and Ian Le Frenais script; Paul Trijbits, Alison Owen and Dario Poloni produce. (Fine Line, 4/18 NY/LA)

Exploitips: *Fine Line was sure enough of this in-house production to showcase it at Showeast; it's also releasing this art-houser in SDDS and Dolby SR-D, another sign it thinks this film has crossover potential.*

Talk of Angels

A sort of gender-bender variant on Ken Loach's "Land and Freedom," this PG-13 drama tells the story of a young Irish woman who arrives in Spain on the eve of the country's civil war. Polly Walker ("Restoration"), Vincent Perez ("The Crow: City of Angels"), Frances McDormand ("Fargo") and Franco Nero star for director Nick Hamm; Ann Guedes and Frank McGuinness script; Patrick Cassavetti produces. (Miramax, 4/18)

Exploitips: *On one hand, this has elements that could make it one of the month's stronger art-house releases; on the other hand, "Talk of Angels" has long sat on Miramax's clogged to-come slate. Best bets are the date-night college crowd and the usual specialized suspects (the educated 40+ demo).*

Hollow Reed

A father ("The Portrait of a Lady's" Martin Donovan) is pitted against his ex-wife in a brutal custody battle that forces him to reveal his homosexuality and threatens the safety of his child. Joely Richardson ("101 Dalmatians") and Ian Hart ("Nothing Personal") co-star for director Angela Pope ("Captives"); Paula Milne scripts; Nik Powell and Stephen Woolley produce. (CFP, 4/18 NY excl)

Exploitips: *Our Ft. Lauderdale fest critic in a three-star review calls "Hollow Reed" "restrained but harrowing.... [W]hat might have turned maudlin...is instead quite moving."*

APRIL 25

Kiss the Girls

In this suspense thriller, a police psychologist ("Seven's" Morgan Freeman) and a young doctor ("Heat's" Ashley Judd) search for an abducted female. Gary Fleder ("Things to Do in Denver When You're Dead") directs; David Klass adapts James Patterson's best-seller; David Brown and Joe Wizan produce. (Paramount, 4/25)

Exploitips: *Will the estimable talent involved counterbalance the narrative's missing boxoffice element, a young male hero, with which the likes of "Seven" have profited? "Kiss the Girls" was moved from 2/28, when it would have gone against the similar-demo, testosterone-heavy "Donnie Brasco."*

Office Killer

In this suspense thriller, Molly Ringwald, Carol Kane and Jeanne Tripplehorn star for Cindy Sherman, a conceptual artist/photographer here making her feature directing debut (as did artist Julian Schnabel with Miramax's "Basquiat"). Christine Vachon and Pam Koffler produce for Good Fear, with James Schamus and Ted Hope among four executive producers. (Miramax, 4/23 NY/LA)

Exploitips: *Only Miramax would have thought to release "Scream" at Christmas, and only Miramax would insist a movie called "Office Killer" go 4/23—Secretary's Day. And only Miramax would have a conceptual artist do a slasher flick. But the Vachon, Schamus and Hope names are well-proven in indie land, and one can expect one of Miramax's nonpareil marketing schemes here.*

The Assignment

In this espionage thriller (aka "Jackal"), U.S. naval officer Annibal Ramirez ("Michael Collins'" Aidan Quinn) must risk his identity by pretending to become an infamous international terrorist. Donald Sutherland and Ben Kingsley co-star as CIA and Israeli agents who select Ramirez for his deadly assignment. Christian Duguay directs; Dan Gordon and Sabi H. Shabtai script; Tom Berry and Franco Battista produce. (Triumph, 4/25)

Exploitips: *This Triumph effort won't impede "Kiss the Girls" the way TriStar's "Donnie Brasco" might have, but all three 4/25 thrillers will split their greater genre demo. "Kiss the Girls" has studio strength behind it, but no male*

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L.A. Confidential

Based on the James Ellroy crime novel, "L.A. Confidential" is a hard-boiled tale of corruption set in the '50s, when Los Angeles was becoming a metropolis. During this heady era, a cast of gritty, colorful characters on both sides of the law intersect in a web of crime and deceit. Kim Basinger ("Pret-a-Porter"), Kevin Spacey ("The Usual Suspects"), Danny DeVito ("Matilda") and James Cromwell ("Star Trek: First Contact") star. Curtis Hanson ("The River Wild") directs; Brian Helgeland adapts; Arnon Milchan produces for New Regency. (Warner, 4/25)

Exploitips: *April 25 could become a Black Friday equal to the infamous 10/13/95, when the similar-demos "Jade," "Strange Days" and "The Scarlet Letter" went head-to-head and all lost. Still, "L.A. Confidential," bearing the cross-promotable Ellroy imprimatur and the weekend's most audience-amenable cast, looks to be the odds-on favorite for first place come Monday's b.o. tally.*

lead; "Office Killer" has the savvy Miramax but three female leads; "The Assignment" has the usual male casting but perhaps the least profile. Advantage: "L.A. Confidential."

Eight Heads in a Duffel Bag

In this comedy, Joe Pesci is a mob bag man who finds that his luggage containing the proof of his most recent hit has been switched. Carol Kane, George Hamilton and Kristy Swanson co-star. Oscar-winning scripter Tom Schulman ("Dead Poets Society") makes his directing debut; Brad Krevoy, Steve Stabler and John Bertolli produce for MPCA. (Orion, 4/25)

Exploitips: *Heads will roll here and in "Office Killer," but for which will auds stroll the aisles? The marketing nod goes to Miramax, but—all else being equal—comedy outsells suspensers. Pesci also provides marquee help.*

All Over Me

Fifteen-year-old best friends Claude ("To Die For's" Alison Folland) and Ellen ("True Crimes'" Tara Subkoff) begin to separate. Alex Sichel directs her feature debut; sister Sylvia Sichel scripts; Dolly Hall ("...Two Girls in Love") produces. (Fine Line, 4/25)

Exploitips: *Made for the same audiences that attended "...Two Girls in Love" in '95 and "Manny & Lo" in '96. Held from March.*

Brassed Off

A local brass band embarks on the competitive circuit as a mine closure threat hangs heavy over their small Yorkshire hamlet. Pete Postlethwaite ("Dragonheart"), Tara Fitzgerald ("Sirens") and Ewan McGregor ("Trainspotting") star in this gritty but heartwarming tale. Mark Herman directs and scripts; Steve Abbott produces. (Miramax, 4/25 NY/LA)

Exploitips: *Bearing good reviews from Sundance, "Brassed Off"—Yorkshire brogue for, ah, "upset"—is its weekend's standard-item art-house fare. McGregor's "Trainspotting" credit is the most salable among the players'.*

Mondo

A gypsy boy wanders the streets of Nice. Ovidiu Balan, Philippe Petit and Pierette Fesch star. Tony Gatlif directs and adapts the novel "Ed. Gallinard" by J.M.G. Le Clezio; Michele Ray-Gavras produces. (Shadow, 4/25)

Exploitips: *Our critic, in a 3 1/2-star review, called this "rich with beautiful imagery and emotionally stirring music...a sparkling gem in a sea of tired, formulaic films."*

APRIL UNDATED

McHale's Navy

This action/comedy stars Tom Arnold ("The Stupids") as the motley-crewed Navy officer lured back into today's service to thwart a new nemesis: a maniacal terrorist (Tim Curry). Co-starring are David Alan Grier, Dean Stockwell and Ernest Borgnine, the original TV McHale. Bryan Spicer ("Mighty Morphin Power Rangers") directs; Peter Crabbe and Andy Rose script; Lance Hool and Perry Katz executive produce for the Bubble Factory. *See photo, p. 10.* (Universal, likely 4/18 or 4/25)

Exploitips: *Universal has had considerable success with its returns to one-time TV properties ("The Flintstones," "The Little Rascals," "Casper"), but its last—the Bubble Factory's "Flipper"—made only $20 mil. Expect "McHale's Navy" to find better sailing based on perfect casting and a wider age reach.*

Breakdown

A married couple (Kurt Russell and Kathleen Quinlan) encounter trouble when killers abduct the wife. J.T. Walsh co-stars for writer/director Jonathan Moslow; Dino De Laurentiis produces. (Paramount)

Exploitips: *The similar "The Vanishing" did about that at the 1993 boxoffice with similar marquee wattage; the De Laurentiis name is a long-lived one, even if most of his releases were short-lived in theatres. "Breakdown" needs a soft weekend slot to break through.*

Venice

Set in 16th-century Venice, this film (aka "Indiscretion" and "The Honest Courtesan") follows a beautiful but poor woman ("Braveheart's" Catherine McCormack) who seeks power to win the man she loves ("Cold Comfort Farm's" Rufus Sewell). Moira Kelly and Jacqueline Bisset co-star. Marshall Herskovitz directs; Arnon Milchan, Sarah Caplan and Ed Zwick produce for New Regency. (Warner)

Exploitips: *Moved from Christmas, "Venice" is a period piece with a female lead and a foreign setting—making this fare for the same distaff demo and art-house audiences drawn to "The Portrait of a Lady." So emphasize the romantic passion and exotic setting.*

Paradise Road

This drama concerns women interned in a Japanese prison camp during World War II and stars Glenn Close, Frances McDormand ("Fargo") and Julianna Margulies. Bruce Beresford directs and scripts; Greg Coote and Sue Milliken produce. (Fox Searchlight)

Exploitips: *Expect identical demos as for "Venice"; the same theme plus a male lead (Dennis Quaid) in 1990 didn't click wide for Fox for Alan Parker's "Come See the Paradise."*

Traveller

A veteran swindler ("Twister's" Bill Paxton) and his protege ("Fear's" Mark Wahlberg) become involved with a complicated con set in motion by fellow "Travellers"—an extended family of con men with strict codes of secrecy and conduct—that could bring them wealth or death. Julianna Margulies co-stars. Jack Green directs; Jim McGlynn scripts; Paxton helps produce. (October)

Exploitips: *Its cast a sign of October's continued growth, "Traveller" would also require drawing beyond the art-house confines to succeed the way "The Usual Suspects" did for Gramercy. Highlighting the Paxton/Wahlberg duo will help draw older and young males.*

Ripe

Two abused sisters (Monica Keena and Daisy Eagan) are freed by car crash from their family hell, but their own relationship grows violent. Mo Ogrodnik directs and scripts; Tom Razzano and Suzy Landa produce. (Trimark)

Exploitips: *Our Toronto fest critic gave "Ripe" a one-star review. ("Nothing in 'Ripe'*

rings true.") But emphasizing the female sibling element can draw the "Manny & Lo" crowd.

The Winner

A winner at Vegas' gambling tables becomes the target of an elaborate con scheme. Rebecca de Mornay, Vincent D'Onofrio ("Good Luck"), Delroy Lindo ("Clockers") and Billy Bob Thorton ("Sling Blade") star. Alex Cox directs; Ken Schwenker produces. (Live)

Exploitips: *The name cast could draw mainstream interest, even as the Cox ("Sid and Nancy," "Repo Man") credit will pull art-housers. Bottom line: a similar-numbers turnout as for Goldwyn's February opener, the similarly themed "Hard 8."*

Late Bloomers

A high school secretary (Dee Hennigan) suspects a geometry teacher (Connie Nelson) of having an affair with her husband. Confrontation begets friendship begets love. Julia Dyer directs; Gretchen Dyer scripts; both produce with Stephen Dyer. (Strand)

Exploitips: *The slightly sensational topic could draw part of the more mainstream distaff demo; still, most business should be in select sites with the lesbian moviegoers that came to the likes of "Go Fish."*

The Leading Man

A married playwright has an affair with the leading lady of his new play while the leading man of the show ("Moonlight & Valentino's" Jon Bon Jovi) seduces the wife for his own gain. David Warner, Anna Galiena and Lambert Wilson co-star. John Duigan ("The Journey of August King") directs and scripts; Doug Chapin and Barry Krost produce. (Legacy)

Exploitips: *This is perhaps Legacy's strongest entry to date, with solid art-house names (Duigan, Galiena) and a twentysomething fave (rocker Bon Jovi). Possible downside: Duigan has proved far stronger with coming-of-age tales ("The Year My Voice Broke," "Flirting") than with grownup raciness ("Sirens," "Wide Sargasso Sea").*

Irma Vep

A has-been French director (Jean-Pierre Leaud) hires Hong Kong action star Maggie Cheung (playing herself) to portray a jewel thief in a remake of a silent classic. As the director loses control of the shoot, his actress encounters her own problems, including the advances of a lesbian costumer (Nathalie Richard). Oliver Assayas directs and scripts; Georges Benayoun produces. (Zeitgeist)

Exploitips: *Our Telluride critic gave this a 2 1/2-star review, on the plus side citing its lightness and interesting French/Asian culture-clashing but on the minus calling its characterizations "superficially developed." Yet the setup sounds like a good one for drawing the French-language crowd.*

Fetishes

Filmed at Pandora's Box, the infamous S&M parlor in New York, this unique documentary reveals the full range of fetishes, from the humorous to the most bizarre sociopolitical twists. Nick Broomfield ("Hollywood Madam") directs, and he produces with Michelle D'Acosta. (Cinema Village Releasing)

Exploitips: *The new Cinema Village is making a quick name for itself with its blue pickups ("Screwed"). Highlighting the blueness will draw the type's specitic constituency. Catchline: "Inside the Pandora's Box of sexuality you will find 'Fetishes.'"*

The Next Step

This Broadway dance film follows an aging stage performer (Broadway star Rick Negron) as he tries to decide whether to find a new musical vehicle for himself and give up the woman he loves, or retire from dancing and settle down with her. Broadway dancer Denise Faye co-stars for director Christian Faber ("Bail Jumper"). (Phaedra)

Exploitips: *Filmhaus became Filmopolis became Phaedra, and in any incarnation the house has done an intriguing job of finding good but very select-site fare.*

Plump Fiction

All is going well for two insect exterminators until their boss asks one to "exterminate" his wife. Paul Dinello, Tommy Davidson, Robert Costanza, Julie Brown and Sandra Bernhard star. Bob Koherr directs and scripts; Gary Binkow produces. (Rhino)

Exploitips: *Postponed from summer '96 and then Feb. '97, this "Pulp Fiction" spoof gets less timely the longer Rhino waits. Runs in college markets are the best bet.*

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UP, UP & AWAY!

Admissions were up, the Blockbuster was back, and the Cold War was finally behind us. A look at the trends of 1996. *by Ray Greene*

Although the numbers don't quite tell the whole story (they never do), it's clear that 1996 was one of the most impressive movie years on record. Overall U.S. boxoffice was up almost 8 percent to an all-time high of $5.9 billion, with U.S. movie ticket sales running at approximately 1.4 billion—their highest level since 1959.

That date is a significant one, because 1959 is largely thought of as the year TV viewing began to get the upper hand on moviegoing. The current attendance surge can be attributed to a variety of factors: the '90s production boom, which has seen more high-profile films making it to market with each passing year, plus the fact that the studios and "niche" distributors have become more and more sophisticated in their ability to couple "can't miss" megahits with carefully marketed specialty titles, thereby maximizing admissions across all sectors of the audience.

An additional (and too frequently overlooked) key to the recent robust growth in admissions is the upgrading of the U.S. theatre infrastructure as a result of the "megaplexing" phenomenon. In 1996, exhibition circuits with a U.S. presence continued to offer moviegoers bigger screens in larger theatre complexes, featuring more comfortable seating, state-of-the-art acoustics and a variety of themed entertainment incentives that were unavailable just a few short years ago. As it has for so much of the 1990s, the exhibition industry kept building it, and the audience continued to come.



IN: Alien encounters, cost overruns. The emblematic film of the year? Tim Burton's "Mars Attacks!"

TRENDS 1996: THE CREATIVE SIDE

Based on the final returns for the year, the "blockbuster" movie was back bigtime in 1996, although it did take more varied shapes than it has in the recent past. Tough-to-pigeonhole titles like "The Birdcage," "Phenomenon" and "The First Wives Club" were all high on the list of the year's top grossers, while such "surefire" attractions as Disney's animated "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" and the Jim Carrey comedy "The Cable Guy" fell well short of expectations.

With the exception of Arnold Schwarzenegger, who did just fine at the boxoffice with his by-the-numbers actioner "Eraser," macho action superstars all had trouble bringing audiences into theatres. The law of diminishing returns seems at last to be working against second-tier action fixtures like Jean-Claude Van Damme (whose two 1996 films, "The Quest" and "Maximum Risk," grossed a paltry combined $34.8 million in the U.S.) and Steven Seagal (whose "Glimmer Man" raked in just $19.8 million).

Part-time action god and "Speed"-ster Keanu Reeves fizzled in "Chain Reaction," despite the directing talents of "Fugitive" filmmaker Andrew Davis. Meanwhile, the once invincible Sylvester Stallone saw his career continue the boxoffice freefall commenced by 1995's "Judge Dredd" and "Assassins." Though paid a reported $20 million for his performance in the disaster flick "Daylight," the Stallone name turned out to be more of a turn-off than a turn-on to U.S. audiences, which stayed away in droves.

In point of fact, slumming "serious" actors Tom Cruise and Nick Cage were arguably the top action draws of 1996. All of which inspires

some rumination about the changing face of the American blockbuster. To whit: Despite the boxoffice success of Cage's "Die-Hard-at-Alcatraz" formula epic "The Rock," 1996 demonstrated that the "Rambo"/"Die Hard"/"Lethal Weapon" action model that has reigned at the U.S. boxoffice for the past decade may be on the wane. Given how oversaturated that particular subgenre has been in recent years, it's hard to imagine that any but the most die-hard "Die Hard" fan will ultimately mourn its passing.

Creatively and thematically, 1996 was also the year that U.S.-produced movies finally got over the end of the Cold War. At the popular level, this phenomenon manifested itself in the two most discernible commercial trends of the year: the revival of the '50s-era "space invaders" genre ("Independence Day," "Space Jam," "Mars Attacks!") and the return of the '70s-era "disaster" film ("Twister," "Independence Day" and a host of other titles such as "Volcano" and "Titanic" which were shot in '96 for a '97 release.)

Even given pop culture's ongoing fascination with all things retro, what explains the surprising re-emergence of two movie subgenres so outdated that they had survived into the 1990s only as subjects for camp humor? How did Roger Corman and Irwin Allen suddenly surface as the ancient unsung avatars of the two most prominent strains of contemporary moviegoing entertainment?

The answer is a simple combination of two symbiotic developments. The first is the technological explosion that has taken place in digital imaging. Pretty much anything that can be imagined can be created using CGI technology at this point, so the empty spectacle quotient inherent in large-scale disaster makes martian invasions and the wrath of Mother Nature equally viable screen subjects for the '90s.

More important is the way that both the "extraterrestrial hostilities" and "inexplicable forces of nature" scenarios resolve the fundamental story dilemma of our time. Which is: now that the Cold War is over and there are no Russians to battle, just who is an imposing enough threat to qualify as a menace to the average American audience-member's way of life? As entities beyond ideology, both little green men and the various seismic and climatic shocks this planet is heir to made ideal foes for the transitional, single-superpower era we're moving through today.

BOXOFFICE BAROMETER: 1996 IN REVIEW

THE BUSINESS SIDE

If 1996 was characterized by any one trend on the business side, it was that the creeping gigantism which has been at work in the movie industry since the mid-1970s finally became the film biz's unquestioned norm. Okay, sure. The Hollywood studios have been throwing money at the screen and calling it entertainment for years. But there used to be some (at least feigned) soul-searching about it, some small, still voice of dissent buried within the complete lack of a sense of proportion. There used to be people making movies who seemed to feel like there just had to be a better way.

Not this year, though. Production and marketing costs soared; the estimated average for getting a major studio title to market climbed to a record $60 million by some estimates. Yet conspicuous in its absence was that one big "runaway production" story (a la "Waterworld," "Last Action Hero" or "Bonfire of the Vanities") to act as the unifying metaphor for the wretched excess of current production philosophies. Pundits who used to keel over like the proverbial canary in a coal mine at the first whiff of a $20 million cost overrun barely bothered to comment on such Olympic-sized budget-busters as "Space Jam," "Mars Attacks!," "Eraser" or "The Long Kiss Goodnight"—each a film which might have incited a scathing press and a bestselling nonfiction expose' just a few short years ago.

Movies like "Waterworld" and "Last Action Hero" were easy for the press to single out for punishment because, in the extremity of their overspending, they were still something of the exception. But it's harder to come down on a film like "Eraser" (to take a randomly selected example) since it merely epitomizes the new Hollywood rule. Alleged friction between star and director, last-minute production difficulties, a rewriting process which extended well into filming, plus an unimaginably expensive star salary all combined to push "Eraser" well above its original projected budget. But so what? Variations on that theme were at work on perhaps a dozen of the most expensive theatrical features of 1996, several of which (for example, "The Rock" and "Space Jam," in addition to "Eraser" itself) managed to perform at the boxoffice anyway.



OUT: Formula action films and the stars who populate them. Schwarzenegger did fine, but Van Damme, Seagal and Stallone may have just been erased.

As star salaries rise up to and beyond the $20 million mark and overall production and marketing expenses spiral out of sight, there no longer seems to be a ceiling beyond which film costs cannot rise. The magic of studio accounting, coupled with those ever-popular ancillary revenue sources (and the growing importance of the overseas market, where U.S.-produced product is currently outgrossing its domestic take), somehow manages to keep the whole leaky vessel of big-budget U.S. filmmaking afloat.

In looking over the way the distribution side of the film business operated in 1996, it seems like the sacked executives and blighted careers caught up in such benchmark "runaway" productions of the past as "Cleopatra," "Heaven's Gate," "One From the Heart" and "Apocalypse Now" have earned a serious apology. Where previous observers found nothing but bloat, waste and dry-rot in such overly expensive cinematic efforts, the business cycle of 1996 showed their makers to have been prophets without honor. As the standardization of the $100 million production budget becomes a thinkable possibility, the most historically reckless of Hollywood's big-time spenders may have turned out to be moviemaking's ultimate visionaries, after all.

1997 Barometer Star Poll Results

Female Star of the Year



Sandra Bullock

For the second year in a row, Sandra Bullock found **Boxoffice**'s Barometer Star Poll "a time to" win the Female Star of the Year award. Both in 1996 and this year's 1997 poll, voters selected their engaging star as the number one favorite. Audiences flocked to see her performance as the eager young law student opposite this year's Most Promising Male Newcomer, Matthew McConaughey, in the blockbuster "A Time to Kill." Bullock also starred in the less-than-encouraging romantic comedy effort "Two If By Sea" and the epic romance, "In Love and War." Now filming "Speed II: Cruise Control" with Jason Patrick ("Sleepers"), the A-list actress plans to next star in "Hope Floats" to be directed by Forest Whitaker ("Waiting to Exhale").

Michelle Pfeiffer went from TV reporter ("Up Close & Personal") to dead wife ("To Gillian on Her 37th Birthday") to harried mom ("One Fine Day") and moved up from number five on last year's poll to take second place. "A Thousand Acres" is Pfeiffer's next project out of the gate.

Goldie Hawn wins third place for her return to fine form in "The First Wives Club" and "Everyone Says I Love You."

Most Promising Female Newcomer

Gwyneth Paltrow is the bearer of 1997's Most Promising Female Newcomer award. Paltrow proved herself to be more than just the girl who got Brad Pitt with her engaging performances in "Emma" and "The Pallbearer." Next up for the rising star is "Kilronan" and "Great Expectations." Janeane Garofalo came in second for her comedic presence in "The Truth about Cats and Dogs" and "Larger Than Life." And rock star-daughter-turned-indie-film-poster-girl Liv Tyler earned third place for her breakout performances in three films: "That Thing You Do!," "Stealing Beauty" and "Heavy."



Gwyneth Paltrow

Female Star of the Year

1. Sandra Bullock, " In Love and War," "A Time to Kill," "Two If By Sea"
2. Michelle Pfeiffer, "One Fine Day," "To Gillian...," "Up Close & Personal"
3. Goldie Hawn, "Everyone Says I Love You," "The First Wives Club"
4. Glenn Close, "101 Dalmatians," "Mars Attacks!," "Mary Reilly"
5. Rene Russo, "Ransom," "Tin Cup"
6. Frances McDormand, "Fargo" "
7. Clair Danes, "Romeo & Juliet," "To Gillian..."
8. Meg Ryan, "Courage Under Fire"
9. Uma Thurman, "The Truth About Cats and Dogs," "Beautiful Girls"
10. Natalie Portman, "Mars Attacks!," "Everyone Says...," "Beautiful Girls"

Female Newcomer

1. Gwyneth Paltrow, "Emma," "The Pallbearer"
2. Janeane Garofalo, "Larger Than Life," "The Truth About Cats and Dogs"
3. Liv Tyler, "That Thing You Do!," "Stealing Beauty," "Heavy"
4. Courtney Love, "The People vs. Larry Flynt," "Feeling Minnesota"
5. Jennifer Aniston, "She's the One"

1997 Barometer Star Poll Results

Most Promising Male Newcomer

Matthew McConaughey sweated out the competition to win the Breakout Star of the Year for his roles in "A Time to Kill," "Larger Than Life" and "Lone Star." McConaughey, a former University of Texas film student, next stars with Jodie Foster in "Contact." Holy Breakouts, Batman!—Television's "E.R." star, George Clooney took second place for roles in "From Dusk Till Dawn" and "One Fine Day." After donning the batsuit for "Batman and Robin," Clooney will star in "The Peacemaker." Nathan Lane captured third place for his hilarious turn as star transvestite/wife/mom in "The Birdcage."



Matthew McConaughey

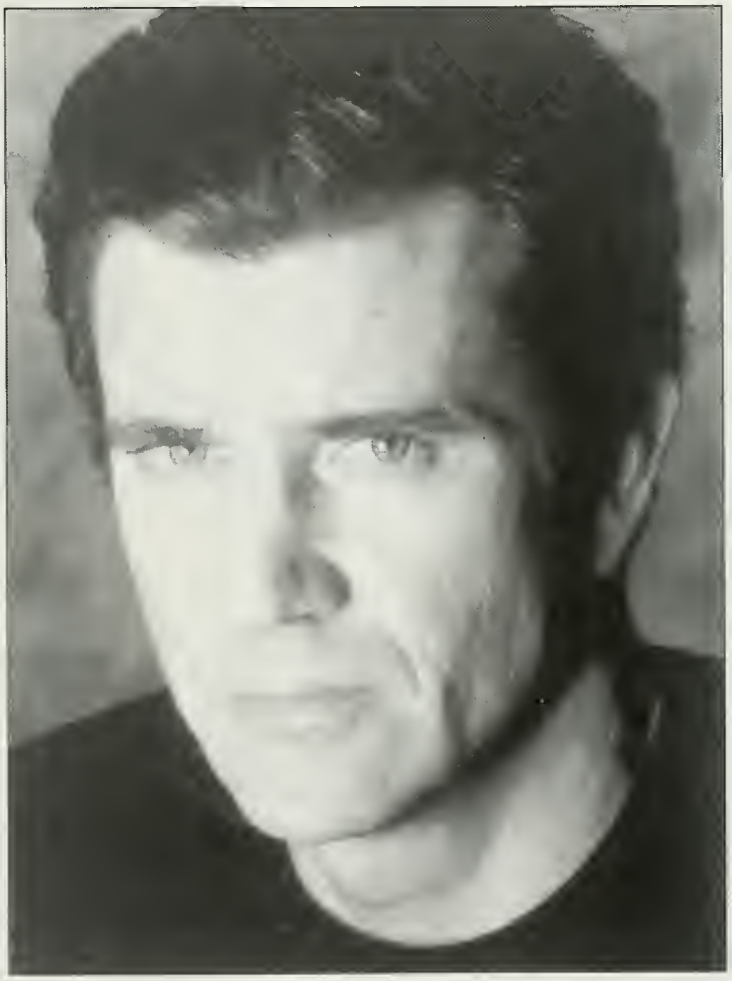
Male Star of the Year

1. Mel Gibson, "Ransom"
2. Tom Cruise, "Jerry Maguire," "Mission: Impossible"
3. John Travolta, "Michael," "Phenomenon," "Broken Arrow"
4. Sean Connery, "The Rock"
5. Denzel Washington, "The Preacher's Wife," "Courage Under Fire"
6. Robert De Niro, "Marvin's Room," "Sleepers," "The Fan"
7. Samuel L. Jackson, "The Long Kiss Goodnight," "A Time to Kill"
8. Robin Williams, "The Birdcage," "Jack"
9. Gary Sinise, "Ransom"
10. (tie) Kevin Costner, "Tin Cup"
10. (tie) Arnold Swarzenegger, "Jingle All the Way," "Eraser"

Male Newcomer

1. Matthew McConaughey, "A Time to Kill," "Larger Than Life," "Lone Star"
2. George Clooney, "One Fine Day," "From Dusk Till Dawn"
3. Nathan Lane, "The Birdcage"
4. Jackie Chan, "Supercop," "Rumble in the Bronx," "Jackie Chan's First Strike"
5. Tom Everett Scott, "That Thing You Do!"

Male Star of the Year



Mel Gibson

Mel Gibson kidnapped the most votes for his role in "Ransom," playing a powerful businessman who faces the most important negotiation of his life when his son is abducted. Next up, the multi-talented star will be seen opposite Julia Roberts in "Conspiracy Theory" as a cabby obsessed with conspiracy theories who finds himself embroiled in one.

Tom Cruise starred in two of the biggest movies of 1996's blockbuster-happy year garnering Cruise second place on BOXOFFICE's Barometer Poll—for the convoluted "Mission: Impossible" and the sports/love story, "Jerry Maguire" for which he won a golden globe. Cruise is currently in production with wife and co-star Nicole Kidman on "Eyes Wide Shut" from director Stanley Kubrick.

And John Travolta took third place for three hit movies this past year, "Michael," "Phenomenon" and "Broken Arrow." Coming soon from the prolific Travolta is "Mad City" opposite Dustin Hoffman, "Face Off," which reteams him with director John Woo ("Broken Arrow"), "She's De Lovely" and "Primary Colors."

1996 BY THE NUMBERS

Grosses, Critical Performance and Other Pertinent Data on the Year in Film

TITLE/MPAA DISTRIBUTOR 5 Excellent 4 Good 3 Fair 2 Poor 1 Very Poor	RUN TIME	GENRE	REVIEWED IN ISSUE	BOXOFFICE	VARIETY	H. REPORTER	L.A. TIMES	N.Y. TIMES	USA TODAY	AVERAGE	TOTAL BOXOFFICE $ *
Ace Ventura: When Nature Calls** **PG-13** (WB)	*92*	C	1-96	2	4	4	2	2	2	2.7	108.3
Across the Sea of Time** **G** (SC)	*40*	D	2-96	2						2.0	7.7
Adventures of Pinocchio **G** (NL)	*96*	F	10-96	3	3	3	3	2	3	2.8	15.0
Alaska **PG** (Col)	*105*	Adv	9-96	2	2	3	3			2.5	11.6
All Dogs Go To Heaven 2 **G** (MGM)	*84*	Ani	7-96	1	2	2	2	3		2.0	8.5
American Buffalo **R** (Gol)	*85*	D	11-96	2	2	2	2	2	2	2.0	0.5
The American President** **PG-13** (Col)	*112*	R C	1-96	3	3	4	3	3	3	3.2	59.9
The Arrival **PG-13** (Ori)	*111*	ThSF	7-96	3	2		3	3		2.8	14.0
The Associate **PG-13** (BV)	*114*	C	12-96	3	3	2	3	2	2	2.5	12.3
August **PG** (Gol)	*106*	D	7-96	2	2		3	2		2.3	0.1
Babe** **G** (Uni)	*91*	F	9-95	4	4	4	4	3	4	3.8	63.6
Balto **G** (Uni)	*70*	Ani	2-96	3	2	4	3		3	3.0	11.2
Barb Wire **R** (Gra)	*98*	Ac	7-96	2	2	2	2	2	1	1.7	3.6
Basquiat **R** (Mir)	*107*	D	9-96	3	3	3	2	2		2.6	2.6
Beautiful Girls **R** (Mir)	*115*	R C	3-96	4	2	3	2	3		2.8	10.4
Beavis and Butt-head Do America* **PG-13** (Par)	*80*	Ani	2-97	3	3	2				2.8	41.1
Bed of Roses **PG-13** (NL)	*87*	R	3-96	3	3	2	2		2	2.4	19.0
Before and After **PG-13** (BV)	*108*	D	5-96	2	2	2	2	3	2	2.2	8.6
Big Night* (Gol)	*110*	D	9-96	3			4	3		3.4	11.0
Bio-Dome **PG-13** (MGM)	*93*	C	3-96	2	1	2	1	1	1	1.3	13.1
The Birdcage **R** (UA)	*120*	C	5-96	4	4	4	2		3	3.4	123.6
Black Sheep **PG-13** (Par)	*85*	C	4-96	2	2	2	3	2	1	2.0	32.3
Bogus **PG** (WB)	*112*	F D	11-96	3	3	3	3	2	2	2.7	4.3
Bordello of Blood **R** (Uni)	*82*	Hor	10-96	2	2	3			1	2.0	5.6
Bottle Rocket **R** (Col)	*95*	C	3-96	3	3		4	3		3.3	0.4
Bound **R** (Gra)	*111*	Th	4-96	3	4	4	4	3	4	3.6	3.8
Boys **PG-13** (BV)	*87*	R D	7-96	1	2	2	2	2	2	1.8	0.5
Breaking the Waves* **R** (Oct)	*158*	D	7-96	2	3	5	2	4		3.2	0.9
Broken Arrow **R** (Fox)	*108*	Ac	4-96	3	3		3		3	3.0	70.6
Bulletproof **R** (Uni)	*85*	Ac C	11-96	2	1	2	1	2	1	1.5	20.6
The Cable Guy **PG-13** (Col)	*95*	Col	8-96	3	2	3	2		3	2.6	59.6
Carpool **PG** (WB)	*89*	C	11-96	2	2	2	2	1		1.8	3.3
Celestial Clockwork (Oct)	*85*	R C	7-96	3		4	3	3		3.2	0.3
Celtic Pride **PG-13** (BV)	*91*	C	7-96	1	3	3	2	2	3	2.3	9.2
Chain Reaction **PG-13** (Fox)	*107*	AcTh	10-96	2	2	2	2	2	2	2.0	20.6
The Chamber **R** (Uni)	*111*	D Th	12-96	3	3	2	2	3	3	2.7	14.3
Citizen Ruth (Mir)	*102*	C	11-96	4		2	3		3	3.0	0.1
City Hall **R** (Col)	*110*	D	3-96	2	3	3	2	2	3	2.5	20.2
City of Lost Children** **R** (SPC)	*113*	F	9-95	2	3	2				2.3	1.0
Cold Comfort Farm **PG** (Gra)	*98*	C	11-95	4	4	4	4	3	4	3.8	5.4
Courage Under Fire **R** (Fox)	*116*	D	9-96	2	4	3	4	3	5	3.5	58.1
The Craft **R** (Col)	*99*	Th	7-96	3	3	3	3	3	2	2.8	24.7
The Crow 2: City of Angels **R** (Mir)	*85*	AcSF	11-96	1	1	2	2	2		1.6	17.9
The Crucible* **PG-13** (Fox)	*115*	D	1-97	4	3	4	3	4		3.7	2.3
Curdled **R** (Mir)	*88*	C	11-96	3	2	3	1	3		2.4	
Cutthroat Island** **PG-13** (MGM)	*123*	AcAd	3-96	2	2	1	1		3	1.8	9.8
D3: The Mighty Ducks* **PG** (BV)	*104*	C	12-96	2	3	3		3		2.8	21.9
Daylight* **PG-13** (Uni)	*114*	Ac D	2-97	2	2	3	2	2	2	2.2	25.0
Dead Man Walking** **R** (Gra)	*122*	D	2-96	5	4	4	4	4	5	4.3	39.4
Dear God **PG** (Par)	*111*	C	1-97	3	3	3	2	2	1	2.3	6.9
Diabolique **R** (WB)	*145*	Sus	6-96	3	2	2	2	2	2	2.2	17.0
Don't Be A Menace... **R** (Mir)	*84*	C	3-96	3	2		2	3		2.5	19.7
Down Periscope **PG-13** (Fox)	*103*	C	5-96	2	3	2	2	2	2	2.2	25.6
Dracula: Dead & Loving It** **PG-13** (Col)	*89*	Sat	2-96	3	2	2	1		2	2.0	10.6
Dragonheart **PG-13** (Uni)	*103*	Ac F	7-96	2	3	3	2	2	2	2.3	51.1
Dunston Checks In **PG** (Fox)	*88*	C	3-96	2	4	3	3	2	3	2.8	9.4
Ed **PG** (Uni)	*95*	C	6-96	1	2	2	1		2	1.6	4.0
Eddie **PG-13** (BV)	*100*	C	8-96	3	2	2	2	3	3	2.5	30.3
Emma (Mir)	*111*	R C	8-96	4	4	3	3	3	5	3.7	22.1
The English Patient* **R** (Mir)	*159*	R	1-97	3	3	4	4	4	4	3.7	22.8
Eraser **R** (WB)	*116*	Ac	8-96	3	3	3	2	2	3	2.7	101.2
Escape from L.A. **R** (Par)	*101*	Ac	10-96	3	2	2	3	2	3	2.5	24.8
The Evening Star* **PG-13** (Par)	*129*	C D	2-97	2		3				2.5	5.3
Everyone Says I Love You* **R** (Mir)	*100*	MusC	1-97	3	4	4			3	3.5	0.1
Evita* **PG** (BV)	*136*	Mus	2-97	4	4	2				3.3	0.3
Executive Decision **R** (WB)	*133*	Ac	5-96	3	3	3	3	3	2	2.8	56.5
Extreme Measures **R** (Col)	*110*	Th	11-96	2	3	2	2	3		2.4	17.4
Eye for an Eye **R** (Par)	*100*	Sus	3-96	3	2	3	2	1	2	2.2	26.7
Faithful **R** (NL)	*91*	C	6-96	2	2	2	2	2		2.0	2.1
A Family Thing **PG-13** (UA)	*109*	D	6-96	3	2	3	3	3	3	2.8	10.0
The Fan **R** (Tri)	*113*	Th	10-96	3	1	2	1		2	1.8	18.4
Fargo **R** (Gra)	*98*	D	5-96	4	4	3	3		4	3.6	24.0

Key to story-types: (Ac) Action; (Ad) Adventure; (An) Animated; (C) Comedy; (D) Drama; (Doc) Documentary; (F) Fantasy; (Hor) Horror; (M) Musical; (My) Mystery; (Sat) Satire; (SF) Science Fiction; (Sus) Suspense; (Th) Thriller; (W) Western.

**** denotes films still in release at year's end.***
***** denotes films released in 1995 that continued grossing in 1996.***

** Total boxoffice, in millions, as of Dec. 31, 1996*

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TITLE/MPAA DISTRIBUTOR 5 Excellent 4 Good 3 Fair 2 Poor 1 Very Poor	RUN TIME	GENRE	REVIEWED IN ISSUE	BOXOFFICE	VARIETY	H. REPORTER	L.A. TIMES	N.Y. TIMES	USA TODAY	AVERAGE	TOTAL BOXOFFICE$*
Father of the Bride II** **PG** (BV)	*106*	C	1-96	3	3	3	3	3		3.1	76.5
Fear **R** (Uni)	*97*	Th	7-96	2	2	3	2	2	2	2.2	20.5
Feeling Minnesota **R** (FL)	*96*	C	11-96	2	2	2	2	2	1	1.8	3.0
First Kid* **PG** (BV)	*101*	C	11-96	3	3	3	2	3	2	2.7	26.1
The First Wives Club* **PG** (Par)	*105*	C	11-96	3	3	4	2	3	3	3.0	103.4
Fled **R** (MGM)	*98*	Ac	9-96	2	2	2	3	2	2	2.2	17.0
Flipper **PG** (Uni)	*96*	Adv	7-96	3	3	3	3	3	2	2.8	20.0
Flirting With Disaster **R** (Mir)	*88*	C	5-96	2	3	4	4	4	4	3.5	14.5
Fly Away Home* **PG** (Col)		D	10-96	3	4	4	4	4		3.8	24.3
Foxfire (Gol)	*101*	D	8-96	4	2	2		2		2.5	
The Frighteners **R** (Uni)	*109*	Th	9-96	2	2	3	3	2	2	2.3	16.5
From Dusk Till Dawn **R** (Mir)	*107*	Hor	3-96	2	3	2		2	2	2.2	25.7
The Funeral **R** (Oct)	*96*	D	10-96	2	3	4	3	4		3.2	1.0
Get On the Bus **R** (Col)	*121*	D	11-96	4	4	3	3	3		3.4	5.7
Get Shorty** **R** (MGM)	*105*	C	1-96	2	3	5	3		3	3.2	71.8
Getting Away With Murder **R** (Sav)	*90*	C	7-96	2	1		2	2		1.8	
The Ghost and The Darkness **R** (Par)	*117*	AcAd	12-96	3	3	3	2	4	2	2.8	37.7
Ghosts of Mississippi* **PG-13** (Col)	*123*	D	2-97	2	2	2				2.0	0.5
Girl 6 **R** (Fox)	*107*	C	6-96	2	2	3	2	3	2	2.2	4.9
Girls Town (Oct)		D	4-96	2			4	3		2.0	0.4
The Glimmer Man **R** (WB)	*91*	Ac	12-96	3	2	3	2	2		2.4	19.8
GoldenEye** **PG-13** (UA)	*130*	Ac	1-96	3	4	3	3	2	4	3.2	106.0
Grace of My Heart (Gra)		D	9-96	4	3	3	3	3		3.2	0.5
The Great White Hype **R** (Fox)	*85*	C	7-96	2	3	3	2	3	2	2.5	11.4
Grumpier Old Men** **PG-13** (WB)	*101*	C	2-96	3	4	3	3		2	3.0	71.4
Hamlet* **PG-13** (Col)	*242*	D	2-97	4	4	4				4.0	0.1
Happy Gilmore **PG-13** (BV)	*96*	D	5-96	2	2	3		2	3	2.4	38.6
Harriet the Spy **PG** (Par)	*97*	Adv	9-96	2	3	3	3	3		2.8	26.2
Heat** **R** (WB)	*172*	Ac D	2-96	4	4	3	4	2	5	3.7	67.3
Heaven's Prisoners **R** (NL)	*131*	D	6-96	3	2	3	2	2	2	2.3	4.8
Hellraiser 4: Bloodline **R** (Mir)	*101*	Hor	5-96	1	1	1	2			1.2	9.3
High School High* **PG-13** (TS)	*86*	C	12-96	3	2	2	2	3	2	2.8	20.7
Homeward Bound II **G** (BV)	*88*	D	5-96	2	3	3	2		3	2.6	32.7
The Horseman on the Roof **R** (Mir)	*118*	D	7-96	4	4	4	4	4		4.0	1.3
House Arrest **PG** (MGM)	*107*	C	7-96	1	2	3				2.0	6.9
The Hunchback of Notre Dame* **G** (BV)	*88*	Ani	8-96	3	3	3	3	2	5	3.2	99.8
I Shot Andy Warhol **R** (Gol)	*100*	D	4-96	4	4	4	4	4	4	4.0	1.2
If Lucy Fell **R** (Tri)	*93*	R C	3-96	2	3	3	2		3	2.6	2.2
Independence Day **PG-13** (Fox)	*143*	AcSF	9-96	2	3	4	3	4		3.2	306.1
The Island of Dr. Moreau **PG-13** (NL)	*95*	SFHr	11-96	2	1	3	1	1		1.6	26.9
It Takes Two** **PG** (WB)	*101*	C	1-96	2	2	3	3		2	2.4	19.4
It's My Party **R** (UA)	*109*	D	4-96	1			4	3		3.0	0.4
Jack and Sarah **R** (Gra)	*110*	R C	2-96	4		4	3	3	3	3.4	0.1
Jack* **PG-13** (BV)	*111*	CD	10-96	2	2	2	2	2	2	2.0	58.5
James & the Giant Peach **PG** (BV)	*80*	Ani	6-96	3	4	3	2	3	4	3.2	28.9
Jane Eyre **PG** (Mir)	*110*	R D	5-96	3	3	2	2	2	2	2.3	5.2
Jerry Maguire* **R** (TS)	*138*	D	2-97	4	4	2	3		4	3.4	60.4
Jingle All the Way* **PG** (Fox)	*89*	C	2-97	3	2	3	2	2	3	2.5	53.2
Joe's Apartment **PG-13** (WB)	*80*	C	10-96	1	3	3	1	2	1	1.8	4.6
Jude **R** (Gra)	*123*	D	8-96	3	3	4	3	2	2	2.8	0.3
Jumanji** **PG** (Tri)	*104*	Ad F	2-96	3	2	3	2	3	4	3.0	100.1

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The Juror **R** (Col)	*120*	Th	4-96	2	2	2	3	2	1	2.0	22.0
Kansas City **R** (FL)	*116*	D	7-96	3	3	2	3		4	3.0	1.2
Kazaam **PG** (BV)	*95*	AdvF	9-96	2	2	3	2	2		2.2	18.7
Kids in the Hall: Brain Candy **R** (Par)	*90*	C	6-96	3	4	3	3	2	3	3.0	2.6
Kingpin **PG-13** (MGM)	*113*	C	10-96	1	3	3	3	1	3	2.3	24.9
Larger Than Life **PG** (UA)	*94*	C	12-96	3	2	2		2	2	2.2	8.3
Last Dance **R** (BV)	*108*	D	7-96	2	2	2	2	2	2	2.0	5.7
Last Man Standing **R** (NL)	*102*	AcTh	11-96	3	2	3	2	2	2	2.3	18.1
The Last Supper (SPC)	*94*	Sat	4-96	3		2	2	2		2.3	0.3
Lawnmower Man II **PG-13** (NL)	*90*	SFTh	3-96	1	2		2	2		1.8	1.6
Leaving Las Vegas** **R** (UA)	*112*	D	11-95	4	3	3	4	3	3	3.3	32.0
Little Indian, Big City **PG** (BV)	*90*	C	5-96	3		2		1	3	2.3	0.7
Loaded (Mir)	*95*	D	3-96	3		2	3	2		2.5	
Lone Star **R** (SPC)	*134*	D	7-96	4	4		4	5	3	4.0	12.1
The Long Kiss Goodnight* **R** (NL)	*120*	Ac	12-96	3	3	3	3	3	2	2.8	32.7
Looking for Richard **PG-13** (Fox)	*113*	Doc	7-96	4		2	2	4	3	3.0	1.3
Losing Chase **R** (CFP)	*94*	D	2-97	2		3	3	3		2.8	0.1
Lover's Knot **R** (Leg)	*86*	R C	9-96	2	2	2	2			2.0	
Mad Dog Time **R** (UA)	*93*	C	1-97	3	1	2	3			2.3	
Manny and Lo **R** (SPC)	*95*	D	7-96	2		2	3	3		2.5	0.4
Mars Attacks!* **PG-13** (WB)	*104*	C	2-97	3	3	4	3		3	3.2	25.8
Marvin's Room* **PG-13** (Mir)	*97*	D	2-97	3	3	4				3.3	0.2
Mary Reilly **R** (Tri)	*118*	Th	5-96	2	2	2	2	2	2	2.0	5.6
Matilda **PG** (Tri)	*100*	C F	10-96	4	4	4	2	3	3	3.3	32.9
Maximum Risk **R** (Col)	*102*	AcTh	11-96	3	2	2	3	3	3	2.7	14.0
Michael Collins **R** (WB)	*132*	D	10-96	4	3	4	4	3	2	3.3	10.8
Michael* **PG** (NL)	*105*	R C	2-97	3						3.0	27.6
Microcosmos* (Mir)	*74*	Doc	10-96	3	4	3	4			3.5	1.1
Mirror Has Two Faces* **PG-13** (TS)	*126*	R C	1-97	2	2	4	2	3	3	2.6	40.4
Mission: Impossible **PG-13** (Par)	*112*	Ac	7-96	3	3	2	2	3		2.6	180.8
Moll Flanders **PG-13** (MGM)	*122*	D	7-96	3	4	3	3	2	2	2.8	3.4
Mother Night **R** (FL)	*114*	D	12-96	4			3	3		3.3	0.3
Mother* **PG-13** (Par)	*103*	C	11-96	4	4	4				4.0	0.2
Mr. Holland's Opus** **PG** (BV)	*143*	D	2-96	4	3	4	3	3		3.4	82.5
Mr. Wrong **PG-13** (BV)	*96*	C	5-96	2	4	2	3	2		2.6	12.6
Mrs. Winterbourne **PG-13** (TS)	*103*	R C	6-96	2	2	2	2	2	2	2.0	10.1
Mulholland Falls **R** (MGM)	*107*	D	7-96	1	2	2	2	3	2	2.2	11.4
Multiplicity **PG-13** (Col)	*112*	C	9-96	3	4	3	3	2		3.3	20.1
Muppet Treasure Island **G** (BV)	*100*	Mus	4-96	4	3	4	4	3	3	3.5	34.3
My Fellow Americans* **PG-13** (WB)	*101*	C	2-97	3	3	3				3.0	10.2
Mystery Science Theatre 3000 **PG-13** (Gra)	*89*	C	5-96	3	3	3	3	2	3	2.8	0.9
Nelly & Monsieur Arnaud **Unrtd** (Art)	*106*	D	7-96	3		4	4	3		3.5	
Nixon** **R** (BV)	*190*	D	2-96	5	3	4	3		4	3.8	13.3
Nueba Yol **Unrtd** (Kit)	*104*	D	7-96	3	3	3		3		3.0	1.2
The Nutty Professor **PG-13** (Uni)	*96*	C	9-96	3	4	4	3	3	4	3.5	128.8
101 Dalmatians* **G** (BV)	*103*	C	2-97	3	3	3	2	2		2.6	104.1
One Fine Day* **PG** (Fox)	*109*	R C	2-97	3	3	4				3.2	19.4
Original Gangsters **R** (Ori)	*99*	Ac D	7-96	2	3	3	3	2		2.6	3.3
Othello** **R** (Col)	*125*	D	2-96	3	3	4	4	4		3.6	2.5
The Pallbearer **PG-13** (Mir)	*104*	C	6-96	4	3	3	3	2	3	3.0	5.6

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The People Vs. Larry Flynt* R (Col)	*126*	D	2-97	3						3.0	0 6
Persuasion** PG (SPC)	*103*	R D	11-95	4	4	5	5	4	4	4.3	4.9
The Phantom PG (Par)	*102*	Adv	7-96	3	3	3	3	2	2	2.7	17.0
Phat Beach R (Ori)	*90*	C	10-96	2	2	2	2	2		2.0	1.3
Phenomenon* PG (BV)	*117*	D	9-96	4	2	4	2	2		2.8	104.5
Portrait of a Lady* (Gra)	*142*	D	11-96	3	3					3.0	0.1
The Preacher's Wife* PG (BV)	*124*	RC	2-97	3	3	3	3		3	3.0	27.9
Primal Fear R (Par)	*130*	D	5-96	3		3	3	3		3.0	56.0
The Proprietor R (FL)	*113*	D	12-96	3	2	3	3	2		2.6	
The Quest PG-13 (Uni)	*95*	Ac	7-96	3	3	3	3	2	2	2.7	20.8
Race the Sun PG (TS)	*90*	D	5-96	2	2	2	2	3		2.2	1.7
Ransom* R (BV)	*121*	Th	1-97	3	4	4	3	4	3	3.5	124.6
Restoration** R (Mir)	*118*	D	2-96	3	3	4	3	3	2	3.0	3.8
The Rich Man's Wife R (BV)	*92*	Th	11-96	2	2	2	1	2	1	1 7	8.4
Richard III** R (UA)	*104*	D	2-96	4	4	2	5	3	2	3.3	2.4
Ridicule* R (Mir)	*102*	CD	8-96	4	4	4	4	3		3.8	0.9
The Rock R (BV)	*137*	Ac	8-96	3	4	3	2	3	2	2.8	133.6
Romeo & Juliet* PG-13 (Fox)	*120*	D	1-97	3	3	3	3	2	3	2.8	43.8
Rumble in the Bronx R (NL)	*87*	Ac	1-96	3		4	3	2		3.0	32.3
Sabrina** PG (Par)	*127*	R C	2-96	3	2	4	2	3	4	3.0	53.5
Scream* R (Mir)	*111*	HorC	2-97	3	2					2.5	21.3
Screamers** R (Tph)	*105*	SF	1-96	2		2	2		2	2.0	5.7
Search for One-Eye Jimmy R (Nor)	*82*	C	8-96	3	2	2		2		2.3	
The Secret Agent R	*95*	D	11-96	1	2	2	3	2		2.0	
Secrets and Lies* R (Oct)	*142*	D	7-96	4	4	4	4	4		4.0	5.3
Sense and Sensibility** PG (Col)	*136*	R C	2-96	5	4	4	3	4	4	4.0	42.7
Set It Off* R (NL)	*121*	Ac D	1-97	3	3	2	3	2		2.6	34.2
Seven** R (NL)	*125*	Th	11-95	3	4	3	3		3	3.2	100.1
Sgt. Bilko PG (Uni)	*93*	C	6-96	3	2	2	3	3		2.6	30.1
She's the One R (FS)	*96*	R D	10-96	3	4	3	2	3		3.0	9.4
Shine* (FL)	*104*	D	4-96	5	5	4	4	3	3	4.0	3.5
Sleepers* R (WB)	*146*	D	12-96	3	4	2	2	2	3	2.7	52.4
Solo PG-13 (Tri)	*94*	SF	11-96	2	3	2	2	2		2.2	4.9
Some Mother's Son* (SPC)	*112*	D	8-96	4	2	2				2.6	0.1
Space Jam* PG (WB)	*88*	F C	1-97	3	3	3	3	3	3	3.0	81.9
The Spitfire Grill (Col)	*117*	D	4-96	4			3	3		3.7	12.6
Spy Hard PG-13 (BV)	*78*	C	7-96	2	2	2	2	2	2	2.0	26.7
The Star Maker R (Mir)	*108*	D	5-96	2	2	2	3			2.3	0.2
Star Trek: First Contact* PG-13 (Par)	*110*	SF	2-97	3	4	4	4	3	3	3.3	85.1
Stealing Beauty R (FS)	*116*	D	7-96	3	4	3	3	3	4	3.3	4 4
Striptease R (Col)	*114*	C D	9-96	2	3	2	2	3	2	2.3	32.7
The Stupids PG (NL)	*90*	C	11-96	1	2	1		1		1.2	2.4
The Substitute R (Ori)	*114*	Ac	7-96	2	3		3	2		2.5	14.7
Sudden Death R (Uni)	*110*	Ac	2-96	3	3	2	3		3	2.8	20.2
Sunset Park R (TS)	*100*	C	7-96	1	2	2	2	2		1.8	10.1
Supercop R (Mir)	*88*	Ac	10-96	4	3	3	3	3	3	3.2	16.2
Surviving Picasso R (WB)	*124*	D	11-96	3	4	2	3	3		3.0	2.0
Swingers* R (Mir)	*96*	C	11-96	3	3	4	3	3	3	3.2	3.9
That Thing You Do!* PG (Fox)	*105*	D	11-96	3	4	3	3	3	3	3.2	25.5
A Thin Line Between Love and Hate R (NL)	*107*	C Th	6-96	3	2	3	2	2		2.4	34.9
Thinner R (Par)	*92*	Hor	1-97	1	2	2	3	3		2.2	14.8
A Time to Kill R (WB)	*142*	D	9-96	2	4	4	2	3		3.0	108.7
Tin Cup R (WB1)	*134*	R C	10-96	2	3	3	2	3	3	2.8	53.9
To Gillian on Her 37th Birthday R (Tri)	*105*	D	10-96	2	2	3	2	2	2	2.2	4 1
Tom and Huck** PG (BV)	*93*	Ad	2-96	2	2	2	2		2	2.0	23.8
Toy Story** G (BV)	*80*	Ani	2-96	4	4	5	4			4.3	191.4
Trainspotting R (Mir)	*93*	D	7-96	4	4	3	4	3		3.6	16.5
Trees Lounge R (Ori)	*89*	D	10-96	2	3	3		4		3.0	0.6
The Trigger Effect R (Gra)	*98*	Th	9-96	2	2	2	2	3		2.2	3.5
The Truth About Cats & Dogs PG-13 (Fox)	*100*	R C	6-96	3	3	3	3	3		3 0	32.6
Twelfth Night PG (FL)	*125*	C	11-96	3	2	3	2	3	3	2.7	0.5
12 Monkeys** R (Uni)	*128*	SF	2-96	4	2	2	3	3		2.8	57.1
Twister PG-13 (WB)	*113*	Th	7-96	2	3	3	3	3	4	3.0	241.6
2 Days in the Valley R (MGM)	*105*	C D	11-96	2	3	2	3	3		2.6	11.1
Two If By Sea R (WB)	*95*	R C	3-96	2	2		2	2		2.0	10.5
Two Much PG-13 (BV)	*115*	R C	5-96	2	3	3	2	2		2.4	1.0
Unforgettable R (MGM)	*118*	Th	5-96	2	2			3	3	2.5	2.5
Unhook the Stars R (Mir)	*105*	D	12-96	3	4	4	3	2	3	3.2	
Up Close & Personal PG-13 (BV)		R D	5-96	2	3	2	3	3	3	2.7	50.9
A Very Brady Sequel PG-13 (Par)	*88*	C	10-96	3	3	3	3	3		3.0	21.4
The Visitors R (Mir)	*106*	C	8-96	4	3	2	4	2		3.3	0.1
Waiting to Exhale** R (Fox)	*124*	C D	2-96	3	4	4	3		3	3.4	66.9
Walking and Talking (Mir)	*90*	D	4-96	4	3	4		3	3	3.6	1.2
Welcome to the Dollhouse (SPC)	*87*	D	4-96	4	4	4	4	4	4	4.0	4.1
White Squall PG-13 (BV)	*128*	D	4-96	2		4	2	2	3	2.6	10.2
The Whole Wide World PG (SC)	*111*	D	11-96	4		4				4.0	0.1

1996 TOTAL BOXOFFICE: $5.9 BILLION●
TOP STUDIO TAKE:
BUENA VISTA $1.2 BILLION●

TOP 20 GROSSERS (IN MILLIONS):

1. Independence Day ($306.1)
2. Twister ($241.6)
3. Mission: Impossible ($180.8)
4. The Rock ($133.6)
5. The Nutty Professor ($128.8)
6. Ransom ★ ($124.6)
7. The Birdcage ($123.6)
8. A Time To Kill ($108.7)
9. Phenomenon ★ ($104.5)
10. 101 Dalmatians ★ ($104.1)
11. The First Wives Club ★ ($103.4)
12. Eraser ($101.2)
13. Hunchback of Notre Dame ★ ($99.8)
14. Star Trek: First Contact ★ ($85.1)
15. Space Jam ★ ($81.9)
16. Broken Arrow ($70.6)
17. Jerry Maguire ★ ($60.4)
18. The Cable Guy ($59.6)
19. Jack ★ ($58.5)
20. Courage Under Fire ($58.1)

(★= FILM STILL IN RELEASE AT YEAR'S END)

(●= BOXOFFICE RECORD)

DATELINE 1996

A Look Back at the Year's Top News Stories

JANUARY

18TH ANNUAL SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL CHOOSES BEST INDIES

Todd Solondz's "Welcome to the Dollhouse" and the Jeanne Jordon - Steven Ascher documentary "Troublesome Creek: A Midwestern" earned Grand Jury prizes at the 1996 Sundance Film Festival, with "Troublesome" additionally awarded "Best Documentary." "The Spitfire Grill" won "Best Dramatic Feature" and was promptly acquired by Castle Rock for $10 million—a record buy for an indie production screened at the Fest. "Girls Town" (which October Films snagged) won a filmmakers' trophy and a "special recognition" award for the collaborative nature of its improvisational screenplay. Awards were also given to actress Lili Taylor ("I Shot Andy Warhol"), director of photography Rob Sweeney ("Color of a Brisk and Leaping Day"), Stanley Tucci and Joseph Tropiano for scripting "Big Night" (which Tucci directed with Campbell Scott), directors Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman for "The Celluloid Closet," Leon Gast for "When We Were Kings," and Cuban filmmaker Fernando Perez for "Madagascar."

The 1996 Sundance Festival was marred by much-talked-about controversy concerning two of the festival's most popular projects. Indie Trimark Pictures cried foul over the "The Spitfire Grill" deal, claiming that it had a verbal agreement in place to distribute that title. In an even more notorious incident, Miramax topper Harvey Weinstein confronted Jonathan Taplin, a producer of the film "Shine," in a public restaurant over the decision to distribute that title through Fine Line Features.

FEBRUARY

ROCCO BREAKS DISTRIBUTION'S GLASS CEILING

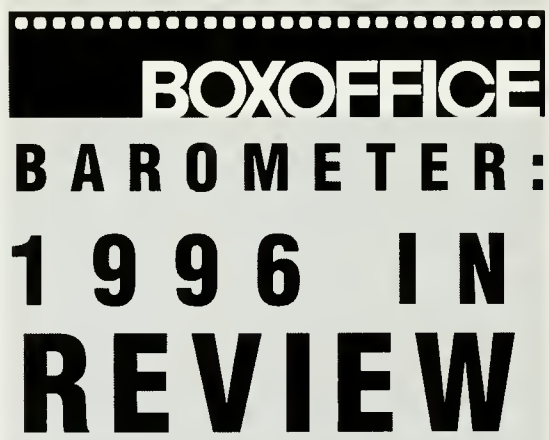
In what was hailed as a major breakthrough for women in the film industry, Universal Pictures named Nikki Rocco president of distribution. Rocco, a 29-year veteran in a variety of capacities at Universal, took over from 44-year distribution veteran and industry legend Fred Mound, who remains involved with Universal distribution in an advisory capacity. The move made Rocco the first female head of distribution for a major studio in Hollywood history.

METROMEDIA GRABS GOLDWYN

Is a new mini-major in the works? After seven months of speculation about its future, debt-ridden Samuel Goldwyn Company agreed to a $119 million acquisition by John Kluge's Metromedia Group. Owned by billionaire John Kluge, Metromedia was formed in 1995 in a four-way merger with Orion Pictures and three other companies. The Metromedia Goldwyn grab took some industry-watchers by surprise, since it followed protracted negotiations with both Ted Turner and Polygram, each of which were given the inside track on a Goldwyn buy-out at various times. Highlights of the deal included a stock swap: Metromedia offered $5 of its stock per Goldwyn share, and took over the ailing indie's $77 million debt. Goldwyn Chairman Samuel Goldwyn was named chairman of the new Metromedia subsidiary, which has kept the Goldwyn name, but with reduced authority.

MARCH

BOXOFFICE REVAMPS ORIGINAL FILM TRADE WEBSITE



BOXOFFICE MAGAZINE, the oldest film trade publication and the first to embrace the information revolution with the 1994 launch of the original film trade website BOXOFFICE ONLINE, renewed its commitment to stay at the leading edge of new technologies with the launch of a new and improved online edition. The site, which carries a variety of informational databases gleaned from the pages of BOXOFFICE, features the latest and advance film reviews; more than a year's worth of BOXOFFICE cover stories, sneak previews and industry-related articles; plus the complete BOXOFFICE BUYER'S DIRECTORY and additional specialized features, as well as search functions for the easy location of specific pieces of information.

Internet users can access BOXOFFICE ONLINE at: http://www.boxoff.com.

SHOWEST NAMES NEW CHAIRMAN

ShoWest chairman Tim Warner stepped down from his post in 1996 and a new chairman took the helm. Daniel Wheatcroft, who exited his position as vice president of marketing at Universal Pictures/MCA Inc., took over the ShoWest chairmanship from Warner after a brief apprenticeship lasting through the end of Warner's last contract with NATO/ShoWest, which expired on April 15, 1996.

POLLOCK OUT AT MCA

In an era of executive shuffles and studio sales, MCA vice chairman Tom Pollock was considered by many to be an anchor in the entertainment world storm. His 10 years at MCA came to a close when he resigned in March. He had survived the sale of MCA to Seagram Co., but published reports had already begun to suggest that his authority was slowly eroding under new MCA president Ron Meyer and Edgar Bronfman Jr., CEO of MCA parent company Seagram.

FIRST QUARTER B.O. BONANZA

Leap day gave the first three months of 1996 an extra bonus playdate, but the real prize came from the studios, whose larger release slates created boxoffice dividends for exhibitors. February was a boom month by any standard, with a record $389 million dollar take, up a whopping 33 percent from 1995. Buena Vista led the pack with an $88.7 million cut of the pie. March came in like a lion, keeping up the record pace on the way to a highly anticipated summer play period which had exhibitors hopeful thanks to a strong field of summer titles and a greater number of releases scheduled throughout the summer months. According to BOXOFFICE MAGAZINE in a March prediction that proved blessedly true, "At this pace, 1996 looks to be *the* record breaking exhibition year to beat."

APRIL

KATZENBERG FILES BREACH OF CONTRACT SUIT AGAINST DISNEY

Jeffrey Katzenberg, the "K" of Dreamworks SKG, filed suit against his former employer, the Walt Disney Company, for breach of contract. In his suit, Katzenberg claimed he is still owed his share of studio profits—some $250 million in bonus incentives for projects initiated during his Disney tenure. The suit stated that during his 10 years at Disney, Katzenberg was instrumental in the studio's tremendous profit growth. The Katzenberg suit also called for a court order that would require Disney to open their financial books, a move that would prove more than interesting to everyone in Hollywood if it ever came to pass.

Katzenberg left Disney during a bitter feud with former friend and Disney chairman Michael Eisner. But it's a small world after all: soon after Dreamworks entered into a lucrative co-venture with Capital Cities/ABC to the tune of $200 million, Disney paid $19 billion to acquire CapCities/ABC, putting Eisner and Katzenberg back in business together.

MAY

A FOXY BILLION-DOLLAR DEAL

In what was believed to be the biggest single film financing deal ever, Citicorp put together a $1 billion package for News Corp.'s 20th Century Fox unit. The money was designated to cover the negative costs of the studio's three-year expanded production slate, which Fox projected would see production rise from 12 films annually to 18-25. Most of the money was raised via commercial paper markets, where big firms can raise large amounts of cash with low interest rates. The rest came from equity investors whose returns will depend on film performance.

The deal marked Fox's first outside film financing since the '80s, when tax shelter investment partnerships died out. Since then, the only major studio to raise film financing on the public market has been Walt Disney Co., which had only a fair amount of success with its Touchwood deals. Fox's deal included a bigger pool of films, thereby lowering the overall risk. Financial experts predicted the Fox financing deal could mark the beginning of a trend back toward bank financing as financial institutions become more sophisticated about film risks and movie financing adventures.

KATZ & MOUSE GAME CONTINUES

Disney denied that Jeffrey Katzenberg, who filed a $250 million suit against former employer Walt Disney Co. for breach of contract, was entitled to anything at all. Disney claimed to have "exceeded its contractual obligations" in its severance payments to Katzenberg, and said it would pay nothing more to Katzenberg, who chaired Walt Disney Studios for 10 years before quitting in 1994.

Although both Katzenberg's 1984 and 1988 contracts stipulated "incentive" bonuses amounting to 2 percent of Disney's profits from product put into production during his tenure, Disney claimed that when Katzenberg quit he enacted a clause from his 1988 contract that meant he would not receive any bonus based on the future performance of film and TV programming produced while he was chairman.

Disney also asserted that Katzenberg was not entitled to sue the studio because his contract stipulated that bonus disputes are subject to mandatory arbitration. Bert Fields, Katzenberg's attorney, called Disney's assertions "absurd" and said Katzenberg would seek redress in court. According to Katzenberg's calculations, Disney made more than $12.5 billion in profits during his tenure, making his bonus a healthy $250 million.

JUNE

DISNEY: SAY GOOD-BYE TO HOLLYWOOD

Walt Disney Studios made good on a two-year plan to cut back production by announcing that its Hollywood Pictures arm would stop all development and production activities and remain in use only as a distribution unit servicing Simpson-Bruckheimer and Scott Free films. The move left Disney with three filmmaking entities: Touchstone Pictures and Walt Disney Films, plus Miramax Films, operated as a standalone entity, but with financial backing from Disney. Touchstone planned to continue to produce more star-driven efforts like "Evita" and "The Rock" while the Walt Disney banner remained committed to an output of six to 10 family films a year, including at least one or two "event" pics such as the live-action version of "101 Dalmatians."

U.S. AND CHINA SEE EYE TO EYE ON TRADE WAR

Acting U.S. Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky cut an 11th-hour deal with China and averted a full-blown trade war between the two countries. As a result of the talks, the U.S. canceled $2 billion in impending trade sanctions against China, which in turn called off counter-sanctions.

The deal called for the immediate closure of 15 CD factories and six distribution centers in China believed to be operating in violation of international copyright standards. Beijing also agreed to destroy much of the equipment used to make illegal products, and to strengthen border and customs procedures on copyrighted goods. A special seven-month crackdown was announced for China's Guangdong province, a hotbed of film, video and music piracy. According to the terms of the deal, 15 "legitimate" factories were to remain open, but would face heavy restrictions.

JULY

SONY SWITCHES HEADS

Sony Pictures Entertainment didn't have any 1996 summer blockbusters, instead distributing "The Cable Guy," "Striptease" and "Multiplicity." After a summer of such disappointments, it came as no surprise when a whole lot of shaking started going on at the Japanese-held company. First, TriStar president Mark Platt stepped down and was quickly replaced by Robert Cooper, former head of HBO Pictures. Cooper was already well-respected within the Hollywood creative community for getting feature-film quality for a fraction of a feature budget in topical and controversial HBO cable films produced on his watch.

Head of marketing Sid Ganis then left his post for a production deal with the studio. Ganis exited after the unusual rollout of "The Cable Guy" turned out to be a big disappointment. In order to release the Jim Carrey comedy on 4,300 screens—the largest ever Columbia/TriStar release—Sony had to ignore the standard exhibition industry practice of "clearances" (i.e. voluntary "no book" zones between theatres showing the same title). Against the better judgment of the rest of the industry, Columbia booked the film in theatres close to one another in a gamble that annoyed the exhibition industry and one which failed to pay off.

Ganis was replaced by Robert Levin, former head of marketing for Buena Vista and at Savoy Pictures.

Following the Ganis departure, Columbia Pictures president Lisa Henson chose to leave her post and join forces with Janet Yang, former president of Oliver Stone's Ixtlan Corp. to form a production company that immediately landed a three year, first look deal at (where else?) Sony.

LION LANDS IN FAMILIAR HANDS

The third time's the charm. At least that's what people were hoping when billionaire investor Kirk Kerkorian bought MGM for the third time after the studio had been "in play" for some months. The $1.3 billion winning bid for the Lion went to a partnership group that included Kerkorian, Australia-based Seven Network and MGM's own in-house management group, led by current MGM chair Frank Mancuso. Kerkorian went in for approximately $650 million and purchased a controlling interest in the board, but said that MGM executives would have firm operational control. As part of his new deal, Mancuso was granted a seat on the MGM board. Kerkorian was to control three seats and Seven another three.

Kerkorian first acquired MGM in 1969 but spent most of the '70s selling off the studio's assets, including the famous backlot in Culver City. On Kerkorian's first watch, MGM even auctioned off props and other property from the company's golden era to raise cash. Kerkorian then sold off MGM to Ted Turner in 1986, then bought back everything but the famous film library, which Turner turned into a goldmine for his TBS and TNT cable networks.

In 1990, Kerkorian sold the studio, ironically enough for $1.3 billion, to a group led by Italian businessmen Giancarlo Parretti and Florio Fiorini. Almost all of the money for the Parretti purchase was financed by state-owned French bank Credit Lyonnaise. Credit Lyonnaise foreclosed within a year and then sued Kerkorian for misrepresentation. Kerkorian settled out of court.

FTC APPROVES TW-TBS MERGER

After months of speculation, federal regulators finally gave the go-ahead to Time Warner Inc.'s $7.5 billion purchase of Turner Broadcasting System Inc. The FTC approval came after both companies agreed to modify terms of their original deal. Restrictions included limits on contract lengths and restrictions on bundling the most popular TW and Turner programs into cable system packages. The proposal also forbade Time Warner from discriminating against competitors in the cable distribution business.

POLYGRAM LOOKS FOR A PIPELINE

After losing out on the buyout of MGM despite making its own $1.3 billion bid, Netherlands-based PolyGram continued to make plans to have a U.S. distribution unit ready to go by 1997. Meanwhile, Polygram was reportedly still shopping for U.S. production and distribution entities. Before MGM went on the block, PolyGram was reported to be interested in buying Castle Rock. The Dutch company was also said to have expressed an interest in New Line if and when Time Warner decided to spin off that unit.

MID-SUMMER BOXOFFICE GETS THE GOLD, SILVER AND BRONZE

Medals should have been bestowed all around for record breaking early and mid-summer boxoffice, which was led by the out-of-this-world success of Fox's "Independence Day" as it broke almost every record in the book, including fastest to $100 million (9 days) and then $200 million (21 days), and was the linchpin in a July 4 weekend that turned out to be the biggest boxoffice weekend ever at $198 million. Other boxoffice hits of early summer included "Twister," "Mission: Impossible," "The Rock" and "The Nutty Professor."

AUGUST

MGM GETS MO' MONEY

The Australian Seven Network, one of the new owners of MGM, sank an extra $350 million into the studio in order to keep hit films like "GoldenEye" and "The Birdcage" coming down the production pipe. Reportedly, this gave MGM $750 million in production budget leeway, enough dollars to keep the coffers full until MGM goes public in an estimated three to five years.

Studio executives also confirmed that MGM is looking to acquire smaller studios to increase the size of its own library, most of which was sold off to Ted Turner in 1986.

DISNEY MOVES UP HEAD COOK

Former president of Buena Vista Pictures Distribution and Worldwide Marketing, Richard Cook was appointed chairman of the Walt Disney Motion Picture Group. Cook continued to answer directly to Joe Roth, chairman of Walt Disney Studios, with Roth and Cook acting as co-heads of production, and Cook directly responsible for domestic and international theatrical marketing and distribution and feature film acquisitions. Under Cook's tutelage as president of Buena Vista Distribution, Disney's boxoffice hits flourished. In 1994 and 1995, Buena Vista set new industry records with consecutive annual boxoffice grosses in excess of $1 billion.

TW-TBS MERGER UPDATE

Time Warner Inc. and Turner Broadcasting System Inc. signed a consent order with the Federal Trade Commission staff giving the go-ahead for the FTC to vote on the proposed merger. TBS and Time Warner had to sign amended merger agreements in order to answer the FTC's concerns. Federal regulators had finally given preliminary approval in June, so there would be little delay moving ahead with a deal to create the largest media and entertainment company in the world.

In related news, TBS reported second-quarter earnings were down 48 percent due to poor performance by Castle Rock Entertainment, which resulted in write-offs of approximately $28 million. Castle Rock, which has been looking for another home recently, produced "Striptease" and "City Hall," among other disappointing 1996 boxoffice efforts.

BOXOFFICE SPEND TRENDS

According to the tenth annual Communications Industry Forecast released by investment bankers Veronis, Suhler & Associates Inc., the communications industry (which includes films, television, digital media, etc.) will post a 7 percent growth over the next five years. The biggest growth in consumer spending will take place in interactive digital media (IDM), which the Forecast predicts will register a growth by the year 2000 of 19.4 percent.

Total spending on filmed entertainment (which includes both features and TV) is expected to rise from $31.4 billion in 1995 to $41.1 billion in 2000. Spending on boxoffice admissions is expected to increase only at a 2.0 percent rate (well below television growth at an expected 7.7 percent). By the millennium, boxoffice spending is expected to total $6.1 billion a year vs. $5.5 billion in 1995.

SEPTEMBER

CANTON OUT AT TRISTAR

The shake up continued at Sony Pictures when Mark Canton, chairman of the Columbia TriStar Motion Picture companies, resigned. Rumors ran rampant that he would be replaced by William Morris Agency head Arnold Rifkin, and Rifkin jetted to New York to meet with Sony heads Alan Levine and Sony Corp. president Nobuyuki Idei, but things didn't go his way, so Rifkin immediately signed a long-term agreement at William Morris, where he represents the likes of Sylvester Stallone, Whoopi Goldberg, Geena Davis, Charlie Sheen and Joe Eszterhas.

There were rumors that Canton was angered by the way Levine handled his exit, but he was probably happy with his final paycheck. With two years left on his contract, insiders predicted Canton would get at least $10-12 million for walking away.

TIME WARNER-TBS FINAL

The Time Warner-TBS merger finally arrived. But of course, it didn't come without controversy. On the day final approval came from the Federal Trade Commission (by a 3-2 vote) for the merger, both companies issued an internal memo that acknowledged there would be layoffs and cutbacks in "overlap" areas. The first casualty was Turner Entertainment group president Scott Sassa, who resigned. Most of the cutbacks were to come from TBS units.

TBS chairman Ted Turner was made vice chairman of the new company, and was placed in charge of all cable programming including HBO. Speculation continued that the new merged company would sell off TBS' New Line Cinema. The sale of Castle Rock (also a TBS entity) has also continued to be the subject of much speculation. Turner was said to be balking at selling the profitable New Line, but New Line chairman Robert Shaye was said to not be keen on reporting to Warner Bros. co-chairmen Bob Daly and Terry Semel. So Time Warner retained the Wall Street firm Furman Selz to advise it on strategic alternatives that would allow Shaye a certain independence while still allowing TW to retain value in the company.

WARNER BROS.' FRIEDMAN IN FOR PARAMOUNT'S LONDON

Barry London resigned as vice chairman of the Motion Picture Group at Paramount Pictures making him the highest-ranking executive to leave Paramount since Viacom took over the studio in 1994. London, who celebrated his 25th anniversary with the company in 1996, entered into an exclusive production deal with the studio.

Initially, many thought Paramount would have a difficult time finding a successor to London as his position encompassed distribution, marketing, video, pay TV and feature acquisitions on a world-wide basis and few candidates would have the experience for the job. So it was a surprise when Paramount quickly hired marketing executive Robert Friedman, a 26 year veteran of Warner Bros., to take over the vice chairmanship.

SUMMER BOXOFFICE RESULTS

Though the summer of 1996 couldn't top 1994's record-breaking summer take of $2.20 billion, it did parallel 1995, with an estimated take of $2.17 billion marking a tie for both years as the second best summers ever for North American theatres. Buena Vista was the summer's clear winner, taking in almost $474 million, or 22.9 percent of the summer market.

Five films passed the $100 million mark during the summer, an equal number to 1995. Two of those films—"Independence Day" and "Twister"— took in over $200 million, a feat no film accomplished in the summer of '95. But there were fewer films that found the $50 to $90 million range. Only "The Cable Guy" ($60.2 million), "Dragonheart" ($51.4 million) and "Courage Under Fire" ($55 million) made the grade, compared to nine 1995 titles.

OCTOBER

SONY TO LEVINE: SAYONARA

In a widely anticipated move, Sony Pictures Entertainment president Alan J. Levine resigned from his post to be replaced by John Calley, a veteran studio executive and the head of United Artists at the time he agreed to take over for Levine. The departure of Levine, who had been Sony Pics' prez since 1994, had been rumored for some time in the wake of the studio's dismal 1996 boxoffice performance. Prior to Levine's exit, Sony's displeasure with its topmost film production executives had resulted in a number of upper-level firings and resignations. Levine's resignation in some ways marked the end of the first Sony era at Columbia TriStar, since Levine first came to the studio in 1989 at the behest of Peter Guber and Jon Peters, Sony's original Hollywood management team.

GLOBAL B.O.: WE'RE IN THE MONEY

Baskerville Communications, a California and London based market research group, predicted that worldwide theatrical boxoffice would jump some 47.3 percent over 1995 levels in the next seven years. The predicted boon will come as a result of the screening boom currently underway overseas, where exhibition infrastructure is in a far more underdeveloped state than in the U.S.

FALL B.O.: "FIRST WIVES" NAB BIG SETTLEMENT

Fueled by the blockbuster success of Disney's mid-wife crisis revenge comedy "The First Wives Club," the pre-holiday fall play period looked good. Released September 20 to grab $19 million in its first weekend, "Wives" struck a big chord with fall moviegoers, racking up three successive number one boxoffice performances before falling to number three over the three-day Columbus Day holiday.

NOVEMBER

DORAN & MANCUSO: RE-UNITED

MGM/UA chairman and CEO Frank Mancuso continued to put his stamp on the studio's executive roster with the hiring of Lindsay Doran to replace John Calley as president of United Artists. Doran's producing resume includes the hits "Dead Again" and "The Firm." at Mirage, as well as work during her days as a Paramount executive on such titles as "Pretty in Pink," "Planes, Trains & Automobiles" and "Ghost." In 1996, Doran received a Golden Globe award for producing the Emma Thompson-starring "Sense and Sensibility," which later won an Oscar for best adapted screenplay.

DREAMWORKS' RUDE AWAKENINGS

The announced plans for the building of a new, state-of-the-art studio production facility at Playa Vista, Calif. by the DreamWorks SKG "dream team" were reported to be on the verge of radical alteration, including a possible relocation of the facility owing to a combination of factors, such as growing unrest among development company Maguire Thomas Partners and DreamWorks' outside strategic partners, and slowdowns brought about by environmentalist protests and legal actions. It was revealed that such high-profile participants in the original Playa Vista plan as IBM and James Cameron's Digital Domain effects house may have already opted not to take space in Playa Vista. At issue were a variety of scheduling and financial uncertainties, including rental pricing for space on the property; the date of availability for rental space; and the restructuring of debt incurred on the Playa Vista site back in the late 1980s and early 1990s, before DreamWorks became involved with developing the location.

NEW LINE VS. BOTTOM LINE

1996 proved a troublesome year for New Line Cinema, with the company's worst-ever financial performance and continuing uncertainty over ownership issues related to Ted Turner's alliance with Time Warner. Leading the list of New Line's budget-fueled 1996 boxoffice failures was director Renny Harlin's Geena Davis-starring action pic "The Long Kiss Goodnight," which cost almost $100 million to produce and market, and grossed less than $35 million domestically. Other pricey studio misses in '96 included "The Island of Dr. Moreau," which grossed less than $30 million on a $50 million production budget, and Walter Hill's "Last Man Standing," for which Bruce Willis was paid a reported $16 million to star in a film that took in $18 million at the U.S. boxoffice.

TURKEY-DAY B.O. SEES SPOTS

The eighth film in the franchise, Paramount's "Star Trek: First Contact" set a series record and took first place over the weekend of November 23, 1996 with an estimated $30.5 million at the boxoffice. Over Thanksgiving, Buena Vista's live-action recreation of the 1961 cartoon "101 Dalmatians" broke the $43 million 1989 record set by Universal's "Back to the Future II" with a gross of $46 million in five days. On the art-house front, Fine Line's "Shine" dominated over Thanksgiving, taking in $156,673, followed by Miramax's "Swingers" at $86,928. But a boxoffice plunge one week later (led by the disappointing opening of the Stallone disaster flick "Daylight" which grabbed a measly $10 million on over 2,000 screens) left the ultimate status of the holiday play period in doubt.

INTERNATIONAL BLOC BUSTERS

Mega-budget U.S. product continued to find extremely lucrative favor with overseas audiences in 1996, making for what U.S. distribution execs were terming an amazing international year. As it did in the U.S., "Independence Day" set the global pace, invading moviehouses to the tune of some US$366 million in overseas receipts during its first 12 weeks of international release. "Mission: Impossible" was closing on the equivalent of US$250 million after 17 weeks; "Twister" had churned up US$226.8 million after 14 weeks; "The Rock" was rock-solid at US$185 million after 16 weeks; and "Eraser," the Arnold Schwarzenegger action hit, had US$132 million stamped indelibly on its ledgers during 11 weeks of play. The growing importance of the international market was demonstrated by the fact that virtually every one of the above named blockbusters had already outperformed its 1996 U.S. domestic gross via overseas bookings by November, with cash registers still ringing for each film worldwide.

DECEMBER

DISNEY REVS UP

While many of the studios did well in their third quarter (which ended Sept. 30, 1996), the Walt Disney Co. surprised the Wall Street execs who had predicted the company would increase revenues up to 50 percent. When the reports were totaled, Disney had raised revenues 68 percent, bringing net profit to $354 million, up $133 million from last year. The growth was due in large part to Disney's film and television production arms, which increased 31 percent in operating income, helped by the domestic and international success of movies such as "The Rock," "Phenomenon" and "The Hunchback of Notre Dame." From 1994 to 1995, Disney was the only company to gross $1 billion in a year from U.S. and Canadian boxoffices. In 1995, Disney beat their 1994 $1 billion record by a day. In 1996, Disney beat their 1995 record by five weeks.

"KUNDUN" CONUNDRUM

Despite smooth national planning, Disney ran into expansion problems in China because of the turmoil over Martin Scorsese's "Kundun," a film about the fourteenth Dalai Lama, Tenzingyatso. "Kundun" takes a sympathetic view of Tibet's struggle for independence and of the Dalai Lama, who was exiled in 1951. Officials at the China Film Bureau professed their strong opposition to the making of the film, believing that it would exalt the Dalai Lama and consequently disrupt national affairs. Chinese officials have threatened that if Disney releases the film, the government could destroy the company's chances of developing a theme park in China.

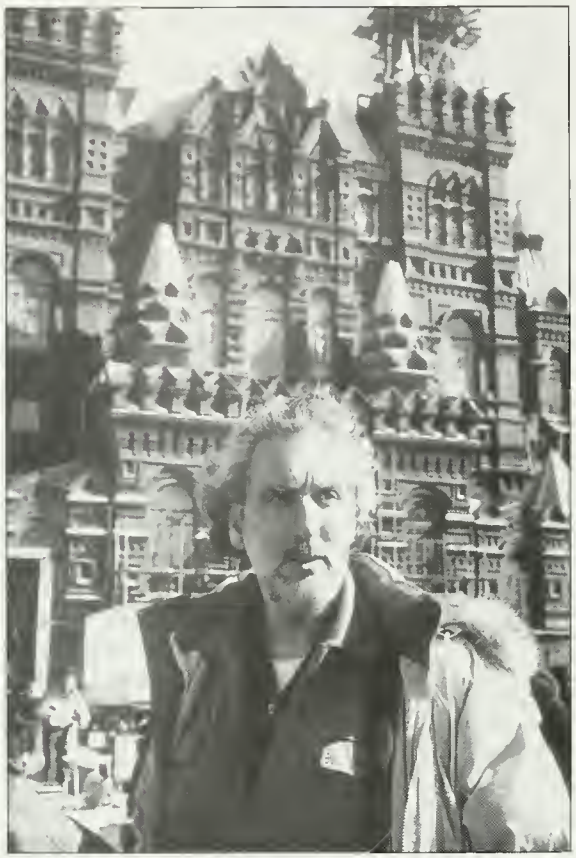
DISNEY: OVITZ AND OUT

Fourteen months after Michael Ovitz rocked Hollywood by leaving CAA, the agency he co-founded, to become president of the Walt Disney Co., the superagent-turned-studio topper stunned industry onlookers again by stepping down from his post. The move was reportedly a mutual decision between Ovitz and Disney chairman and CEO Michael Eisner. Insiders blamed a poorly-defined job description, causing Ovitz to infringe upon other executives' territory. No immediate plans to fill the position were announced. Ovitz divulged no plans, but he won't be on line at the unemployment office: Under his settlement with Disney, his cash pay-off was $38.9 million plus some 3 million stock options valued at $31 million at current prices—a buyout that had some Disney stockholders seething. Not bad for a little over 400 days' work. And that's the year that was.

"SAINT" PHILLIP

Director Phillip Noyce Journeys Into Adventure With "The Saint"

By Bridget Byrne



Director Phillip Noyce bundled against the Moscow cold on the set of Paramount's March release "The Saint."

It was terribly easy." That's the judgment of director Phillip Noyce about the experience of filming Paramount's long-awaited "The Saint" in the Russian capital of Moscow. "In any former totalitarian state it is, if you know the right people," says Noyce, whose "Patriot Games" and "Clear and Present Danger" also took him to exotic climes.

"If you want to shoot a complicated scene in a major intersection in the middle of New York, the abuse is going to start flowing in your direction in moments from the people inconvenienced, but in Russia you can have everything come to a stop for hours." That proved fortunate, as one mammoth scene involved massing thousands of extras in Red Square. Noyce's production travels also took him throughout England, from the soundstages at Pinewood and locations at Oxford colleges to the city of London, where buildings stood in for surviving Czarist structures.

Noyce's itinerant nature comes clear in his recent conversations with BOXOFFICE. A few days before Christmas, he's traveling the M4 between Oxford and London, where he's been doing post-production work. A few days after Christmas, Noyce has already moved half a world, returning to the discussion as he drives down La Cienega Boulevard in Los Angeles.

Noyce recalls that, as a child growing up in New South Wales, he enjoyed the stories of Simon Templar, the dashing adventurer better known as The Saint. Created by novelist Leslie Charteris, The Saint has taken several guises over the years in movies and TV, and Noyce finds many Templar characteristics appealing: his devil-may-care demeanor; his Robin Hood attitude toward law-breaking; his independence; his tendency to use brain over brawn to cleverly outwit the bad guys; and his journeys to foreign locales.

Noyce feels he can relate to the nature of an international character like The Saint, Americanized though the character now is in the hands of star Val Kilmer. Noyce has homes in Los Angeles and Sydney and a rented house in London but, like The Saint, he goes where the job is. "I'm like him, not really living anywhere but hotels, not knowing quite where I am, who I am, always having to catch a plane," Noyce says, laughing.

The Saint" is set in a future so close that Noyce describes it as "tomorrow." The story establishes how Templar becomes "The Saint," embroils him in a world where law and order is breaking down, and thrusts him into a love affair. Kilmer (who in a highly publicized move exited his role as the second Batman to become The Saint) is ideal to play Simon Templar, Noyce says.

"We needed a leading man who is also a true actor—because he's not playing just one character, but a master of disguise. He has to appear to be 13 different people with 13 different accents and 13 different body languages. He's seen, for example, as a South African, a German and an Australian, as well as having to be totally convincing when disguised as his opponent—a Russian industrialist who is his nemesis."

Elizabeth Shue—Oscar-nominated for "Leaving Las Vegas"—plays the scientist who steals Templar's heart. "She has great intelligence and strength and is convincing as a nuclear physicist in a way many other actresses wouldn't have been," Noyce says. "Essentially our story is a romance that's at the heart of the enormous [personal] journey Templar takes from selfish to selfless. You have to want the man and woman to be together, so chemistry is very important. Luckily for us, they formed a very close relationship, which shows onscreen. Because they were playing out a great romance, they put themselves in situations that were pregnant with possibilities, and the camera captures that."

Noyce's success with political thrillers has established him as a director comfortable with films that have a global flavor, and he feels his outsider's viewpoint is a help in bringing perspective to both the American character and the nature of America's place in the world. His next project will be a version of Graham Greene's "The Quiet American," featuring a cast that includes Sean Connery. Noyce also hopes to return soon to his Down Under roots with "Butcher's Creek," a film about the conflict between European settlers and the Aborigines.

Now 46, and a self-described "discombobulated presence on a set" (the Aussie lad matured into a 6'5" 250-pound man), Noyce maintains an enthusiasm for his work wherever it takes him. Despite his career success, he still voices surprise that, as he puts it, "it happened at all" to an Australian who grew up in a country that then had no indigenous film industry. "No child back home would really think to say, 'I want to be a movie director,' because there was no such animal," Noyce says. Yet he became one of cinema's most cosmopolitan talents, and that, he says, is "a gift, a privilege. Not a right but a wonderful, wonderful gift."

"I'm like [the Saint], not really living anywhere but hotels, not knowing quite where I am."

"The Saint." Starring Val Kilmer and Elizabeth Shue. Directed by Phillip Noyce. Written by Wesley Strick and Jonathan Hensleigh. Produced by David Brown, Robert Evans, William MacDonald and Mace Neufeld. A Paramount release. Adventure. Opens March 28.

A "WIDE" RANGE

Actress Dana Delany Ventures Into Religion With "Wide Awake"

by Bridget Byrne



Dana Delany stars in the Miramax dramatic comedy "Wide Awake," slated for early summer release.

Dana Delany isn't a mother, but that doesn't mean she can't play one convincingly—even though most of her movie admirers probably don't think about her that way. In "Wide Awake," Delany is a "rational, conservative doctor," mother of a 10-year-old boy who, coping with the death of his grandfather, embarks on a search for God.

The Miramax release, tentatively slated for early summer, is helmed by sophomore director M. Night Shyamalan and also stars Denis Leary as the boy's father, Robert Loggia as the grandfather and Rosie O'Donnell as a nun.

Her portion of filming occurred in Philadelphia, where she traveled almost immediately after spending four months in Canada on "Fly Away Home," the film about orphaned geese being taught to migrate. "I enjoyed that film, but I felt I was the distaff interest in it. 'Wide Awake' gave me something at the other end of that spectrum," Delany says over a glass of juice in a cafe near her Venice, Calif. home. It's a place she often comes after her morning yoga class, where she can drink coffee and do The New York Times crossword puzzle.

She was impressed with the performance of newcomer Joseph Cross, who plays her young son. "We got lucky. He was delightful. He was still at the age when he believed in make-believe—he hadn't reached the point where young actors tend to turn self-conscious. I had a crying scene to do in reaction to the death of my father, his grandfather.

"When he saw my tears, he asked me, 'How do you do that?' I said, 'You just believe in what you are doing.' Later he had a scene with the priest, and he's there with tears streaming down his face, obviously not fake ones. When the shot was over he jumped up and down and started cheering, 'I did it, I did it!'" Delany recounts, with almost motherly pride.

She says she felt comfortable from her first scene with Shyamalan, despite his youth. "He is very self confident, low key, calm and willing to admit when he doesn't know something," she says, explaining that she likes to work with directors who believe in "mistakes and the unexpected." She recalls that in "Wide Awake," during a scene in which Joseph asks his mother about God, she replied "She is..." rather than "He is...." The director let it ride—but, she believes, the nontraditional response might have been changed since.

There is a still-waters-run-deep quality to Delany. Her outer appearance is neat, cultured, groomed, her blue/gray eyes enhancing the clear skin of her delicate face. But in conversation she gives sign of, perhaps not wildness, but an inner freedom. She's 40 and has never married—a situation, she laughingly implies, men find disturbing. And she's not taken any sort of traditional Hollywood path toward capitalizing on her pretty looks. "I'm not really comfortable with glamor. I like to play strong characters and to take chances," she says, explaining that her acting style is not that of "a performer" and noting that TV usually provides more challenging roles for women than do feature films.

"I'm not really comfortable with glamor. I like to play strong characters and to take chances."

She first found fame in the critically acclaimed series "China Beach," a show that had the qualities she sees in the best dramas: "a moral viewpoint and a way of educating people and affecting lives." She still gets messages on her website (set up for her by a fan) expressing the comfort the show provided to war veterans. But, after she played the birth control pioneer Margaret Sanger in a made-for-cable movie, taking her an ideology away from her Irish-Catholic nurse of "China Beach," she also got letters from people saying they would never watch anything she did again.

Raised in Stamford, Conn., Delany wanted to be an actress from the age of three. As a child, she loved musicals and Doris Day movies, which perhaps goes some way to explaining her neatly packaged sexiness. She took an actress' traditional route: After graduating from Wesleyan University, she moved to New York to work in the theatre. She eventually relocated to Hollywood for the West Coast production of Nicholas Kazan's play "Bloodmoon," in which she'd won praise off-Broadway.

"Girlfriend roles" in series like "Moonlighting" and "Magnum, P.I." helped her career along, but they were never the challenges that she really wanted to undertake. In movies, she's certainly tried to find more unusual fare; sometimes she's succeeded, as in 1992's "Light Sleeper," the Paul Schrader film about the upscale New York drug scene, and sometimes she hasn't, as with her (albeit intriguing) turn as a dominatrix in the Garry Marshall comedy "Exit to Eden."

"It didn't work. What was in Anne Rice's book didn't make it to the screen, but I never regret trying something," Delany says philosophically. With that, she heads home to read another week's offering of scripts, hoping to find something off-kilter, void of cliche and free of convention.

"Wide Awake." Starring Denis Leary, Dana Delany, Robert Loggia and Joseph Cross. Directed and written by M. Night Shyamalan. Produced by Cary Woods and Cathy Konrad. A Miramax release. Drama/comedy. Opens in early summer.

"VALLEY" GIRL

Krista Griffin keeps "Rocky Horror" and alternative cinema alive at Arizona's Valley Art

By Melissa Morrison



Owner Krista Griffin is the theatre's only full-time employee.

Its original Art Deco architecture makes the 57-year-old Valley Art theatre stand out in boomtown Tempe, Ariz., like an oldster at the Junior Prom. There aren't many theatres like it left in the state—multiscreen modernism makes more sense in one of the fastest-growing regions of the country.

But the Valley Art's two-story, neon-glowing tower on the desert landscape is a fitting symbol for what goes on inside the theatre, which is the only place in the Phoenix area where Arizonans can see things like political documentaries, short-film festivals, local cinema students' projects, Mexican vampire thrillers, Japanese animation and French directors' latest installments in the book of love. "We definitely show films nobody can see elsewhere," says the Valley Art's owner—and projectionist and popcorn seller—Krista Griffin.

By now, there are certainly more profitable uses for the building at 507 S. Mill Avenue. In recent years, as Tempe completed its transformation from a sleepy college town to busy urban center, the Valley Art has found itself surrounded by a Hooters franchise, cappuccino bars and the kind of chain restaurants that serve $5 margaritas. In the 11 years Griffin has owned the theatre, she says it hasn't made a profit. But, if money were the Valley Art's sole reason for being, it would have been shut down years ago. "Since I've had it, it's been a $1 theatre and an art theatre, and it's a lot more fun being an art theatre," she says. "It has a purpose and a value in the community. We show Chinese films, we get the Chinese community—they all know each other and talk Chinese to each other. Same thing with gay and lesbian films. It's fun. You don't just get a movie here, it's a whole funky vibe."

Griffin took over the Valley Art in 1986, culminating a career in Arizona's exhibition industry that began when she got a job selling popcorn at age 16. She eventually managed five theatres for the Harkins chain, Arizona's largest exhibitor. In 1983, she bought her own moviehouse, the University Theatres in Tempe, which she converted from two to three screens and refashioned into the region's first $1 cinema. She sold that theatre in 1982, leaving her with the Valley Art.

As the Phoenix area's only full-time art-house, scheduling is a matter of instinct versus opportunity. "We watch what other big cities play and then try to figure out what the market for them is here, which is a really big guess because we don't have a cultured and sophisticated audience yet," Griffin says. "And we don't have a loyal audience that will come no matter what we show. But we have cultivated that audience enough that they'll sometimes take a gamble on something unfamiliar."

In addition to BOXOFFICE, Griffin studies New York's Village Voice newspaper for film tips, and her Northern California-based buyer closely watches the San Francisco and L.A. markets. Griffin says a lot of her choices depend on what the chains pass over.

Though the Valley Art has a built-in audience pool of students from Arizona State University, located a few blocks away, Griffin says the theatre routinely draws people from a 40-mile radius, depending on the type of film. It's also not unusual for the Valley Art's one-of-a-kind program to attract people from the cities of Flagstaff and Tucson.

The 386-seat moviehouse was built in 1940 by Harry L. Nace Sr. and Dwight "Red" Harkins, the founder of the Harkins chain, and named the College Theatre. It was renamed the Valley Art in 1961 by different owners and went through a stint in the '60s as a porn house. In the late '70s, the building was also bought by Parallax Theatre Systems, now Landmark. (For more history, check the Valley Art's Website at http://members.aol.com/valleyart1/index.html.)

"You don't just get a movie here, it's a whole funky vibe."

Not much has changed technologically at the Valley Art since then. It still operates with its original projector, a Brenkert. That company is now out of business, so, when parts are needed, Griffin buys them used. The auditorium has stereo sound, but not Dolby. Griffin estimates the newest equipment is a '70s-era Cretors popcorn machine. Outside, a stand-alone ticket booth, trimmed in turquoise and pink, sits sentry beneath a neon backlit marquee. A plaque in



"The Rocky Horror Picture Show" is a perennial favorite for the midnight crowd at the Valley Art.

the lobby honors the late Bill Greig, the Valley Art's projectionist from 1940 to 1985: "Through his dedication, skill and knowledge of the cinema, Bill raised the trade of the projectionist to an art form."

Like the films it highlights, the Valley Art has hosted an equally varied roster of art events. Local Indian tribes have blessed the building during ceremonies that include traditional dancing and chants. The stage has also been the site of concerts by folkies Joan Baez (whom Griffin says opted for less money to perform there rather than at a newer concert hall) and Janis Ian, as well as alternative-rock goddess Tori Amos. Griffin has also lured legendary DD-movie director Russ Meyer to introduce "Faster Pussycat! Kill! Kill!" and actor Bud Cort to do likewise for "Harold and Maude." ("He called me every day for months after that," Griffin says.)

The theatre has the distinction of hosting the region's biggest screenings and one of the longest running programs of "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" in the Southwest, a tradition Griffin began 11 years ago at the University Theatres. The Saturday midnight screenings have evolved into live-theatre spectacles performed by a dozen costumed fanatics who draw lipstick Vs on the foreheads of unsuspecting RH "virgins," and whose comebacks to the screen action drown out the soundtrack.

Not that such programs pay big bucks. "I'm doing the struggling artist thing," Griffin says. Ticket prices are lower than the market average: $5.50 for evenings and $3 for matinees and weekends. Griffin, who hasn't collected a salary since June 7, recently earned an elementary-education degree so she can support herself by working as a substitute first-grade teacher. Griffin is the theatre's only full-time employee (she's assisted by a handful of part-timers), which sometimes results in patrons being drafted into service.

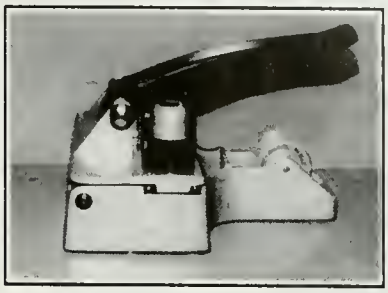
"I'll grab somebody out of the line and say, 'Come here, come here. I'll give you a free Pepsi if you come behind the counter and tell people, "She'll be right back,"'" she laughs. Despite the lack of monetary rewards, the Valley Art offers enough alternative incentives to keep Griffin hanging in there. "I love it here. I come here, I hang out, I do my homework here—It's my own little space."

The Valley Art
507 S. Mill Avenue
Tempe, AZ 85281
(602) 829-6668
Owner: Krista Griffin

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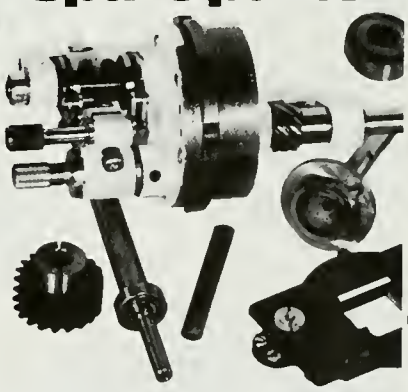


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EXHIBITION BRIEFINGS

UATC'S RESTRUCTURING PLAN

United Artists Theatre Circuit Inc. refuted reports that the company was putting itself up for sale, and instead announced a corporate restructuring plan to reduce general and administrative expenses by 15 to 20 percent, which should save about $6 million annually. This plan involves the consolidation of several administrative positions in the purchasing, marketing and sales departments—and the layoffs of 50-75 corporate employees, reportedly including senior marketing VP Bill Quigley. "While these types of restructurings are never easy because of the loss of jobs, it was very important that we structure ourselves more efficiently so we can provide the necessary resources and focus in the corporate support areas which are most important to the long-term success of our core business," said Kurt Hall, executive vice president and CFO of UATC, in a prepared statement. "The key to our future success is to keep our business plan simple and to focus on two overall goals: increasing our operating cash flow and net earnings and reducing our debt." This restructuring comes only a month after UATC's president and CEO Stewart Blair resigned; at press time, his position still had not been filled.

CINEPLEX INCREASES OFFER TO PROJECTIONISTS

Now in its fourth month, the lock-out of Cineplex projectionists continues, though both the circuit and the projectionists' union, Local 173, are striving to come to an agreement. Cineplex wants to make cutbacks, on the grounds that in recent years, automated technology has made projectionists' jobs much easier, and the position no longer warrants as high a pay scale. The current average salary for a projectionist ranges between C$30,000 to C$40,000 (US$20,000 to US$27,000). Cineplex had initially wanted to cut these wages by half, but after negotiations has reduced its wage cut proposal to 30-35 percent, which would mean a new salary range of C$25,500 to C$30,000 (US$17,000 to US$20,000). Cineplex also wants to eliminate 33 of 73 projectionists' jobs, which the union agrees to, provided the severance package is fair. But while Cineplex is willing to pay severance for the years that the projectionists have worked specifically for the company, the union wants compensation based on the total years that the projectionists have worked overall.

IMAX WINS TECHNICAL OSCAR

Toronto-based but American-owned Imax Corp. has won an Oscar for scientific and technical achievement. Imax was recognized by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for its innovations, including large format filming and exhibition. The company, which reported record earnings last year, will be honored on March 1 at a special ceremony in Beverly Hills. An estimated 500 million people worldwide have seen an Imax movie since the company was incorporated in 1970.

SHOWMANDISER PROMOTION OF THE MONTH



How much is that doggy in the front seat? Look closely and you'll 'spot' a real live dalmatian naively snuggling up to a Cruella cut-out. Not only did Harold Christman, manager of the Chakeres Wilmington Plaza Cinemas Five in Wilmington, Ohio, decorate his theatre with floor and window displays to promote Disney's "101 Dalmations," he had a drawing in which patrons 18 years or older could win this adorable pup! The cuddly canine was given a good home, and Christman's promotion was a howling success.

AUDIENCES TAKEN BY STORM WITH DTS "LOST WORLD" TRAILER

Digital Theater Systems (DTS), Universal Pictures and Amblin Entertainment joined forces to create a special limited release presentation of the trailer for "The Lost World," the highly-anticipated sequel to the 1993 blockbuster "Jurassic Park." A spectacular light and sound display simulates a torrential thunder-and-lightning storm so convincing that disclaimers have been posted in theatres warning patrons of the "intense" nature of the teaser. The effects are achieved by a modified DTS unit that activates six strategically-placed strobe lights. The timing for the lights is encoded into the trailer's print, which is synched to the DTS CD-ROM system.

In a related item, DTS, whose sound system was launched four years ago with the release of Universal and Amblin's "Jurassic Park," posted a record number of unit installations in 1996. Last year, DTS shipped a total of 2,539 units, which is nearly a 20 percent increase over 1995's figures. DTS's installations worldwide now number over 8,200.

MARCUS EXPANDS INTO MICHIGAN

Marcus Theatres Corp. will build a 14-plex in the northeast Detroit suburb of Utica—the circuit's first theatre in Michigan. "Utica offers our company a unique opportunity," says Bruce J. Olson, president of Marcus. "It is a rapidly-growing area of Detroit with a large population base, yet it lacks a state-of-the-art theatre to attract moviegoers. Our first Michigan theatre will feature all of the newest innovations, creating a first-class moviegoing experience." The 60,000-square-foot cinema will seat 3,300, and the site may grow to 20 screens in the future. An early fall opening is projected.

MUVICO'S POMPANO AND CIRCUMSTANCE

Muvico Theatres Inc. has signed an agreement to build an all-stadium seating 18-plex at the site of their present 6-plex in Pompano, Florida. Scheduled to open this fall, the theatre will seat 3,200, with each auditorium ranging from 100 to 300 seats. It will have superior viewing sightlines, digital sound systems, wall-to-wall curved screens, gourmet concessions, love seats and specialty designed seats created especially for Muvico.

CLEARVIEW BUYS 13 NJ SCREENS

Clearview Cinema Group Inc., headquartered in Madison, N.J., has acquired 13 screens in three locations from Livingston, N.J.-based Magic Cinemas LLC. The purchase of the Tenafly Cinema 4, the Bergenfield Cinema 5, and the Closter Cinema 4 brings Clearview's total screen count to 60 in 16 locations. "A total of at least 100 screens by the end of 1997 is our objective," says Clearview president and CEO A. Dale Mayo.

REGAL ROCKS PLYMOUTH WITH NEW 10-PLEX

Plymouth Township of Pennsylvania is the site of Regal's latest build, a 10-plex with giant wall-to-wall screens; Dolby surround sound; DTS Digital, Dolby Digital and SDDS; stadium-style seating in selected auditoriums; love seats with cupholder armrests; computerized ticketing stations with 3-day ad-

vance ticketing; a continuous loop lobby projection screen featuring coming attractions; and a video game room. Also included is Regal's trademark Cafe Del Moro, which serves fresh-baked goods and other specialty concessions.

NATIONAL AMUSEMENTS' "CREATURE" FEATURE

National Amusements and Universal Pictures teamed up to support local zoos across the nation with free screenings of the menagerie-themed comedy "Fierce Creatures" for zoo employees, sponsors and patrons. "National Amusements and Universal Pictures are proud to present these free screenings which will enable the zoos to offer a special thanks to the individuals and groups that have continually shown their support throughout the year," says Shari Redstone, executive vice president of National Amusements.

PRYSMTECH PACTS WITH KERASOTES

Kerasotes Theatres has selected Roswell, Ga.-based PrysmTech LLC as the circuit's provider of theatre management and concession point-of-sale systems. Kerasotes will be the first chain to install PrysmTech's newest product for concessions, ConcLyte, a low-cost point-of-sale solution with a key-touchpad, up to 77 product keys, and nine different payment keys. In addition to Kerasotes, PrysmTech has deals with exhibitors Sony, Cobb, Crown, Muvico, Regal and Cinamerica.

ON THE MOVE

Jack Loeks Theatres Inc. has promoted **Steve Forsythe** from general manager of Studio 28 in Grand Rapids, Mich., to the corporate-level position of general manager of Jack Loeks Theatres Inc. Forsythe will oversee the operations and human resource functions of the 11 theatres currently in the company's circuit...**Elizabeth Figge** has joined **Dolby Laboratories** as Sales Manager, Cinema Products. Figge will be responsible for supporting exhibitors, Dolby's cinema product dealers, and film distributors both regionally and nationally. Before joining Dolby, Figge was North American Sales Manager for Sony Cinema Products...**Ballantyne of Omaha Inc.,** a manufacturer and marketer of motion picture projection systems and specialty entertainment lighting equipment, has promoted **Ray Boegner** to senior vice president. Boegner was previously Ballantyne's marketing vice president for cinema products...**David Tomber** has been appointed sales manager of entertainment venues for **Multiplex Company Inc.,** a manufacturer of beverage dispensing and water treatment equipment for the food service and exhibition industries. Tomber is a member of the board of directors and education chairman of the National Association of Concessionaires, and was director of concessions and ancillary marketing for Wehrenberg Theatres Inc. prior to joining Multiplex.

Q&A: LAURA ZISKIN: FROM "PRETTY WOMAN" TO FOX 2000 HEAD

Laura Ziskin, president of Fox 2000 Pictures, saw her company's first release, "Courage Under Fire," pull $60 million. It's hardly the first success for this one-time USC film school student and game show writer; early in her career, she joined Jon Peters' production company and then ran Sally Fields' Fogwood Films; later, she executive produced Buena Vista's "Pretty Woman." This past Christmas, Fox 2000's sophomore effort, "One Fine Day," opened to reasonable business, and Ziskin awaits her high-profile "Volcano," pushed to a tentative spring date to avoid Universal's "Dante's Peak." In the meantime, she's overseen "Inventing the Abbotts," which was slated for a February 28 bow.



BOXOFFICE: What makes a Fox 2000 project a Fox 2000 project?

LAURA ZISKIN: Our mandate—and our desire—is to make commercial movies. Those to me in this market are the proverbial movies that open on Friday night. Beyond that, what all our movies share is that they're character-driven movies. They are of any genre—"Courage Under Fire" was a drama, "One Fine Day" was a romantic comedy, "Valcano" is a disaster movie—but they're all driven as much by characters as by concept.

BOXOFFICE: It's easy to distinguish between the fare of, say, Fox Searchlight and Fox. But how is Fox 2000 different from Fox?

ZISKIN: I don't think we're different. We're additive. What it does is allow the company to have multiple points of view, to have more than one group of people creating product. I think the fact that I'm a woman influences my life and influences my taste. Women are clearly a big audience for movies, and certainly there's a value in having women in the decision-making process. But I want to be careful how I say this, because I don't think I'm making women's movies.

BOXOFFICE: Character-driven movies sometimes require a little percolation time for their audience to find them, and yet Fox 2000 movies are to be Friday-night movies. How do you design in enough boxoffice appeal for weekend one so you can have weekends two, three and four?

ZISKIN: One always still wants to have an idea. That doesn't necessarily mean a high-concept idea, but an idea or theme that the public can grab onto. The other philosophy I bring into the division is that I like to work with movie stars. I like to create material that attracts movie stars. So that certainly helps us. You must have character, you must have concept—hopefully we have it all. I would say we try to do the impossible: We're trying to make really good movies that make money! (laughs) My dream, my fantasy, is: good movies that make money. For them and for us.

BOXOFFICE: In the past few years, the majors had been ramping up production. For example, Disney and Fox added divisions. But now Disney is dismantling, Paramount is cutting back, Warner released only nine movies in a six-month span last year. Fox, though, is going ahead with its four separate conduits. What is your take on all that?

ZISKIN: If we succeed, we'll continue that way (laughs) and if we fail we won't.

BOXOFFICE: Do you think that production cutbacks at other studios could benefit Fox's full-tilt slate?

ZISKIN: I think we're in great shape. The fact that we have diversity gives us real depth. It's like a baseball team, where you have depth in the dugout.

BOXOFFICE: Also in recent years, with more studio movies, more exhibitors have been building megaplexes to play them. Suddenly, the pipeline starts slowing. Where are all the movies going to come from?

ZISKIN: I don't think there'll be a huge quantitative drop, but it may be just enough so that movies will play longer, and that attendance and grosses will stay the same. So some movies that might have dropped out after two weekends might play twice as long.

BOXOFFICE: Isn't that an advantage for character-driven movies?

ZISKIN: Yes, absolutely. That the potential of a movie to find an audience can be taken away is a sore subject for me. It's a [boxoffice] contest every weekend, and if you don't win the contest then the public doesn't know you exist. We hurt the depth and breadth of movies by squeezing [attention] into just the top three. But, look, I'm a moviemaker, so I want us to make lots of movies.

BOXOFFICE: And how many are you planning on making a year?

ZISKIN: As many good ones as I can find.—***Kim Williamson***

NATIONAL NEWS

1996 FINAL: ANOTHER RECORD!

As the fifth consecutive year of improved boxoffice, 1996 was the biggest year in film history with domestic grosses topping out at $5.76 billion (on 159 studio films released last year), a figure up 7.9 percent over last year. The sixth biggest domestic film of all time, "Independence Day, took in a stratospheric $306.2 million and laid claim as the third all-time biggest global film with a worldwide take of $746 million. Despite the disappointing summer due to Olympic fever, 1996 saw 12 films shoot past the $100 million mark, a big jump from last year's seven films that made the cut that tops the former high of 11 in 1994. There were an estimated 1.265 million tickets sold domestically (up 3.5 percent over 1995).

Buena Vista and Warner Bros. took first and second place on the market share slots for the third year running. In the top spot, Buena Vista took 20.8% of the market with $1.2 billion gross on 38 films (24 wide releases) giving them an average return of $42.2 million per picture (up 18.5 percent over 1995). Warner Bros., with a little help from "Twister," ended the year with 15.7% of the market share, but topped Disney on a per-title basis with a $44.8 million average per film.

Paramount's performance improved 35.5 percent over 1995 taking in 12.6 percent of the market share with 24 films (15 wide releases). Fox found forth place even though they released only 14 movies (less than any other studio). They received the highest average return per film: $56.4 million, thanks to "ID4." Sony, which released 41 titles (26 wide releases), ranked fifth in the market share and failed to have a single film reach $100 million. Universal fell off 27.7 percent from last year with only one major hit on their slate, "The Nutty Professor." MGM/UA ranked seventh and the tumultuous New Line ranked eighth despite a last quarter hit with "Michael." 1996 saw a big rise in New Line's budgets, up 70 percent to an average of $27.6 million.

According to the Motion Picture Association of America, members spent an average of $36.4 million to produce a film and $17.7 million to market one in 1996. Certain marketing executives disagree, believing the normal advertising expense for a wide release film to really be between $25-$30 million.

ALL EYES ON OCTOBER

Paramount and Universal are just two of the numerous companies eyeing a deal with the successful independent distributor October Films. Universal doesn't seem twice shy at hooking up with another specialized "arthouse" company after selling off their 50% stake in Gramercy Pictures last year—a deal which had never paid off for the studio. October is having a banner year with "Secrets and Lies" and "Breaking the Waves" and has taken over where Mirimax left off when it was acquired by the Walt Disney Co., a merger that helped lead the hip trend for studios to have their own specialized arthouse arm. 20th Century Fox created their own division in house, Fox Searchlight. Paramount has made noises about starting their own classics division, but also has been checking out existing companies, including possibly bringing over the Sony Classics group whose contract with Sony is up in February. And October, which has a strong slate for 1997 including the intriguing David Lynch film, "Lost Highway," which premiered at Sundance, is a real contender. The current investor group of the seven-year old distribution company says its not interested in selling and any deal would be far off, but some say it would take new and more powerful backing to move October to the next stage where it could compete with Mirimax, considered the lord of all arthouse distributors.

EISNER AND OVITZ GRAB DISNEY DOLLARS

In a series of revelations unlikely to temper the shareholder criticism that has been leveled at the Walt Disney Co. since speculation began about the severance offered to recently departed Disney president Michael Ovitz, the Walt Disney Co. revealed details about chairman and CEO Michael Eisner's recently completed executive compensation package, as well as the terms of Ovitz's exit.

Eisner's new deal freezes his annual salary at $750,000 for the next decade—a frugal pay scale given the scope of Eisner's responsibilities at Disney. The big money, though, will come when Eisner excercises the whopping 8 million stock share options the contract awarded him—currently valued at $195 million, but capable of yielding a great deal more if Disney's robust recent performance continues into the next decade.

Ovitz, meanwhile, was bought off for a cool $38.9 million—a more than reasonable pay-off considering his tenure as president of Disney lasted just 14 months. But Ovitz's golden parachute was even more valuable, granting him some 3 million stock options valued at at least $31 million at current prices, but could be worth more if Disney stock accrues value through 2002, when Ovitz must excercise his options. Estimates of the potential yield to Ovitz from excercise of the options alone run up to and beyond the $100 million mark.

At press time, there were two known shareholder lawsuits filed against Disney in connection with Ovitz's severance. Each suit charges Disney's officers and directors with dereliction of duty in agreeing to the Ovitz severance package.

IT'S A BIRD! IT'S A PLANE! IT'S BURGER KING!

In an attempt to get in a preemptive strike for Summer 1998, Warner Bros is in talks with Burger King about sealing a first-look promotional development deal for "Superman Reborn" a year and a half before it's release. Warner Bros. hopes "Reborn" will hail the return of their "Superman" series, but without a director or an approved script ("Clerks" Kevin Smith is doing a rewrite), isn't finding the company to sell Superman cups and meal-deal toys a bit premature? Not for the intense battles heating up over the lucrative promotional deals. Last year the Walt Disney Co. took the No. 1 fast-food restaurant out of the game when they signed an exclusive 10-year promotional partnership with McDonalds, leaving the other studios to scramble over the No. 2 fast-food chain, Burger King, which signed on to Universal's "Lost World" for the summer, leaving Warner Bros. with a far less lucrative deal with Taco Bell for their "Batman and Robin." Warner Bros. hoped to get Burger King signed on for their upcoming animation film, "Quest for Camelot," but the chain decided to go with Fox's animated "Anastasia."

Promotional tie-ins are becoming increasingly important as they can mean millions to a picture. Example: When Disney's upcoming live-action comedy. "George of the Jungle" became an approved McDonald's promotion, the budget rocketed to $55 million (from $28 million) and gained state-of-the-art CGI effects to become one of Disney's "event" films of the summer.

UNIVERSAL TO EXPAND UNIVERSE

Universal Studios, Inc. faced county and city planners in Los Angeles in January to explain and defend its 25 year master plan for expansion of the Universal Studios property. The hearings with city planners, supporters and opponents of the plan covered effects of increased traffic and noise pollution the Universal project would have on the surrounding area. Universal's plans include transforming the studio lot, the expansion of the tourist-haven City Walk and a new family theme park. The studio hopes to create a destination resort with five or six hotels, entertainment and restaurant venues on the scale of Disneyland, Disneyworld or even its own Universal Studios, Florida. Opponents to the plan simply don't want a Disneyland in their backyard, but supporters say the plan will bring an economic boon to the area, creating 13,000 new jobs and adding millions to city and county tax revenues.

DGA SELECTS FIRST TIMERS

First time's the charm for the 1996 Director's Guild of America nominees for feature films. Not since the 1950s have all the chosen directors been first time nominees. They are: Joel Coen for "Fargo," Cameron Crowe for "Jerry Maguire," Scott Hicks for "Shine," Mike Leigh for "Secrets and Lies" and Anthony Minghella for "The English Patient." The winner will be announced on March 8. Notable omissions from the list, which has historically been a fairly accurate barometer for the Oscar, include Milos Forman (who won the Best Director Golden Globe) for "The People vs. Larry Flynt" and Alan Parker for "Evita" (which won the Golden Globe for Best Picture Musical or Comedy).

Only four times since its inception in 1949 has the DGA Awardee not gone on to win the Oscar for best director. Last year was the fourth exception when Ron Howard won the DGA Award for "Apollo 13", but failed to even get an Oscar nomination and the Oscar went to Mel Gibson for "Braveheart." Two of the virgin DGA nominees aren't even members of the DGA (Hicks and Leigh) and Coen only joined recently. All the contenders except Hicks have some form of writing credit on their films, while all but "Jerry Maguire" are independent films that come from outside the studio system.

BOXOFFICE GOOD, BLOCKBUSTER BAD

Though Paramount Pictures was looking great in the final frame of 1996, other sectors of Viacom, Inc. ate up the communications giant's profitability and then some. Viacom wrote off $100 million offset against their fourth-quarter profits (between $38-$52 million) in a one-time charge to cover costs of closing 50 of their Blockbuster Music stores. Viacom will also use some of the write-off to cover the cost of moving Blockbuster headquarters from Ft. Lauderdale, Fl. to Dallas, Tx. Blockbuster Music continues to lose money as a whole and even the Blockbuster video chain has had disappointing growth. After the fourth quarter reports came out, Viacom stock stumbled downward. Blockbuster contributes about one-third of Viacom's total cash flow. The losses were offset by MTV Networks, Spelling Entertainment and Paramount Pictures, which ended 1996 with three surefire hits: "The First Wives Club," "Star Trek: First Contact" and "Beavis and Butthead Do America."

OSCAR'S GOLDEN GLOBETROTTERS

The Golden Globe Awards, long viewed by Oscar handicappers as one of the most prominent indicators of possible Academy nominees and winners, were announced January 19 in Los Angeles. In other Oscar-related news, Saul Zaentz, producer of "The English Patient" as well as such prestigious Oscar-winners as "One Flew Over the Cukoo's Nest" and "Amadeus," was named the 33rd recipient of the coveted Irving G. Thalberg Memorial Award. The Thalberg Award, which will be presented as part of the Oscar ceremony on March 24, is given out periodically to film producers whose "bodies of work reflect a consistently high quality of...production," according to Academy by-laws.

A complete list of this year's film-related Golden Globe Awardees follows.

Best Motion Picture—Drama
"The English Patient."
Best Motion Picture—Musical or Comedy
"Evita."
Best Actor—Drama
Geoffrey Rush, "Shine."
Best Actress—Drama
Brenda Blethyn, "Secrets and Lies."
Best Actor—Musical or Comedy
Tom Cruise, "Jerry Maguire."
Best Actress—Musical or Comedy
Madonna, "Evita."
Best Foreign-Language Film
"Kolya" (Czech Republic).
Best Supporting Actor
Edward Norton, "Primal Fear."
Best Supporting Actress
Lauren Bacall, "The Mirror Has Two Faces."
Best Director
Milos Forman, "The People vs. Larry Flynt."
Best Screenplay
Scott Alexander & Larry Karaszewski, "The People vs. Larry Flynt."
Best Original Score
Gabriel Yared, "The English Patient."
Best Original Song
"You Must Love Me," from Evita; music by Andrew Lloyd Webber, lyrics by Tim Rice.

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INTERNATIONAL NEWS BRIEFS

EUROVIEWS

European News Notes *by Melissa Morrison*

ENGLISH LANGUAGE CINEMA PLAN TO COMPETE WITH HOLLYWOOD

LONDON—Hollywood is sort of the King Kong to Europe's bananas, chewing up the monster's share of local audiences, generally leaving few leftovers to feed domestic productions. With that in mind, the United Kingdom and Ireland are among five countries taking the strength-in-numbers approach to countering Hollywood's domination of local cinemas by banding together to make their own joint productions. Canada, New Zealand, and Australia are the other members of the newly formed English-Language Cinema Plan (ELCP). The five countries (which hope to become six with the inclusion of South Africa) will pool their respective funds and talent to create films that rival American ones for audiences. Simon Perry, the Briton who conceived the plan, said member countries have only themselves to blame for allowing Hollywood to gain dominance in countries whose natives are English speakers. The ELCP will dedicate $500,000 for the first two years of its intended five-year life span, with an eye toward developing eight to 12 movies annually. The resulting films promise to have distinct cultural identities rather than those diluted by the participation of more than one country, Perry said. The member countries' representatives are: British Screen Finance (of which Perry is the executive director), the Irish Film Board, Telefilm Canada, the New Zealand Film Commission, and the Australian Film Finance Corp.

KEEPING UP WITH THE MULTIPLEXES

BERLIN—A five-year study by a German film agency has concluded that the multiplex boom is forcing older theatres to adapt or face annihilation. The German Federal Film Board found that the influx of multiplexes, which now account for 15 percent of the marketplace, has reduced the number of old-style cinemas within range of those multiplexes by 10 percent over the 1989-1995 period. The study also discovered that theatres in the same region as newly built multiplexes suffered a 20 percent decline in audiences in 1995.

However, older theatres that have managed to find niches, such as art-houses and cinemas that plan special events and film festivals, along with those that have renovated to remain technologically and architecturally exciting, stand the best chances of survival in any country, exhibitors say. Good thing, too, because the German multiplex boom shows no sign of slowing: 18 are currently under construction with another 54 in the planning stages. Exhibitors say the increase in screens has also had another effect: The more screens in a neighborhood, the more movies residents see. It's an effect they say that's beneficial to all theatres.

RAY OF HOPE

BUDAPEST—In December, post-communist filmmaking received a much-needed boost when the Hungarian film "Bolshe Vita" was awarded the first-ever Satyajit Ray Award, named for the director of "Panther Panchali," in London. "Vita" director Ibolya Fekete, 45, was honored for his drama set in Central Europe when the region was undergoing the transition from communism to democracy.

The Satyajit Ray Foundation launched the award to recognize new directors' films that reflect the legendary Indian film director's values and artistry. "Vita" is Fekete's first film and a triumph for Central European filmmaking, which is struggling in the wake of the same period of flux Fekete documents in his movie. For instance, government subsidies for film have been slashed as local economies adjust to the market system and domestic films are outgunned by Hollywood imports in terms of budgets, marketing and star power. The award also signals that artists in the countries of the former East bloc are finally able to document artistically the profound changes wrought by the demise of the Soviet system.

NO VIOLENCE, PLEASE, WE'RE BRITISH

LONDON—The British government, whose heritage secretary has been embroiled in a prominent campaign against David Cronenberg's sex-and-violence soaked flick "Crash," has stepped up its campaign against unsavory films by criticizing Hollywood for violent fare. The British Board of Film Classification filed a government report attacking the American film industry for exploiting violence in films. The report was directed at video releases and named superstars such as Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sylvester Stallone and Steven Seagal as perpetrators. James Ferman, director the board, urged Hollywood to voluntarily reduce screen violence, saying British censorship was helpless against the American industry's superior economic strength and Hollywood's domination of British boxoffice. The board also declined to strengthen its own censorship standards, saying the responsibility lies with the Americans.

The film classification board censors video releases. Since 1994, it has cut violent acts out of 369 videos and banned 14 from domestic release. The board's report echoes comments by National Heritage secretary Virginia Bottomley. Earlier last year, West End theatres agreed not to screen the controversial "Crash," inspired by Bottomley's well-publicized comments against the film's scenes of violence, most of which involve automobile accidents.

FELIX MAKING WAVES

BERLIN—Europe's answer to the Oscar lauded Danish director Lars von Trier's Scotland-set film "Breaking the Waves" as European Film of the Year and its British star Emily Watson as European Actress of the Year. The European Film Academy's ninth Felix awards ceremony in December attracted stars such as Ian McKellen (European Actor of the Year for "Richard III"), Ben Kingsley (who accepted the Lifetime Achievement Award on behalf of Alec Guiness), and Johnny Depp (awarded the first Screen International Five Continents Award for Jim Jarmusch's "Dead Man").

The academy has tried to broaden its appeal recently by expanding its membership and publicizing its awards show, including hosting the event in English—"Crying Game" producer and academy chairman Nik Powell did the honors. Felixes also went to Ireland's Terry George for "Some Mother's Son" (the Young European Film award); to Poland's Jerzy Sladkowski and Stanislaw Krzeminski (the Prix Arte for the pair's documentaries); and to "Prisoner of the Mountain" scribes Arif Alev, Sergei Bodrov and Boris Giller (the Screenwriter of the Year Award).

The academy originally was intended to be an elite group of filmmakers. However, lack of money and recognition prompted a makeover, including opening up competition to American films with the Five Continents Award. The next step: In 1997, Powell plans to privatize the Felixes. Could Rob Lowe singing show tunes be far behind?

Q&A: CROATIAN EXILE LORDAN ZAFRANOVIC

Lordan Zafranovic was born Feb. 11, 1944, on the island of Solta in Croatia and grew up in what was then Yugoslavia. In 1991, he fled Zagreb, smuggling out with him his documentary "Testament," which he was then editing. Zafranovic left behind his life's work: 13 features and 55 short films and documentaries, among them the Oscar-nominated "Occupation in 26 Images," made in 1978 and the crown jewel in an award-studded career. Currently in self-imposed exile in Prague, Zafranovic is working on his next film, "Balkan Island," based on the 1993 book by Vidosav Stevanovic. His campaign to get his films released from the Croatian state archives continues.



BOXOFFICE: Why have your films been embargoed?

LORDAN ZAFRANOVIC: Since I'm a filmmaker, I thought my job is to actually discover and reveal the truth. The people of Croatia, after 1943, went to the Partisans and Allies, but part of the Croatian people unfortunately went to help Hitler. They were his collaborators. Croatia was a satellite country [run by Croatian fascists called the Ustashe]—they made camps, where they killed Serbs, Jews and Gypsies. I want to show what people really did, so they can come clean and go on with their lives. But with this Croatian government in 1991, the Ustashe life came back to Croatia. Of course this government did not like ["Testament"] because it's actually a picture of them. Only five or six [of my films] talk about the Ustashe, but they won't let any of them out. The other films are about everyday life, about normal people. Even the amateur films from 1961 are banned, which means it's not a question of films, it's a question of name.

BOXOFFICE: What are you doing to get your films back?

ZAFRANOVIC: I wrote a few letters to [Croatian President Franjo] Mr. Tudjman, but nothing's successful so far. There were several protests. Fifty directors wrote directly to Mr. Tudjman. This year at the Karlovy Vary festival there was also a protest. Sixty or 70 people signed, including several Oscar winners. It was sent to the Helsinki Board of Human Rights in Croatia, but... nothing. It's very bad for me, because I have to show my films to producers in America, and there is nothing I can show.

BOXOFFICE: The Jadran film archive claimed your films have deteriorated too much to transport out of the country.

ZAFRANOVIC: It's pure lies. Those were new copies. They cannot say the films are banned, that's why they say this. It's the old communist system... The thing is, the people who won't release the films are ex-producers, friends, people who worked with me on these films, and they won't let these films out. Because they're scared. They're there and I'm here.

BOXOFFICE: What makes you think your films haven't been destroyed?

ZAFRANOVIC: I simply cannot believe something like that. That would be murder...

BOXOFFICE: Your situation highlights the potential power a country's national film archive has over films of significance made in that country. What has your experience taught you about the role of national film archives?

ZAFRANOVIC: The rules vary from country to country. And in a country like Croatia, there are no rules. It's not just embarrassing for Croatia, it's embarrassing for the whole of Europe. A thing like this case probably does not exist anywhere else in the world, except maybe China or Cuba. There's nothing that [protects] authors' rights. ■

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BOXOFFICE criss-crosses North America to cover five film fests

★★★★★ OUTSTANDING
★★★★ VERY GOOD
★★★ GOOD
★★ FAIR
★ POOR
(no stars) BOMB

MONTREAL

DIFFERENT FOR GIRLS ★★

Starring Steven Mackintosh, Rupert Graves and Saskia Reeves. Directed by Richard Spence. Written by Tony Marchant. Produced by John Chapman. A First Look release. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 97 min. Won the Grand Prix of the Americas for Best Film at the Montreal fest. Opens June 1997.

Steven Mackintosh is excellent as Kim, nee Karl, a transsexual whose orderly life is upset when she meets Paul, an old schoolmate and protector ("Intimate Relations'" Rupert Graves) whom she's always fancied. But "Different for Girls" doesn't know how to handle Mackintosh's character; its potentially fascinating story arc of Kim's path through conservative society is never properly developed.

The film is also contrived; having Paul, a charming but aimless slob, display a sexual interest in the proper, anal-to-a-fault Kim is not believable. Neither is a situation that sees Paul arrested and Kim debating whether to testify for him—and risk everyone learning of her private life. The shaky relationship between Kim and her sister ("Butterfly Kiss'" Saskia Reeves), who has problems of her own, is another non-starter. Bland and conventional, despite the sex-change angle, "Different for Girls" is not different enough.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

CRIME TIME ★1/2

Starring Stephen Baldwin, Pete Postlethwaite and Sadie Frost. Directed by George Sluizer. Written by Brendan Somers. Produced by David Pupkewitz. A Trimark release. Drama. Rated R for violence, sexuality and language. Running time: 118 min.

In a near-future England, TV recreations of crimes are all the rage. But what happens when a murderer ("Dragonheart's" Pete Postlethwaite) begins to identify with the actor ("Threesome's" Stephen Baldwin) who plays him and, worse, carries out his killings based on their chances of being dramatized on the tube?

The cinematic juxtaposition of TV and its influence on "reality" isn't fresh; it's popped up in everything from "Deathwatch" to "The Running Man" to "To Die For." But "Crime Time" adds nothing new to the lexicon of media analysis. Its premises, that anyone can kill and that the line between citizen and killer is a thin one, are offered as revelation when, in fact, "Crime Time" is just a bargain basement rehash of the truly compelling relationship between Hannibal Lecter and Clarice Starling in "The Silence of the Lambs."

It also stretches credulity right from the start, when Baldwin's actor gets a gig as the murderer of the week on a TV series called "Crime Time." Baldwin's impersonation of a talented actor isn't at all convincing on either level, as the real thing or as the character he's playing. Then there's Baldwin's thespian girlfriend ("A Pyromaniac's Love Story's" Sadie Frost), who is consistently cast as his victim in the show's scenarios; how low is its budget, anyway? Director George Sluizer, who bitterly (and rightfully) complained that Hollywood compromised the ending of his "The Vanishing" remake, has by himself made a movie nearly as ridiculous.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

THREE LIVES AND ONLY ONE DEATH ★★1/2

Starring Marcello Mastroianni and Anna Galiena. Directed by Raoul Ruiz. Written by Raoul Ruiz and Pascal Bonitzer. Produced by Paulo Branco. A New Yorker release. Comedy. French-language; English subtitles. Unrated. Running time: 123 min.

A man returns to his wife after a 20-year absence. A rich professor lives as a tramp. A businessman discovers that the family he has invented for business reasons is planning to visit. All three parts are played by the late Marcello Mastroianni with playful charm; he also portrays a butler on an estate that is unexpectedly inherited by an impoverished young couple (Marcello's daughter Chiara Mastroianni and Melvil Poupaud). Eventually, all of Marcello's characters turn out to be the same man.

Mastroianni is supported by a top cast that includes Marisa Paredes ("The Flower of My Secret") as the wife with the missing husband, and Anna Galiena ("The Hairdresser's Husband") as a sexy callgirl revealed to be a business executive. In the imaginative screenplay, characters continually acquire new identities, and the cast makes "Three Lives and Only One Death" enjoyable. But, because the characters calmly accept every outrageous event (even an ax to the head), the film fatally lacks tension and believability.—*Ed Scheid*

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SAINT CLARA ★1/2

Starring Lucy Dubinchek, Halil Eohev, Johnny Peterson and Maya Meron. Directed and written by Ari Fulman and Ori Sivan. Produced by Marek Rozenbaum and Yuri Sabag. A Kino release. SF. Hebrew-language; English subtitles. Unrated. Running time: 85 min.

In what could be the first Israeli post-apocalyptic film, co-creators Ari Fulman and Ori Sivan have burdened "Saint Clara," adapted from a Yelena and Pavel Kohout novel, with one too many contrived subplots, suffocating an interesting premise.

Set in 1999 yet looking very "Mad Max"-ish, this oddball teen angst treatise and magic realism wannabe presents an assortment of seventh graders attending dreary Golda Meir School. When an entire class scores perfectly on a math test, the authorities discover that a Russian immigrant girl named Clara (Lucy Dubinchek) has astonishing psychic powers that allow her to predict the correct answers.

Beyond that, the tale is cluttered with rebellion, friendship, love, nuclear disaster, parents who seem certifiably insane, and a good three dozen other elements. In terms of casting, the kids outshine the rather bizarre adult players, most of whom appear to be drugged and/or inappropriately seductive with young people.—*Susan Green*

THE DARIEN GAP ★★★1/2

Starring Lyn Vaus and Sandi Carroll. Directed and written by Brad Anderson. Produced by Brad Anderson and Jim Taylor. A Northern Arts release. Drama. Unrated. Running time: 90 min.

With a cinema verite feel, "The Darien Gap" profiles a restless young man (Lyn Vaus, as himself) who dreams of shooting video footage of the legendary giant sloth in Patagonia. On a deeper level, this Boston-bred independent film by London Film School grad Brad Anderson is a cautionary Generation-X tale: Children of divorce could be unable to connect with each other or develop a sense of their own futures.

Lyn tries to bond romantically with Polly (Sandi Carroll), an aspiring fashion designer, but the giant sloth calls. Lyn keeps a stash of unopened letters from the father who disappeared from his life two decades earlier. Family home movies show the happy face that once masked dysfunction. Although a bumpy ride, the film manages to be touching and occasionally quite funny, with a soundtrack of fabulous, albeit abbreviated, songs by some of Beantown's best underground bands.—*Susan Green*

NOT FOURTEEN AGAIN ★★1/2

Directed and written by Gillian Armstrong. Produced by Jenny Day and Gillian Armstrong. No distributor set. Documentary. Not yet rated. Running time: 108 min.

In 1976, Australian director Gillian Armstrong ("Little Women") began a series of films following the lives of three young Aussie girls. "Smokes and Lollies" profiled them at age 14, "Fourteen's Good, Eighteen's Better" arrived four years later and "Bingo, Bridesmaids and Braces" came in 1988, when the three were 26. "Not Fourteen Again" is the latest installment of the series that examines Kerry, Diana and Josie, now 34 and with children of their own, two of whom are 14-year-old girls. Fortuitously, that fact allows Armstrong to repeat to her subjects' daughters some of the same questions she'd asked before.

By duplicating much of the format of Michael Apted's fine "Up" series of documentaries, Armstrong forces comparisons. Unfortunately, she doesn't benefit by them. "Not Fourteen Again" is more diffuse than Apted's films. Though Apted deals with a dozen subjects, he does a better job of delineating them than does Armstrong, who can't seem to make her three subjects stand out from one another.

Some of "Not Fourteen Again" is substantial. Conversations with the new generation of girls is compelling because they seem less preoccupied with staying within defined gender roles. At film's end, Armstrong suggests she will return in a few years for another go-round with her women. Despite this film's flaws, that's a welcome prospect.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

HOLY WEEK ★★

Starring Beata Fundalej, Wojciech Malajkat and Magdalena Warzecha. Directed and written by Andrzej Wajda. Produced by Lew Rywin. No distributor set. Drama. Polish-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 100 min.

Much as "Mississippi Burning" reduced African-Americans to extras in their own history, "Holy Week"—based on a short story by Jerzy Andrzejewski—slights the Jewish battle to survive the 1943 destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto in favor of a

SUNDANCE REVIEW

LOVE! VALOUR! COMPASSION! ★★★1/2

Starring Jason Alexander, John Glover and John Benjamin Hickey. Directed by Joe Mantello. Written by Terrence McNally. Produced by Doug Chapin and Barry Krost. A Fine Line release. Drama/comedy. Rated R for graphic nudity, some sexuality and strong language. Running time: 115 min.

What initially seems to be the latest in a growing trend of gay-themed cinema, "Love! Valour! Compassion!" actually reaches mainstream appeal by showing how the human heart—regardless of race, color or sexual preference—must challenge itself in finding new ways to stay true and connected in the complicated '90s. In this adaptation of Terrence McNally's Tony-winning play, eight gay male friends rendezvous at a sprawling Victorian home on a private lake over three summer holiday weekends, where they fall in love and fall from grace, hurt and forgive, celebrate strengths and chastise weaknesses. They form an assortment of hilarious and inspiring permutations on contemporary relationships and even don tutus for a good cause.



Fine Line's "Love! Valour! Compassion," which bowed at Sundance, opens May 16 NY/LA/SF.

Jon Mantello, who directed the stage version, makes his film directing debut, and the result has the look and feel of a low-budget movie with its use of a single location—lush country grounds on a remote estate—which effectively creates intimacy without ever stifling. There's no need for more than the one setting, because the film's power comes from the actors, most of whom were in the original New York cast. Included in that ensemble is John Glover, who won a Tony for his ingenious double role as the polar opposite twins John and James Jeckyll. The only "Hollywood" addition is Jason Alexander, who delivers a superb turn as the flamboyant Buzz, "love child of Judy Garland and Liberace."

An unneeded flash-forward (with voiceover) near the end breaks the mood and flow, but the players override the flaw. The octet succeeds in conveying a touching, often funny, and at times heartbreaking story that celebrates the fragility of life, love and the human spirit.—***Zorianna Kit***

tediously revisionist examination of Polish attitudes toward the Jews during that time.

The historical reality is that the Jewish inhabitants of the Ghetto were pretty much on their own when they decided to fight back against the Nazis, but writer/director Andrzej Wajda falsely balances the equation, with each "good" Pole being matched by a "bad" one. And his only major Jewish character, Irena (Beata Fundalej), who hides out at a Christian ex-boyfriend's house, is there only so the Poles can agonize about what to do as the Ghetto burns.

Wajda doesn't even utilize the inherently dramatic Warsaw setting; most of the film inexplicably takes place in the country. Dramatically slack and morally questionable, "Holy Week" fails to do justice to its important subject.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

PRETTY VILLAGE, PRETTY FLAME ★★★

Starring Dragan Bjelogrlic, Nikola Kojo and Velimir Bata Zivojinovic. Directed by Srdjan Dragojevic. Written by Srdjan Dragojevic, Vanja Bulic and Nikola Pejakovic. Produced by Goran Bjelogrlic and Dragan Bjelogrlic. No distributor set. Drama. Serbian-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 128 min.

The long-running, bloody Bosnian conflict is the backdrop for this forceful anti-war drama, which opens and closes with newsreel footage of politicians dedicating monuments to friendship among Yugoslavia's various factions. In each case, the dignitary cutting the ribbon cuts himself instead. That gives an idea of the tone of this cleverly named film, which largely is set in an abandoned tunnel in which a group of Serbs are besieged by Muslim soldiers.

But the movie opens in a hospital ward where the tunnel survivors try to keep their old hatreds alive. It also flashes backward to the pre-war relationship between a Serb named Milan (Dragan Bjelogric) and a Muslim named Halil (Nikola Pejakovic) who later become bitter enemies. With some scenes worthy of Vonnegut at his most hallucinatory, "Pretty Village, Pretty Flame" barrels its way forward, almost forcing the audience to pay attention. It's somewhat cliched and a little more pro-Serb than necessary, but it packs a genuine punch.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

CHILDHOOD'S END ★★★

Starring Cameron Foord and Heather Gottlieb. Directed and written by Jeff Lipsky. Produced by Jason Kliot and Joana Vicente. No distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 115 min.

An impressive debut from Jeff Lipsky, founder of October Films turned filmmaker, "Childhood's End" has more in common with frank, uncompromising European cinema than with its softer American model. Following a group of Minneapolis teenagers, all on the cusp of adult responsibilities and challenges, "Childhood's End" sets out to paint a dark but still optimistic portrait of contemporary American youth.

It's loosely plotted, picking up and dropping its characters in turn, but it never feels underwritten or sloppy. The film concentrates on two main strands: the relationship between Greg (Sam Trammell), a hotshot young photo editor, and Evelyn (Cameron Foord), a forthright older woman; and the budding friendship between Evelyn's cynical daughter Denise (Colleen Werthmann) and the painfully shy Rebecca (Heather Gottlieb). "Childhood's End" is a strongly presented, sexually explicit drama, strikingly well acted and often startling in its intensity. Some pretentious, overblown literary dialogue aside, it marks Lipsky as a talent to watch.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

THE NYMPH ★

Starring Stefania Sandrelli, Raoul Bova and Lucia Cara. Directed by Lina Wertmuller. Written by Ugo Pirro and Lina Wertmuller. Produced by Fulvio Lucisano. No distributor set. Drama. Italian-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 111 min.

A tedious variation on Bernardo Bertolucci's "Stealing Beauty," "The Nymph" is set in the less than pastoral town of Nofi, circa World War II. Miluzza (Lucia Cara) is a budding teenager, lusted after by half the men in her village, including the local priest; yet she remains oblivious. She just wants to enjoy her life, but fate and misfortune dictate otherwise.

In "Stealing Beauty," the heroine wanted to lose her virginity; in "The Nymph," it's taken from her. Otherwise, both films are vapid. The difference between them is that Wertmuller doesn't have Bertolucci's poetic eye. "The Nymph," based on a Demenico Rea novel, fails to come to life, despite the vibrant presence of Stefania Sandrelli as Miluzza's promiscuous mother. Its ostensible critique of small-town attitudes and prejudices is superficial, a pretense to meaning.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

FORGOTTEN SILVER ★★★1/2

Directed and written by Peter Jackson and Costa Botes. Produced by Sue Rogers. No distributor set. Mockumentary. Not yet rated. Running time: 52 min.

New Zealand film pioneer Colin McKenzie receives his due from two countrymen in this documentary, which unearths his "lost" 1917 silent "Salome" and shines a light on a remarkable career that saw McKenzie use both sound and color in motion pictures years before Hollywood did. The only problem is that McKenzie never existed, a "fact" that allows co-directors/co-scripters Peter Jackson ("The Frighteners") and Costa Botes to spoof the craze for discovering obscure films and restoring the reputation of neglected filmmakers.

With the usual experts dutifully trotted out to pay homage to McKenzie, including film historian Leonard Maltin and Miramax head Harvey Weinstein, "Forgotten Silver" is an uncanny, deadpan take on the typical hagiography.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

HAMSUN ★★★1/2

Starring Max Von Sydow and Ghita Norby. Directed by Jan Troell. Written by Per Olov Enquist. Produced by Erik Crone. No distributor set. Drama. Norwegian- and German-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 160 min.

The story of Norwegian writer Knut Hamsun—a 1920 Nobel Prize winner who betrayed his country by siding with the Nazis after they occupied Norway—has been powerfully and vividly brought to the screen by Swedish director Jan Troell ("The Emigrants"). Based on a book by Thorkild Hansen, "Hamsun" spans the last 17 years in the author's life, beginning in 1935 and encompassing his perpetually rocky marriage, his estrangement from his children, his lack of self-worth after years of writer's block, and his attempt to rewin his countrymen's good graces after WWII.

Hamsun's is not an easily understood persona, and Max Von Sydow's fluid performance never allows an easy reaction toward him. His Hamsun is compelling—an elderly cold soul whose stubborn integrity prompts admiration even as his myopia provokes horror. Troell's intimate epic suggests that Hamsun's anti-British fervor and nationalistic wish to see Norway prominent in the new Europe blinded him to German anti-Semitism and the occupation's viciousness. That might be a questionable interpretation, but in the film it's convincing. As Hamsun's bitter, even more pro-German wife, Ghita Norby gives a shaded performance. Richly atmospheric, "Hamsun" sags in the middle and short-shrifts the writer's relations with his children, but mostly it does justice to an unusual man and his turbulent life.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

FAREWELL MY DARLING ★★

Starring Sung Choi, Jung Sook Moon and Sung Duk Kwon. Directed and written by Chul-Soo Park. Produced by Youngman Kim. No distributor set. Drama. Korean-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 116 min. Won a Special Grand Prix of the Jury at Montreal.

When the patriarch of a large, extended Korean clan dies suddenly in a bicycle accident, his kin from far and near arrive for a few days of mourning, burial preparation and the funeral. It's a drawn-out process that exposes rifts and resentments among various family members.

If that plot sounds a lot like Juzo Itami's skillful and delicate 1984 black comedy "The Funeral," it's because "Farewell My Darling" is virtually the same story, complete with the obligatory relative who wants to make sure proper custom is followed. The problem with "Farewell My Darling" is that it coarsens what was wonderful about Itami's film. Its characterizations are one-dimensional—audiences never learn anything about the relatives during the two hours of screen time—and Park's direction is crass. He moves the camera crazily but to little end; the sensitivity and tact needed remain absent.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

FESTIVAL REVIEWS

PITTSBURGH

THE PHANTOM LOVER ★★★1/2

Starring Leslie Cheung, Wu Chien-lien, Huang Lei and Liu Lin. Directed by Ronny Yu. Written by Roy Szeto, Raymond Wong and Ronny Yu. Produced by Michael Ng, Raymond Wong and Leslie Cheung. No distributor set. Drama. Mandarin-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 100 min. Screened at Pittsburgh's 3 Rivers fest.

In 1930s China, a theatrical troupe arrives to perform in a dilapidated theatre that had burned down 10 years before. Director/co-writer Ronny Yu, shooting these scenes in black-and-white, emphasizes the decay of the theatre and the shadows of the mysterious backstage area. Flashbacks shot in color tell the fire's cause. The ornate structure was built by Song Deeping ("Farewell My Concubine's" Leslie Cheung), a popular star who sings as a musical Romeo to enraptured females and angry older men. His offstage love ("Eat Drink Man Woman's" Wu Chien-lien) has been promised to a corrupt politician's son. In revenge for her rejection of the arranged suitor, the theatre is torched. Song is presumed dead; his lover goes mad. In reality, Song's face was disfigured by the flames, and he has hidden in the ruins.

The theatrical troupe's opening performance, which satirizes communist propaganda, is a disaster. In desperation, the lead decides their next performance will be Song's musical version of "Romeo and Juliet." There are other parallels: The rejected suitor is now a cultural official who's attracted to the new star's girlfriend.

The flashback's bright colors (especially the reds) accentuate the passion of the romance from the past. Lush images and opulent stage design make an appropriate setting for the intense emotions of Song's love story. Cheung is charismatic as the onstage Romeo, the offstage lover and the disfigured phantom, who proves far more benign than the one haunting Paris' Opera. Wu and the other actors create vivid portraits without exaggerating their characters' emotions. Director Yu has made a film that's both enjoyable and absorbing as the love stories of past and present intersect.—*Ed Scheid*

HITS! ★★★

Starring Jeff Monahan, James Marshall, Martin Sheen and Alanna Ubach. Directed by William R. Greenblatt. Written by Jeff Monahan. Produced by William R. Greenblatt and Martha D. Humphreys. No distributor set. Comedy. Not yet rated. Running time: 83 min. Screened at Pittsburgh's 3 Rivers fest.

Dommy ("Twin Peaks'" James Marshall) and Mickey (Jeff Monahan, who also scripts) are assigned by a crime boss (Martin Sheen, in an interesting change-of-pace role) to follow a man and retrieve a briefcase he's stolen. Mickey has been recruited only becuase his brother, who had worked for the mob, is unavailable. Mickey is disheveled, with uncombed long hair; partner Dommy is slick and tries to act cool, but he's actually as inexperienced as Mickey.

Marshall and Monahan have a good chemistry as their characters unexpectedly bond because of the time the duo is forced to spend together. But the main strength of "Hits!" is Monahan's talent for writing quirky and amusing dialogue that cleverly defines Mickey and Dommy. Their comic banter holds the film together and, combined with the appealing performances of the leads, makes the two mismatched characters a likable pair.—*Ed Scheid*

TELLURIDE

IRMA VEP ★★1/2

Starring Maggie Cheung and Jean-Pierre Leaud. Directed and written by Olivier Assayas. Produced by Georges Benayoun. A Zeitgeist release. Comedy. French-language; English subtitles. Unrated. Running time: 98 min. Opens in April.

A has-been French director (played by Jean-Pierre Leaud) hires Hong Kong action star Maggie Cheung (playing herself) to star as a jewel thief in a remake of a silent classic serial, "Les Vampires," which he plans to shoot as a silent also. The director is ridiculed by the crew as he loses control. Meanwhile, Cheung is having her own problems: She doesn't speak the crew's French, and she must deal with the advances of a lesbian costume designer (Nathalie Richard).

"Irma Vep" is much lighter than the emotional studies that were writer/director Olivier Assayas' previous works. The most interesting element of this film is an initial culture clash between the Asian actress and French intellectuals. Assayas' screenplay makes clever satirical observations on the French film industry, but the characters and situations are superficially developed, particularly when Cheung attempts to get into character by trying to steal jewels from a woman's hotel room. Overall, this look behind the scenes at French filmmaking suffers in comparison with a classic like Truffaut's "Day for Night" (which also starred Leaud).—*Ed Scheid*

GABBEH ★★★

Starring Shaghayegh Djodat and Hossein Moharami. Directed and written by Mohsen Makhmalbaf. Produced by Khalil Daroudtchi and Khalil Mahmoudl. A New Yorker release. Drama. Iranian-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 75 min. Opens in May.

Among the nomadic peoples of Iran, a gabbeh is a handwoven carpet with patterns inspired by tribal life. As this film opens, an old woman is washing her gabbeh in a river; a young woman named Gabbeh (Shaghayegh Djodat), dressed in the deep blue of the carpet, appears and talks about her life, which is told in the fabric's patterns: Her father forbids her to marry the man she loves; as she travels with the tribe, her lover follows at a distance on horseback.

"Gabbeh" combines a fable with a documentary-like look at nomadic life. Unlike the black robes depicted in Iranian films set in urban areas, the tribespeople here wear bright costumes. The film is likewise full of vividly colorful images of the world the nomads encounter. "Life is color," says one character; a man's hand changes colors as he points to the sky and flowers. Director/writer/editor Mohsen Makhmalbaf weaves together different threads into an unusual and intriguing film.—*Ed Scheid*

LILIAN'S STORY ★★★★

Starring Ruth Cracknell and Toni Collette. Directed by Jerzy Domaradzki. Written by Steve Wright. Produced by Marian Macgowan. No distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 96 min.

"Lilian's Story," with a script based on a novel by Kate Grenville that itself was inspired by actual events, is about the tenacity to survive. Lilian (Ruth Cracknell) is released after spending 40 years in a mental institution. Adapting to her new surroundings is difficult; her great joy is in speaking Shakespeare's verse, so she recites the Bard on the street to support the family she forms with other outcasts. Lilian gradually remembers the incidents with her stern father ("Strictly Ballroom's" Barry Otto) that led to her incarceration.

Cracknell is outstanding, showing a wide range of emotions as Lilian expresses herself through her "Sir William." In flashbacks, the young Lilian ("Muriel's Weddings'" Toni Collette) has a youthful optimism that is eventually destroyed. Jerzy Domaradzki, a Polish director working in Australia, brings a sense of discovery to this absorbing film as Lilian finds herself in a world very different from what she remembered. As in Kieslowski's "Blue" and "The Double Life of Veronique," the cinematography of Slawomir Idziak focuses on subtle feelings found in the expressions of a woman's face.—*Ed Scheid*

AYN RAND: A SENSE OF LIFE ★★★1/2

Narrated by Sharon Gless. Directed, written and produced by Michael Paxton. An A.G. Media production; no distributor set. Documentary. Not yet rated. Running time: 121 min.

"Ayn Rand: A Sense of Life" provides viewers with an enriching historical perspective of the life and times of Ayn Rand, the best-selling author of "The Fountainhead" and "Atlas Shrugged." In this vivid film, writer/director/producer Michael Paxton has studiously assembled a montage of Rand's life, loves and work via stock footage, rare photos, taped interviews, film clips, and even rare footage of her testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee. Despite the fact that Paxton never met the author, his film breathes life into the woman, commonly regarded as one of the most controversial and provocative writers of this century.

FESTIVAL REVIEWS

"Ayn Rand" is a joyous movie, although its subject matter at times is dark. Through the use of music, live and still shots with Rand and interviews with some of her closest friends, Paxton successfully brings to life a complex woman whose philosophy of objectivism (an atheistic worldview in which human beings are responsible for their own happiness and fate) was both her greatest asset and worst curse.

In Rand's novels, it is the human spirit that is always fighting to prevail against a backdrop of repression. Likewise, in Rand's life, that theme often repeats itself, as Paxton portrays Rand's undying strength of character as the film's dominant theme. In so doing, Paxton makes "Ayn Rand: A Sense of Life" a testament to the woman. In explaining the person behind the great novels, the film conveys her sense of life and establishes Rand as one of the greatest visionaries of her time.—*Pat Kramer*

LA RENCONTRE ★★

Directed/written by Alain Cavalier. Produced by Francoise Widhoff. Artistic License release. Drama. French-language; English subtitles. Unrated. Running time: 75 min.

Part of Telluride's tribute to Alain Cavalier, this film displayed the unusual progression of the writer/director's cinematic career. He began with films that starred luminaries like Catherine Deneuve (he called his collaboration with her "my last makeup job") but his approach evolved into the minimalist style of "Therese."

Shooting in Hi-8 video ("La Rencontre" was filmed while being projected on a video monitor), Cavalier uses objects and conversations to tell the story of a relationship. Eventually, the objects acquire emotional connections, as when a dead father's last pair of shoes is described. The photography, also by Cavalier, is impeccable. But "La Rencontre" would have made a better short film; at the current 75 minutes, the accumulation of minute detail becomes monotonous, and the dialogue is unable to make the unseen speakers interesting.—*Ed Scheid*

A SELF MADE HERO ★★★★

Starring Mathieu Kassovitz, Anouk Grinberg, Sandrine Kiberlain and Jean-Louis Trintignant. Directed by Jacques Audlard. Written by Alain Le Henry and Jacques Audlard. Produced by Patrick Godeau. No distributor set. Comedy/drama. French-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 105 min.

"The best lives are invented" is a significant quote from this very inventive film about deception and avoiding the truth of the past. "A Self Made Hero" ("Un Heros Tres Discret"), directed and co-written by Jacques Audlard, won the best screenplay award at Cannes in an earlier screening last year; based on a novel by Jean-Francois Denlau, the script takes clever turns and captures many amusing details.

Albert, a boy in a French town post-Great War, has his first exposure to lies when he discovers his dead father, whom his mother reveres as a battle hero, was a drunk who died in a bar. Albert learns to hide what is true. Grown, Albert ("La Haine's" Mathieu Kassovitz) pretends to have been a Resistance agent, even romancing a seductive Resistance fighter (Anouk Grinberg).

Audlard ingeniously adds a documentary-like structure by having a current-day Albert ("Red's" Jean-Louis Trintignant) along with contemporaries and scholars periodically comment on his past. Kassovitz, who received a Cannes best director nod for "La Haine," is always likable as the supposed hero who gains confidence as his fabrications are believed, and the supporting cast is excellent.—*Ed Scheid*

RIOT ★★★1/2

Starring Dante Basco, Luke Perry and Mario Van Peebles. Directed by Galen Yuen, Alex Munoz, Richard DiLello and David C. Johnson. Written by Galen Yuen, Joe Vasquez, Richard DiLello and David C. Johnson. Executive produced by Harry Winer, Judith A. Polone and Fred Fuchs. A Showtime production; no distributor set. Dramatic vignettes. Not yet rated. Running time: 96 min.

"Riot," for which the Showtime network hopes to find a domestic distributor before airing it on pay TV, shows the 1992 Los Angeles civil disturbances from ethnic perspectives. Each of four vignettes is engrossing; each filmmaker is of the same ethnic group as his characters, lending the film an authenticity as it portrays the viewpoint of different communities. But what makes "Riot" especially powerful is that the stories intersect to emphasize the end result of these racial divisions: Euphoric Hispanics loot a Chinese family's store; a policeman tries to stop the thieving as a black mother's son tries to flee his area. Throughout, the fine ensemble shows the emotional consequences of the destruction.—*Ed Scheid*

FT. LAUDERDALE: DAY & DATE: 3/21

THE QUIET ROOM ★★★

Starring Chloe Ferguson, Celine O'Leary, Paul Blackwell and Phoebe Ferguson. Directed and written by Ralf de Heer. Produced by Ralf de Heer and Giuseppe Pedersoli. A Fine Line release. Drama. Rated PG for language and thematic elements involving a child affected by domestic discord. Running time: 98 min. Screened at the Fort Lauderdale fest.

A child's-eye-view of a family coming unglued, "The Quiet Room" is an absorbing tale with a few imperfections, chiefly that Dutch-born Australian director Ralf de Heer falls short in his attempt to effectively provide the perspective of a young girl who stops speaking because her parents cannot stop their fighting.



Fine Line's "The Quiet Room," which screened at Ft. Lauderdale, bows 3/21 NY and expands 4/18.

An unnamed, moon-faced seven-year-old (Chloe Ferguson) recalls how much better things were when she was just three (a toddler played by real-life sibling Phoebe Ferguson). "Me when I was then," as she puts it in ongoing voiceover, lived with Mother (Celine O'Leary) and Father (Paul Blackwell) in a happy home seen through flashbacks.

Now, as the couple bickers in increasingly angry cycles, their silent daughter enacts clever subterfuges calculated to pull them back together. Failing that, she retreats to her bedroom to draw pointedly symbolic pictures that the adults are too distracted to understand. All she wants is to move to the country, get a puppy and make the dysfunction go away.

A sad portrait of people in pain, the film has several crucial elements that don't work well. The child is too wise and world-weary to be fully believable, and her folks are far too generic. When things are proceeding smoothly, they're giddy; when matters are going poorly, the dimensions of their anguish seem quite predictable.

On the plus side, de Heer and cinematographer Tony Clark offer some memorably visual moments when the child stages an all-Barbie wedding party, when she attempts to hatch an unfertilized egg under a desk lamp, and when she rather gruesomely mimics Mother while the older woman is applying her makeup.

As divorce looms, the distraught girl ups the ante. Thankfully, "The Quiet Room" ends on a hopeful, though not necessarily feel-good, note.—***Susan Green***

BOXOFFICE REVIEWS

March 1997

★★★★★ OUTSTANDING
★★★★ VERY GOOD
★★★ GOOD
★★ FAIR
★ POOR
(no stars) BOMB

GOOD LUCK ★★1/2

Starring Gregory Hines, Vincent D'Onofrio and Max Gail. Directed by Richard LaBrie. Written by Bob Comfort. Produced by Richard Hahn, Shirley Hahn and Andrej Kamarowski. An East West release. Comedy. Rated R for some sex-related language (rating being appealed to CARA board). Running time: 98 min. Opens 3/7 eight markets, 4/4 natl.

If good intentions could be broadcast directly onto the screen, "Good Luck" would win an Oscar. It's easy to admire much about this small-scale, character-driven production. The first release from East West Partners Films, the new home of former October Films head Jeff Lipsky, tells the story of a paraplegic (Gregory Hines) who wants adventure and a chance to change society's image of the disabled. He enlists the help of a bitter, suicidal ex-pro football star ("The Whole Wide World's" Vincent D'Onofrio) who lost his sight during a game in a freak accident. After convincing him that with trust their disabilities cancel out, the pair set out on a standard movie-style roadtrip through the Pacific Northwest. The aim: competing in a whitewater raft race.

Hines and D'Onofrio do excellent work, making their characters' disabilities believable, and several sequences achieve "Good Luck's" entertaining goal. Unfortunately, director Richard LaBrie is unable to ride out some rough passages in the script by Bob Comfort ("Dogfight"), so "Good Luck" is swamped before its boys reach the river.

Sometimes the filmmakers draw the audience in completely, yet other times not a single onscreen line or action rings true. Guy-talk banter that's keen and funny in one scene is awkward and obvious in the next. Eventually, this rollercoaster ride between finely observed detail and dreadful cliche, between thought-provoking insights and feel-good-movie lies, makes moviegoers pray for just enough good luck for the movie to be over.—*Alex Albanese*

MON HOMME ★★★

Starring Anouk Grinberg and Gerard Lanvin. Directed and written by Bertrand Blier. Produced by Les Films Alain Sarde-Plateau a Studio Images 2. An Artificial Eye release. Drama. French-language; English subtitles. Unrated. Running time: 98 min. Opens 3/7 NY, April natl.

In this 1995 French-language film, a prostitute named Marie (Anouk Grinberg) is so uniquely good at her work she's hardly interested in the money; she breathes men's sexual pleasure. If she has a need, it's to find "my man"—the man she can love above all others, and who will love her even as she loves all others. She finds him, she thinks, in a filthy homeless man named Jeannot (Gerard Lanvin); when, after she takes him in for a meal and then her bed, and he proves himself the equal of her in amours, she names him her pimp, to whom she will devote her life.

To this point, "Mon Homme" carries a sexual electricity. As Jeannot tries to accustom himself to being a man of wealth and leisure, the film grows comic. When Jeannot begins straying and is finally found out—thanks to Jeannot's arrest by gendarmes—by a crushed Marie, "Mon Homme" switches to drama. In the film's last swerve, ahead to Jeannot's release from prison, it becomes a morality fable. Art-house audiences able to stroll "Mon Homme's" weaving road will leave the theatre feeling satisfied, but not as consummately as if the film's first focus, Marie, had been their companion to the climax.—*Kim Williamson*

MANDELA ★1/2

Directed by Jo Menell and Angus Gibson. Produced by Jonathan Demme, Edward Saxon and Jo Menell. An Island release. Documentary. Unrated. Run time: 119 min.

Making a brilliant documentary often brings out the worst in filmmakers. They must push their subjects past the boiling point to challenge the preconceived notions of their subject, or go soft and lay in danger of generating either mediocre product or, as with "Mandela," creating propaganda.

This surface exploration of the turbulent life of South African President Nelson Mandela uses old news footage and current-day interviews to piece together Mandela's past, from his days as a lawyer and cofounder of the ANC Youth League to his rise to power, 27-year imprisonment, and 1994 election as president.

It's what's missing from "Mandela" that's the problem. The filmmakers avoid political discussions of any kind, refusing to question anything. There are no opposing viewpoints here, and none of Mandela's enemies are interviewed. There's not even a historian to put it all into objective perspective. Even as the filmmakers glorify Mandela to God-like status, they pretend not to. They show him, for example, in the bathroom shaving, as if proximity equals intimacy. This scene is meant to portray Mandela as an average man, but it actually reveals nothing of his true character—just like the movie.—*Lea Russo*

BLOOD & WINE ★★★

Starring Jack Nicholson, Stephen Dorff, Jennifer Lopez, Michael Caine and Judy Davis. Directed by Bob Rafelson. Written by Nick Villiers and Alison Cross. Produced by Jeremy Thomas. A Fox Searchlight release. Thriller. Rated R for violence and language. Running time: 100 min.

Based on a story by co-scripter Nick Villiers and director Bob Rafelson, "Blood & Wine" weaves together temptation, a stressed marriage, paranoia and murder; at its core is a failing wine merchant (Jack Nicholson) looking to make a big score. To make his dream a reality, he enlists the help of his sexy Latin mistress ("Selena's" Jennifer Lopez) and his safe-cracking partner-in-crime, Victor (Michael Caine). The bounty's worth: $1 million. Meanwhile, Alex tries to deal with his hanging-by-a-thread relationship with his stepson ("Reckless'" Stephen Dorff) and must get his wife (Judy Davis) to accept that their marriage has lost its spark.

In this fifth collaboration between Rafelson and Le Jack, the director benefits from a powerhouse duo in Nicholson and Caine. It's like watching two cats fight for the same mouse, because both characters are corrupted to the bone. In a few spots, the plot lags, leaving the caliber of onscreen talent to plug the dike; also helping keep audience interest is that the characters' lives undergo drastic changes after the story's setpiece, a jewelry heist. The screenplay by Villiers and Alison Cross ignores the norm in favor of a product that will surprise, shock and please. "Blood & Wine" is a thriller with a satisfactory amount of action that culminates with a violent reconciliation.—*Dwayne E. Leslie*

REVIEWS

MEET WALLY SPARKS ★1/2

Starring Rodney Dangerfield, Burt Reynolds and David Ogden Stiers. Directed by Peter Baldwin. Written by Rodney Dangerfield and Harry Basil. Produced by Leslie Greif. A Trimark release. Comedy. Rated R for continuous crude sexual humor and some nudity. Running time: 107 min.

This film is so raunchy that a five-minute scene is built around one extended (ahem) penis joke. "Meet Wally Sparks" also gives new meaning to the word "cheap" when there are no less than three scenes where the comedic climax is that someone is fallen on by a fat person.

The old court jester of comedy himself, Rodney Dangerfield, does his usual brand of schtick as shock-talk show host Wally Sparks. With advertisers outraged, Sparks must clean up his act, so he crashes a grand party at the Georgia governor's mansion in an effort to get an exclusive interview with the stuck-up but politically correct official ("Mighty Aphrodite's" David Ogden Stiers). After a freak accident involving a drunken horse, Sparks winds up staying at the mansion. Of course, chaos ensues.

Stiers adds a touch of class to an eclectic band of players, with kudos going to Debi Mazur ("Trees Lounge"), Burt Reynolds, and a wayward squirrel. The script is such a mixed bag of cheap shots, sincerely funny bits and elaborate set-ups for ludicrous payoffs that the film never maintains forward momentum. The amazing thing is that Dangerfield, at 75, is more than occasionally funny; his patter might be familiar, but he performs it with dogged determination. Unfortunately, the jokes that hit are punctuated by ones so awkward and awful as to be the ultimate undoing of the entire film. As Dangerfield himself says near the end, "It's lonely at the top, when there's no one on the bottom." Indeed.—*Susan Lambert*

FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN ★★★★

Directed and produced by Beth Gage and George Gage. Written by Beth Gage. A First Run release. Documentary. Unrated. Running time: 72 min.

This fascinating account of the formation of the only American infantry division ever trained for mountain and winter warfare combines rousing adventure, heartfelt emotion and extraordinary archival footage. Activated in 1941, the 10th Mountain Division was the brainchild of National Ski Patrol founder Charles "Minnie" Dole, who believed the United States would soon enter the war then raging in Europe and need troops trained in cold-weather activities—skiing, rock climbing and avalanche safety.

Thanks to a camera-handy division member, plentiful footage exists of the unit's training and of its February 1945 assault on Italy's Riva Ridge. Single file, the troops of the 10th scaled the ridge—2,300 feet of almost vertical shale covered with two feet of snow—to take the surprised foe prisoner.

A dozen surviving unit members reminisce about their experiences. Wisely, director/producers Beth and George Gage also explore the impact the men have had on America's outdoor life since World War II; one founded Vail, another introduced jogging to America, a third became the first executive director of the Sierra Club, and a fourth designed running shoes—and named his company Nike.—*Jean Oppenheimer*

PREFONTAINE ★★1/2

Starring Jared Leto, R. Lee Ermey, Ed O'Neill, Amy Locane and Lindsay Crouse. Directed by Steve James. Written by Steve James and Eugene Corr. Produced by Irby Smith, Jon Lutz, Mark Doonan and Peter Gilbert. A Buena Vista release. Drama. Rated PG-13 for brief strong language. Running time: 106 min.

With two-thirds of the "Hoop Dreams" team behind it—co-writer/director Steve James and co-producer/cinematographer Peter Gilbert—"Prefontaine" comes off a bit like two-thirds of "Hoop Dreams," both in length and execution, proving its makers somewhat less capable at recreating real-life sports drama than at capturing it.

A rough-and-tumble account of the life of mercurial long-distance runner Steve Prefontaine (Jared Leto), whose obsessive and winning ways captivated America until his untimely automobile death in 1975, this Hollywood Pictures effort is a cinematic curiosity, blending conventional narrative filmmaking with *faux* documentary interviews and actual archival footage of the real "Pre" in action. The net effect of this ambitious approach is uneven, producing rousing race sequences on the one hand, while needlessly fragmenting what could have been a cohesive narrative on the other.

Fortunately, the events of Prefontaine's life—the 1972 Munich Olympics in particular—are sufficiently compelling on their own; not only do these scenes overcome the film's dramatic inadequacies, at times they even recall portions of "Rocky" and "Chariots of Fire." In the lead, Leto is able to seize on these moments to convincingly capture Prefontaine's egotistical, enigmatic, obsessive, charismatic personality even when the script fails to do so.—*Wade Major*

FIERCE CREATURES ★★★

Starring John Cleese, Jamie Lee Curtis, Kevin Kline and Michael Palin. Directed by Robert Young and Fred Schepisi. Written by John Cleese and Iain Johnstone. Produced by Michael Shamberg and John Cleese. A Universal release. Comedy. Rated PG-13 for sexual innuendo and language. Running time: 93 min.

Funny, if not quite as perfectly formed funny as the starring cast's previous collaboration, "A Fish Called Wanda," "Fierce Creatures" is laugh, giggle and chuckle provoking. The film contains all that should be hoped for in a farce: men caught with their pants down; good-looking, smart women; and enough pointed satire about issues that matter to give true bite to the jokes.

PREVIOUSLY REVIEWED FEB./MARCH RELEASES

In light of our continuing commitment to bring you reviews as early as possible, we now provide a reader guide to upcoming releases we've already critiqued. The alphabetical list below notes the issue of BOXOFFICE in which the review appeared, gives its star rating, and provides updated distributor and release date information.

"Champange Safari" ★★★: First Run, 2/21; see March 1996.
"Citizen Ruth" ★★★★: Miramax, 2/21 exp; see Nov. 1996.
"Crash" ★★: Fine Line, 3/21; see July 1996.
"Daytrippers" ★★★1/2: CFP, 2/21 NY, 3/7 exp; see Aug. 1996.
"Drunks" ★1/2: Northern Arts, 3/14 NY; see Dec. 1996.
"The Eighth Day" ★★1/2: Gramercy, 2/21 NY/LA; see July 1996.
"Female Perversions" ★★: October, 3/28; see Nov. 1996.
"Flipping" ★★: Dove, undated Feb.; see Nov. 1996.
"Hard 8" ★★★★: Goldwyn, 2/28 ltd; see Aug. 1996.
"Hotel de Love" ★★★★: Live, 2/14 excl; see Nov. 1996.
"Jerusalem" ★★: First Look, 2/14; see Feb. 1997.
"Kama Sutra" ★★: Trimark, 2/28 NY/LA, 3/7 exp; see Jan. 1997.
"Lost Highway" ★★★★: October, 2/21 ltd, 2/28 exp; see Feb. 1997.
"Love and Other Catastrophes" ★★★: Fox Searchlight, 3/28; Aug. 1996.
"Margaret's Museum" ★★: CFP, 2/21 NY/LA/Chi; see Nov. 1995.
"Marvin's Room" ★★★: Miramax, 2/21 exp; see Feb. 1997.
"Prisoner of the Mountains" ★★★★: Orion Classics, 2/7 exp; Feb. 1997.
"The Sadness of Sex" ★★: Tara, 2/14 L.A., March natl; Feb. 1997.
"Salut Cousin!" ★★★1/2: Seventh Art, Feb. undated; see Dec. 1996.
"Scream of Stone" ★: Roxie, Feb. undated; see Aug. 1996.
"Screwed" ★★★: Cinema Village, Feb. exp; see Feb. 1997.
"Sling Blade" ★★★1/2: Miramax, 2/21 exp; see Nov. 1996.
"The Substance of Fire" ★★: Miramax, 2/7 exp; see Nov. 1996.
"SubUrbia" ★★: Sony Classics, 2/7 NY; see Jan. 1997.
"Unhook the Stars" ★★★: Miramax, 2/14 exp; see Dec. 1996.
"The Van" ★★: Fox Searchlight, 3/14; see Aug. 1996.
"When We Were Kings" ★★★1/2: Gramercy, 2/14 ltd; see Feb. 1997.
"Without Air" ★★1/2: Phaedra, Mar. undated; see Aug. 1996.

REVIEWS

The struggles of a little zoo to stay true to its animals in the face of a takeover works as an apt example of corporate downsizing and its ugly consequences. The stars all fit naturally into their roles, especially Kevin Kline doing double duty as a vulgar Australian tycoon and his inane son. John Cleese, as a rigid chap who is essentially a good egg, and Michael Palin, as a verbally dexterous know-it-all, do variations on the types that made them famous; Jamie Lee Curtis, as a glamorous executive whose ambitions wilt amid the mammals, manages to be foil, decoration, catalyst and emotional core with consummate ease.

The real animals are appealing and merited more screen time, though it's a shame animatronics were needed here and there. A crucial, emotion-altering scene with Curtis and a gorilla is undercut by this technology, despite the best efforts of both actress and "animal." This use of special effects in the movie, though probably unavoidable, also undercuts a good joke in the Cleese/Iain Johnstone script about their use in the restructuring of the zoo into a theme park.

The script is more a collection of slap-happy scenes than a seamless whole, and the work of two directors probably didn't help in this area. (Fred Schepisi came in after some negative preview testing to reshoot sequences for which Robert Young wasn't available.) But, despite the various bumps, jerks and missteps in the whole, the point really is that Cleese in bed with one unusual animal is always worth a laugh, and this time he's on the wrong side of the blanket with five.—*Bridget Byrne*

FLASHBACK: *MARCH 10, 1939*
What BOXOFFICE *said about...*

THE SAINT STRIKES BACK

[Though Louis Hayward originated the role, it was George Sanders who for a generation of moviegoers was Simon Templar. This month, Paramount releases a new film version of the story of the man known as The Saint (see our Phillip Noyce profile, p. 28). Now, it's a former Batman, Val Kilmer, who's taking the lead.]



Second in the series of mystery/detective thrillers, this maintains the standard of excellence set by the initialer and emerges as a well-knit chapter in the adventures of Leslie Charteris' popular modern Robin Hood, Simon Templar—otherwise known as The Saint. Its business-like construction should please average audiences and delight the adventure fans. Despite a major change in casting, which finds George Sanders taking over the characterization first essayed by Louis Hayward, the feature suffers not a whit, as Sanders' build, personality and mannerisms fill to perfection the popular conception of the devil-may-care desperado. This time, The Saint appears in San Francisco to aid Wendy Barrie in clearing her name and wiping out a band of thieves who had framed her father, the police commissioner. John Farrow directs; Jonathan Hale, Jerome Cowan, Neil Hamilton, Barry Fitzgerald and Gilbert Emery co-star.

EXPLOITIPS

Charteris' "Saint" novels are widely read by detective-story addicts. Tie in with bookstores and rental libraries on displays of them studded with stills from the picture. Give the marquee credits to Sanders and Barrie. Prepare a lobby display in which The Saint is the centerpiece surrounded by other fictional rascals—Bulldog Drummond, Raffles and the like. Prepare throwsheets as mimeographed "warnings" from The Saint to appear at your theatre on the date the picture opens.

CATCHLINES

Fiction's Famous Phantom...Who Laughed At The Law...But Did No Man An Injustice...Returns In The Thrill Special Of The Year.

The Saint...The Modern Robin Hood...Who Preys On Those Who Have More Than Their Just Share...And Gives To Others Who Have Less.

THE RELIC ★★1/2

Starring Penelope Ann Miller, Tom Sizemore and Linda Hunt. Directed by Peter Hyams. Written by Amy Holden Jones and John Raffo and Rick Jaffa & Amanda Silver. Produced by Gale Anne Hurd and Sam Mercer. A Paramount release. SF/thriller. Rated R for monster violence and gore, and for language. Running time: 109 min.

Despite some cliched dialogue, sloppy editing, unanswered questions and unfulfilled potential, "The Relic" is still a pretty good thriller, as it keeps tension and body counts coming. Penelope Ann Miller ("The Shadow") plays a sassy evolutionary biologist in a museum that's the scene of a grisly murder; Tom Sizemore ("Strange Days") is a sardonic, no-bull police lieutenant investigating the crime. Together, they discover that a shipment of artifacts from Brazil has brought a mythical monster into their midst. Interesting genetic postulations are put forth but not sufficiently developed.

Nevertheless, the film is successful in keeping the audience jumping. Within the creepy confines of a museum after hours, darkly lit mummies, dinosaurs and mannequins maintain a spooky mood, and the cheap but effective scare tactic of blaring loud chords of music at tense moments keeps anxiety high. The film's monster is well-rendered but nothing new; basically, it's the same assemblage of saliva-dripping jaws, reptilian tendrils and scaly flesh.

After nearly two hours of playing blood-sucking-beast-and-mouse, the ending is somewhat unsatisfying; a more dramatic climax involving a previously introduced carnivorous breed of insect was obvious but unused. But not-too-demanding fans of creature features should still be able to sink their teeth into the film.—*Christine James*

METRO ★★★

Starring Eddie Murphy, Michael Rapaport and Michael Wincott. Directed by Thomas Carter. Written by Randy Feldman. Produced by Roger Birnbaum. A Buena Vista release. Action. Rated R for strong violence and language. Running time: 117 min.

Managing to avoid Axel Foley redux despite starring once again as a smartass cop, Eddie Murphy is winsome in this formulaic but effective actioner. Inverting the wisecracking-to-serious ratios helps Murphy distinguish "Metro's" Scott Roper from "Beverly Hills Cop's" Foley, as did the actor's abstinence from slipping in his notorious chortle (except once). Roper is an expert hostage negotiator who's paired (to his predictable disgruntlement) with SWAT team sharpshooter Kevin McCall ("Beautiful Girls'" Michael Rapaport). Soon, however, Roper takes the worthy rookie under his wing and teaches him the tricks of the trade.

While sharing a laugh with the audience by poking fun at some thriller cliches, "Metro" is guilty of indulging in many as well. Particularly unabashed is a scene in which Korda endangers Roper's girlfriend (Carmen Ejogo) much in the same way that moustache-twirlers of yore once did after they tied women to logs and threatened them with buzzsaws. And the title is a little confusing; one would expect most of the action to take place in a subway, but "Metro" must instead refer to the gritty city

in which it's set, though the atmosphere of the urban center is never really touched upon. Nevertheless, "Metro" does a good job in balancing harrowing action with comic relief, and the film's stars all give engaging performances.—*Christine James*

BEVERLY HILLS NINJA ★★

Starring Chris Farley, Nicolette Sheridan, Nathaniel Parker, Chris Rock and Robin Shou. Directed by Dennis Dugan. Written by Mark Feldberg & Mitch Klebanoff. A TriStar release. Comedy. Rated PG-13 for sex-related humor, martial arts violence and a humorous drug-related scene. Running time: 85 min.

Chris Farley is no Peter Sellers and, though he shares the late John Belushi's ability to make flab funny, Farley lacks that actor's repertoire of facial expressions. All Farley can muster is a goofy sweetness but, for many viewers, that may be enough.

"Beverly Hills Ninja" follows Farley from bumbling ninja to bumbling hero. That's not much of a character arc, and the plot is pure formula, with Farley pursuing beautiful Nicolette Sheridan and her evil boyfriend (Nathaniel Parker) from Japan to Beverly Hills. The actor falls down a lot and runs into things, which children will no doubt love. But adults might get a bit antsy waiting for the film's subtle high points, as when Farley accidentally trashes a sacred scroll, telling Sheridan that his ninja brothers "may have a second copy."

Robin Shou stands out as Farley's put-upon older brother. He has the dark deadpan and physical grace of a first-rate movie ninja. Chris Rock is wasted in a demeaning bellboy role, and Dennis Dugan's direction is adequate, but not much more. Yet there's at least one consolation: David Spade is not in the movie.—*Rick Schultz*

JACKIE CHAN'S FIRST STRIKE ★★★1/2

Starring Jackie Chan, Jackson Lou, Chen Chun Wu and Bill Tung. Directed by Stanley Tong. Written by Stanley Tong, Nick Tramontane, Greg Mellot and Elliot Tong. Produced by Barbie Tung. A New Line release. Action/comedy. Rated PG-13 for plentiful action/violence. Running time: 83 min.

With "Jackie Chan's First Strike," released in Asia last year as "Police Story 4" and issued here with additional music and a trim by New Line, director Stanley Tong and Chan have made their most accessible (i.e., Americanized) film to date. Though showing less of Chan's breathtaking ability than his fans are accustomed to, "First Strike" is a fast-paced actioner with spectacular stunts, a clear plotline and clever comedy.

Again the Hong Kong policeman, though this time compared to James Bond and called simply Jackie, Chan chases the mysterious Tsui (an effectively complex Jackson Lou) and a stolen nuclear warhead from the snows of the Ukraine to the balmy coast of Australia, allowing for stunt sequences with snowmobiles, helicopters, ocean high-rises and aquarium sharks, all skillfully lensed by cinematographer Jingle Ma (who shot "Rumble in the Bronx"). Sound is also well crafted, intensifying the impact.

Wardrobe contributes via fabulous neon colors (even helping keep the plot lucid). Distinctly Chinese motifs have survived: a white-uniformed army emerges from beneath snow, and hundreds of umbrellas open in a Chinatown sequence. There's even a John Woo moment: the salvation of good-hearted adversaries. Chan could use another Woo treatment—a slow-motion camera—so that hardcore fans could meditate on his magic.—*Karen Achenbach*

TURBULENCE ★1/2

Starring Ray Liotta and Lauren Holly. Directed by Robert Butler. Written by Jonathan Brett. Produced by Martin Ransohoff and David Valdes. An MGM release. Thriller. Rated R for terror, strong violence and language. Running time: 103 min.

The type of movie whose climax supplies the needed 90 seconds of exciting footage for a good trailer but that fails to fill the other 90 minutes to make a good film, "Turbulence" suffers a number of in-flight problems.

The key fault light flashing is logistical: Director Robert Butler and writer Jonathan Brett decide to eject plausibility in their attempt to fashion a mano-a-womano fracas 40,000 feet up in a 747. Although the jet takes off from New York, heading to Los Angeles on travel-heavy Christmas Eve, only a handful of passengers and crew are aboard. As soon as the plane ascends, half

SPECIAL FORMATS

THE GREAT AMERICAN WEST ★★★

Narrated by Jason Robards. Directed by Reed Smoot. Written by Richard Parkinson. Produced by Scott Swofford. A John Q. Hammons release. Documentary. Unrated. Running time: 41 min. Format: IMAX.

SURVIVAL ISLAND ★★★

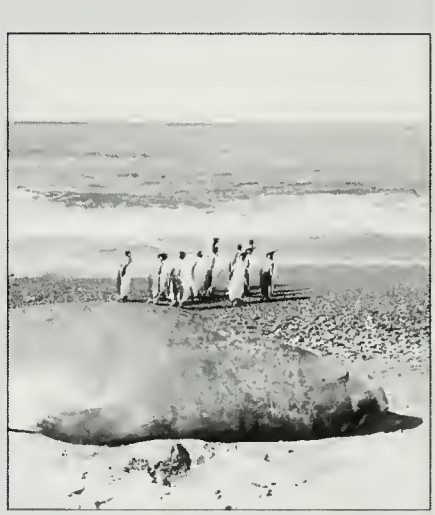
Narrated and written by Sir David Attenborough. Directed by David Douglas. Produced by Christopher Parsons. An IMAX Corp. release. Documentary. Unrated. Running time: 40 min. Format: IMAX.

Two nature pictures hit the really big screen doing what IMAX movies do best—conveying hugeness—by providing the likes of a gargantuan grizzly chasing a crusty trapper in "The Great American West" and "Survival Island's" vast sea of landfaring penguins at an apparent arctic U.S. Festival.

"The Great American West" is quintessentially gorgeous, each shot the stuff of dream vacations—frozen lakes, khaki shrubbery surrounding chunks of red earth, frothy waves, limegreen valleys, yellowstone fountains. As eye candy, it's palpably delicious.

The story starts with Napoleon's sale of the Louisiana Territory to then-president Thomas Jefferson to fund the former's European campaigns. Next onscreen come Lewis and Clark on the first federally funded expedition; we then speed through history via the diaries and letters of real people: Chinese railroad workers, Utah-bound Mormons, a California miner.

A slightly "smaller" movie, "Survival Island" is like a good "National Geographic" or "Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom" episode—but more cleverly written and meticulously shot. It shows



"Survival Island."

the life cycle of multi-modal animals who swim or fly each spring to a frozen island in Antarctica called South Georgia to give birth to their offspring.

The appeal of this show is in the humanness of the animals, with a little help from a narrator who (for example) describes an albatross mating ritual as the equivalent of a high school dance. Here, the stars are the penguins. A pair walking down the beach seem so human in their overall plodding countenance that a question from one—like "now where did we leave our towels?"—would not seem out of place.

In a recent dual screening, the audience seemed to prefer the animal picture over the panorama. The latter, despite its vistas and costumes, has too broad a scope—covering an 87-year span of 15 states in less than 45 minutes—and sends one off with a vague sense of its message. However, the two do play well together and would make a nice double feature.—***Ann Kwinn***

of the people are killed, and all but two of the rest are locked away. Those two are a serial killer, Ryan (Ray Liotta), and a flight attendant, Teri (Lauren Holly). The rest of the journey is a physical and psychological battle of wits—uninteresting because it's so one-sided—between Ryan and Teri; a secondary plot pits woman against nature as Teri must pilot the craft through a mammoth storm that causes major turbulences.

Various landing conflagrations, with a building being smashed and a parking tower destroyed, are but a mere piece of the film, and they're not persuasive; a 747 coming down would have caused even more carnage than occurs here. The filmmakers do manage to create some intensity, but their vision and the direction of the movie seem like they're booked on separate flights. Although Ryan does have some intriguing characteristics, in the end Liotta has again purchased the wrong ticket.—*Dwayne E. Leslie*

THE LINE KING: THE AL HIRSCHFELD STORY ★★1/2

Directed, written and produced by Susan W. Dryfoos. A Castle Hill release. Documentary. Unrated. Running time: 86 min.

With the few strokes of a pencil, caricaturist Al Hirschfeld can do in minutes what filmmakers, writers and painters spend months trying to create: He captures the essence of his subjects, rather than their likeness. It's too bad that Susan Dryfoos' documentary "The Line King: The Al Hirschfeld Story," though it covers a lot of ground, isn't quite as insightful.

Looking back over eight decades of Hirschfeld's work, "The Line King" views like a "who's who" of entertainers, displaying hundreds of vivid caricatures, from Charlie Chaplin and Marlene Dietrich to Katharine Hepburn, Joan Collins and Woody Allen. Among the parade of drawings, Hirschfeld reminisces about his early days in Paris, his marriage to European actress Dolly Haas and his work for The New York Times. Filmmaker Dryfoos also includes Hirschfeld's old home-movie footage and interviews with his former colleagues to help recreate days long gone.

Yet, because time is so compressed throughout the film, "The Line King" becomes a light dance over the past. Names, faces and eras whiz by, revealing only fleeting glimpses of personality. Dryfoos relies on Hirschfeld's work to carry the show but, although the drawings are fascinating, they're simply not enough to sustain a full-length feature film.—*Lea Russo*

TROMEO AND JULIET ★★

Starring Will Keenan, Jane Jensen and Lemmy. Directed by Lloyd Kaufman. Written by James Gunn and Lloyd Kaufman. Produced by Michael Herz and Lloyd Kaufman. A Troma Team release. Horror. Rated R. Running time: 107 min.

According to Troma Studios, this mini-budget film is its most important and ambitious project to date. The Tromatized version of "Romeo and Juliet" includes all the elements that made Shakespeare great: body piercing, kinky sex, and dismemberment. But that wasn't good enough for the creatively twisted minds at Troma, who added cybersex, gay and lesbian eroticism, cruelty to animals, incest, decapitations, head smashing, mutant inbreeding and car crashes, all meshed with sporadic language of the Bard. Who else but the Troma types could develop a dream sequence that combines popcorn, rats and pregnancy? To complement its mod alternative-rock soundtrack, this concoction is narrated by Lemmy of the metal band Motorhead.

In this telling, Juliet (Jane Jensen) is engaged to marry a sausage maker, even though she is a vegetarian. Tromeo (Will Keenan) meets her at a party, and it's love at first sight; the only problem is that they are the offspring of feuding families. That's about where the resemblance to the 1596 original ends; from there on until the eventual death scene (which has Juliet transformed into a beast), it's Troma time, thanks in part to a subplot that thoroughly contorts the main story's ending.

Troma films have a big cult following, and they're certainly not for everyone. "The Toxic Avenger" in 1985 was Troma's breakthrough, leading to two sequels and to hero Toxie becoming the company's mascot. It took four years for "Tromeo and Juliet" writer/director/producer Lloyd Kaufman (Troma's president) and co-scripter James Gunn to finalize this iambically demonic script. Already selected to screen at several film fests, "Tromeo and Juliet" is great for midnight showings for its target audience, from the opening moments right through to the fun-to-watch closing credits. Of course, that targeted audience might have trouble reading them all. Or just reading.—*Dwayne E. Leslie*

SUNDANCE REVIEW

BRASSED OFF ★★★1/2

Starring Pete Postlethwaite, Tara Fitzgerald, Ewan McGregor and Stephen Tompkinson. Directed and written by Mark Herman. Produced by Steve Abbott. A Miramax release. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 107 min.

Like the music it celebrates, "Brassed Off" is in-your-face yet sentimental, rousing yet sad, defiant but full of heart. Set in a Yorkshire village where the local coal workers are being made redundant, this movie uses the sound, fury and feeling of a colliery brass band as its weapon of war. Although Mark Herman's script occasionally sounds too calculatedly polemic, he has drawn from his excellent actors performances that expose—with humor and grief—the truth of the community's struggle to stay viable in the face of government indifference.



Miramax's "Brassed Off," which screened at Sundance, opens 4/25 NY/LA.

The dignity of the band leader ("Dragonheart's" Pete Postlethwaite) who has chonneled oll his possion into a sole obsession—that it's the music that really matters—sets the tone for the film, which (despite the blunt colloquial humor that marks its U.K. spot of the map) tackles the universal theme of the rights of man. And woman—for it is the return of a local lass mode good (who just happens to play the flugelhorn) who raises the testosterone and then the hackles of the bandsmen, setting the story in motion. Though her part is somewhat underwritten, Tara Fitzgerald ("Sirens") is fine as the young woman whose success has put her, unwillingly, on the wrong side of the conflict but never out of the heart of the young coalworker facing a bleak future, played—with more impact than the part provides—by Ewan McGregor ("Trainspotting").

Stephen Tompkinson as Danny's son, wrenched hardest by all the conflicts of emotion and circumstance, matches up impressively to a role that demands he appear tragic while wearing giant clown's feet. Among the supporting cast, Jim Carter, Philip Jackson and Melanie Hill bring real individuality to people who, quite literally, have the ground on which they stand, live, breathe and earn their daily bread taken out from under them.

The Grimethrope Colliery Brass Band stands in for the fictional Grimley band. Their music binds and boosts the story, helping to cover some cliches of plot and character and injecting the passion of an important message as this journey of survival wends its way from rehearsal hall to village green to hospital car park to city center and finally on to London's Albert Hall.—***Bridget Byrne***

REVIEWS IN BRIEF

MONDO ★★★1/2

Starring Ovidiu Balan, Pierette Fesch, Philippe Petit and Jerry Smith. Directed and written by Tony Gatlif. Produced by Michele Ray-Gavras. A Shadow release. Drama. French-language; English subtitles. Unrated. Running time: 77 min.

In this bittersweet tale, a beautiful young orphan (Ovidiu Balan) called Mondo wanders the streets of the French seaside village of Nice, searching for family, food and shelter. When the police at last capture him, the loss is felt by all who grew to eare about him and the sweet innocence he embodied.

Rich with beautiful imagery and emotionally stirring music, "Mondo"—based on the J.M.G. Le Clezio novel "Ed. Gallinard"—is a sparkling gem in a sea of tired, formulaic films, providing only the definition needed to keep its story intriguing.—***Pat Kramer***

DEATH BY DESIGN ★★★

Directed and written by Peter Friedman and Jean-Francois Brunet. Produced by Peter Friedman and Emmanuel Laurent. A First Run release. Documentary. Unrated. Running time: 70 min.

Cellular biology might sound like a dry and intimidating topic, but this documentary brings the subject to life in an accessible, entertaining and educational format. Informative interviews with scientists from around the world are interspliced with fascinating close-ups (set to music) of the artistic choreography of eell movement, which are contrasted with stock footage of similar human activity. Some comparisons are a stretch, but most are insightful and occasionally almost profound.

There is humor in "Death By Design" (subtitled "Where Parallel Worlds Meet"), both from these filmic metaphors and from the scientists themselves, who are engaging and not the least bit stuffy. Although subtitles identifying the eells would have added to its instructional value, and the at-times repetitious 70 minutes could use a slight trim, "Death by Design" is nevertheless certainly worthwhile to anyone with a thirst for knowledge.—***Christine James***

DADETOWN ★★1/2

Starring Tom Nickenback and Ed Hubble. Directed by Russ Hexter. Written by Russ Hexter and John Housely. Produced by Jim Carden. A Castle Hill release. Drama. Unrated. Running time: 84 min.

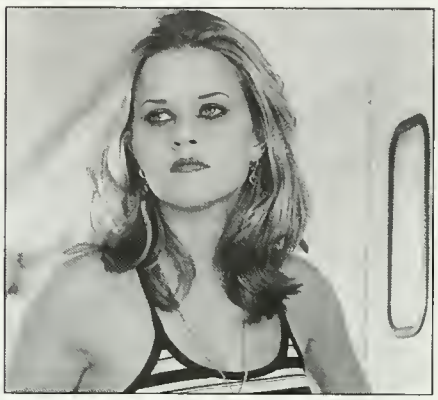
A clever, amusing but protracted conceit, "Dadetown" attempts to use a faux documentary style to relate a dramatic small-town tale with light-hearted cynicism. In his first and last feature before his death at age 27, filmmaker Russ Hexter reveals a sharp, original, even iconoclastic sensibility.

In trying to delineate the tragic effects of provincialism, however, this uneasy mix of forced satire and credible melodrama tends to blunt his thesis. Still, using a talking-head interview format, Hexter makes a volatile statement on how eneroaching industrialism can cause inhuman competition and social disruption.—***Dale Winogura***

FREEWAY ★★★1/2

Starring Reese Witherspoon and Kiefer Sutherland. Directed and written by Matthew Bright. Produced by Brad Wyman and Chris Hanley. A Roxie release. Comedy. Rated R. Running time: 102 min.

This darkly comic justice-meting story of Vanessa ("Fear's" Reese Witherspoon), a beautiful but troubled youth who dishes out what's coming to sympathetic psychologist by day/deranged serial killer by night Bob Wolverton (Kiefer Sutherland), is a pretty funny take on a pretty twisted subject.



Reese Witherspoon in Roxie's "Freeway."

A wonderfully eclectic cast—Amanda Plummer as Vanessa's addict/prostitute mom, Dan Hedaya as a police detective and Brooke Shields as Bob's clueless wife—provides fine support, but the film is carried by Witherspoon's hilarious performance as the perky murderess.—***Christine James***

PARIS WAS A WOMAN ★★

Directed by Greta Schiller. Written by Andrea Weiss. Produced by Frances Berrigan, Greta Schiller and Andrea Weiss. A Zeitgeist release. Documentary. Unrated. Running time: 75 min.

"Paris Was a Woman" looks at the beguiling era between the world wars from the perspective of the many talented women who made the City of Light their own. Among those notables are bookstore keepers Sylvia Beach and Adrienne Monnier, artist Romaine Brooks and New Yorker Magazine luminary Janet Flanner.

Only those especially excited by the time will overlook the flat presentation; the film suffers from a scarcity of archival footage, instead trying to make do with still photos, maps and lengthy interviews with scholars. Although earnest and well-meant, "Paris Was a Woman" lacks the zest of its own subjects.—***Cathy Thompson-Georges***

SLEEPOVER ★

Starring Michael Albanese, Karl Giant and Ken Miles. Directed and written by John Sullivan. Produced by Jim McNally. An Artistic License release. Drama. Unrated. Running time: 88 min.

Mark ("Malcolm X's" Michael Albanese), Sean ("Party Girl's" Karl Giant) and Ken (Ken Miles) are teenage pals who tell their parents they'll be sleeping at a friend's house. The boys—each with a different background and different problems—plan to run the streets with hopes of finding girls. Of course, their plans go awry.

Despite a microscopic budget, the filmmakers manage to put their players in scenarios that showcase their talents and touch on real-life issues. However, the plot's events during the night in question are ordinary to the point of inciting audience boredom.—***Dwayne E. Leslie***

ADRENALIN: FEAR THE RUSH ★

Starring Christopher Lambert, Natasha Henstridge and Craig Davis. Directed and written by Albert Pyun. Produced by Tom Karnowski and Gary Schmoeller. A Legacy release. Action. Rated R for gruesome violence and gore, and for strong language. Running time: 75 min.

Stupidity reigns supreme in "Adrenalin: Fear the Rush," a gratuitous and simple-minded exploitation thriller that's as meaningless as its title. Bereft of suspense and terror elements, writer/director Albert Pyun makes sures that characters and sense don't get in the way of all the gory violence and unimaginative action. Even the cheesy production values are not amusing enough to qualify the film as camp.

The story: In a ravaged future Boston, a rookie cop ("Maximum Risk's" Natasha Henstridge) joins with an armed police unit (led by Christopher Lambert) to track down an insane cannibalistic killer. A plodding pace, ugly viewpoint and lackluster use of Panavision show Pyun hasn't learned mueh about moviemaking since his dreadful 1982 fantasy "The Sword and the Sorcerer."

The best thing about "Adrenalin"—which back in 1995 was on Miramax's schedule—is it's short, but such hackery seems long even at an hour-fifteen.—***Dale Winogura***

SUITE 16 ★★★1/2

Starring Pete Postlethwaite, Geraldine Pailhas and Antonie Kamerling. Directed by Dominique Deruddere. Written by Charles Higson and Lise Mayer. Produced by Paul Breuls and Frank Bak. A Filmopolis release. Thriller. Rated R. Running time: 98 min.

This sexually provocative film by director Dominique Deruddere ("Crazy Love," "Wait Until Spring Bandini") provides an interesting twist on passion, domination and control and the extent to which people will go to attain them. It stars Antonie Kamerling ("The Small Blonde Death") as a street hustler and Pete Postlethwaite ("Dragonheart") as an impotent invalid; the film pits youth and virility against wealth and intelligence as the older man uses the younger as a stand-in for sexual episodes.

"Suite 16" is drenched in passion, sometimes erotic, sometimes shocking. Riveting throughout its fast-moving storyline, and emblazoned with a bold, emotionally charged musical score by nouvelle composer Walter Hus, "Suite 16" is fresh, interesting and dangerously bad.—***Pat Kramer***

Boxoffice Magazine presents



MovieFone's Moviegoer Activity Report

For the Month of December 1996

MovieFone® (777-FILM®) and its sister service, MovieLink® Online, are now the single largest source of movie showtime information in the country, providing information to over 12 million moviegoers each month. The following information represents the most requested theatres and exhibitors on MovieFone.

Top 10 Exhibitors & Theatres

Most Requested Exhibitors

Rank	Exhibitor	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
1	United Artists	649,772	1
2	Sony	599,753	2
3	Cineplex Odeon	587,737	4
4	AMC	531,250	3
5	General Cinema	346,363	5
6	Century	243,840	6
7	National Amusements	138,726	7
8	Cinemark	128,835	8
9	CinAmerica	117,670	9
10	Famous Players	107,266	13

Most Requested Theatres

Rank	Market	Theatre	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
1	NY	Sony Lincoln Square	97,621	1
2	NY	CO Chelsea	45,672	4
3	LA	AMC Century 14	41,088	3
4	NY	CityCin Village East	37,007	9
5	BO	Sony Cheri	34,411	2
6	BO	Sony Assembly Square	26,002	11
7	NY	Sony Village 7	25,043	7
8	NY	Sony New York Twin	24,415	36
9	NY	Sony 84th St.Sixplex	23,580	5
10	PH	UA Cheltenham	23,518	8

Most Requested Theatres Per Screen

Total Requests	Rank	Theatre (# screens)	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
New York	1	Sony New York Twin (2)	24,415	5
1,183,195	2	Sony Astor Place (1)	7,774	35
	3	Sony Lincoln Square (13)	97,621	10
Los Angeles	1	CO Showcase (7)	5,712	19
566,338	2	CinAm National (1)	5,284	18
	3	Pacific El Capitan (1)	4,446	N/A
Dallas	1	AMC Highland Pk Village (4)	9,108	3
493,001	2	AMC Forum (6)	12,491	2
	3	UA Cine (2)	3,688	38
San Francisco	1	Century Cinema 21 (1)	6,061	5
317,526	2	Century Century 21 (1)	5,107	4
	3	UA Coronet (1)	4,145	3
Philadelphia	1	UA Sameric (4)	16,947	1
258,791	2	Cinemagic 3 at Penn (3)	10,663	5
	3	UA Cheltenham (8)	23,518	3
Miami	1	Cobb Miami Lakes (10)	14,957	2
243,025	2	AMC Kendall T & C (10)	13,136	3
	3	Cobb Miller Square (8)	10,037	4
Boston	1	Sony Cheri (4)	34,411	1
240,961	2	NA Circle Cinema (7)	22,515	2
	3	Sony Nickelodeon (5)	15,970	4
Chicago	1	CO Biograph (3)	6,356	1
220,945	2	CO Watertower 1-4 (4)	7,214	23
	3	CO Lincoln Village 1-6 (6)	10,445	5
Toronto	1	Famous Uptown (3)	14,442	2
181,646	2	Famous Eglinton (1)	4,279	1
	3	Famous Hollywood (2)	5,757	7
Houston	1	CO River Oaks Plaza (12)	15,424	2
147,860	2	CO Spectrum (9)	10,422	1
	3	Landmk River Oaks (3)	3,254	7
Phoenix	1	Hark Cine Capri (1)	2,910	2
138,568	2	Hark Christown (5)	7,019	1
	3	Century Glendale D-I (9)	10,842	5
San Diego	1	CinAm Cinema 21 (1)	1,369	1
112,948	2	Landmk Cove (1)	748	22
	3	UA Horton (14)	8,704	4
Kansas City	1	Dksn Glenwood (4)	5,690	1
93,129	2	Dksn Cinema (6)	6,544	16
	3	Dksn Antioch (2)	2,103	12
Atlanta	1	UA Midtown Cinemas (8)	3,209	2
86,691	2	Roswell Cinema (10)	3,722	25
	3	AMC Phipps Plaza (14)	5,063	4
Seattle	1	CO Cinerama (1)	3,247	4
76,988	2	Landmk Guild 45th (2)	2,585	5
	3	Landmk Neptune (1)	989	3
Minneapolis	1	Mann Suburban World (1)	782	11
64,393	2	CO Edina (4)	2,525	4
	3	CO Skyway (6)	3,051	12
Cleveland	1	Regal Severance Movies (8)	5,952	3
63,276	2	GCC Ridge Park Square (8)	5,498	1
	3	Sony Cedar Theater (2)	1,353	2
Denver	1	UA Continental (1)	2,190	1
56,420	2	Landmk Esquire (2)	2,164	17
	3	AMC Colorado Plaza (6)	3,172	2
Las Vegas	1	Century Las Vegas D-I (6)	4,591	1
52,431	2	Century Cinedome 12 LV (12)	8,386	7
	3	Century Rancho (16)	10,160	3
Sacramento	1	Century Sacramento D-I (6)	8,580	4
44,280	2	Century Cinedome Sacr. (9)	10,228	3
	3	Century Century 21 (2)	1,599	1
Detroit	1	Star Lincoln Park (8)	2,952	2
40,972	2	Star Taylor (10)	3,042	1
	3	AMC Southland (4)	1,070	5
Washington, DC	1	CO Embassy (1)	796	2
27,174	2	CO Uptown (1)	581	1
	3	CO Cinema (1)	442	9
Tampa	1	Cobb University (4)	1,403	25
24,215	2	Muvico Palm Harbor (10)	2,679	5
	3	Carmike Main St. (6)	1,552	8
Orlando	1	Carmike Hoffner Centre (6)	1,350	1
21,078	2	Sand Lake (7)	1,577	4
	3	Regal UC Cinema (7)	1,513	2

Top 3 Actively* Requested Theatres:

1. CO Worldwide New York, NY
2. Sony Lincoln Sq. New York, NY
3. CO Chelsea Cinemas New York, NY

*Caller specifically requested theatre

Key to Exhibitors

AMC	AMC Theatres, Inc.	CityCin	City Cinemas	General	General Theatres
Act III	Act III Theatres	CO	Cineplex Odeon Corp	Hark	Harkins Theatres
Blm	Blumenfeld Theatres	Cobb	Cobb Theatres	Hollywood	Hollywood Theatres
Carmike	Carmike Cinemas, Inc.	Dksn	Dickinson Theatres	Landmk	Landmark Theatre Corp
Century	Century Theatres	Famous	Famous Players	Mann MN	Mann Minneapolis
CinAm	CinAmerica Theatres, LP	GCC	General Cinema Theatres	Met	Metropolitan Theatres Corp.
Muvico	Muvico Theatres				
Pacific	Pacific Theatres				
Regal	Regal Cinemas				
Sony	Sony Theatres				
Star	Loeks-Star Theatres				
SupSav	Super Saver Cinemas				
UA	United Artists Theatre Circuit				

777-FILM

BOXOFFICE

	December	January	February	MARCH (Current)
Buena Vista (818) 567-5000 (212) 593-8900	**The Preacher's Wife**, 12/13, Rom/Com, PG, 124 mins., Dolby SR, SR-D, SDDS, Flat. Denzel Washington, Whitney Houston, Gregory Hines. Dir: Penny Marshall. **Evita**, 12/25 NY,LA, 1/11/97 wide, Mus./Drama, 130 mins., PG-13, Dolby SR, SR-D, SDDS, Anamorphic. Madonna, Antonio Banderas, Jonathan Pryce. Dir: Alan Parker.	**Metro**, 1/17, Dra, R, 117 min., Dolby SR, SR-D, SDDS, Anamorphic. Eddie Murphy, Carmen Ejogo, Michael Rapaport. Dir: Thomas Carter. **Prefontaine**, 1/24 ltd, Dra, PG-13, 106 min, Dolby SR, SR-D, Flat. Jared Leto, Amy Locane, Ed O'Neill. Dir: Steve James. **The Shadow Conspiracy**, 1/31, Dra, R, 103 min., Dolby SR, SR-D, Anamorphic. Charlie Sheen, Linda Hamilton. Dir: George P. Cosmatos.	**That Dam Cat**, 2/14, Com, PG, 89 min., Dolby SR, SR-D, Flat. Christina Ricci, Doug E. Doug, Dyan Cannon Dir. Robert Spiers **Grosse Pointe Blank**, 2/21, Com, R, 106 min, Dolby SR, SR-D, SDDS, Flat. John Cusack, Minnie Driver, Dan Aykroyd, Joan Cusack. Dir: George Armitage.	**Jungle2Jungle**, 3/14, Com, PG, 105 min., Dolby SR, SR-D, SDDS, Flat. Tim Allen, Mar Short, Lolita Davidovtch, David Ogden Stier JoBeth Williams. Dir: John Pasquin.
Columbia (310) 280-8000 (212) 833-8500	**Ghosts of Mississippi**, 12/20 ltd, 1/3 exp., Dra. 123 min., PG-13, Dolby A, SR, SDDS, Flat. Alec Baldwin. Dir: Rob Reiner. **Hamlet**, 12/25 ltd, 1/24 exp. Dra, PG-13, Dolby A, 242 mins, Anamorphic. Dir/Star: Kenneth Branagh. **Some Mother's Son**, 12/26 ltd.,Dra, R, 112 min., Dolby SR, Flat. Helen Mirren, Fionnula Flanagan. Dir: Terry George.	**People Vs. Larry Flynt**, 12/27 ltd, 1/10 exp, Dra, R, 130 min. Dolby A, SR, SDDS, Anamorphic. Woody Harrelson, Courtney Love. Dir. Milos Forman.	**Absolute Power**, 2/14,Thr, R, 120 min., Dolby A &SR, SDDS. Anamorphic. Gene Hackman, Scott Glenn, Judy Davis. Dir/Star: Clint Eastwood. **Fools Rush In**, 2/14, Rom/Com, PG-13, 106 min., Dolby A, SR, SDDS, Flat. Matthew Perry, Salma Hayek. Dir: Andy Tennant. **Booty Call**, 2/26, Com, R, 77 min., DTS, SDDS, Flat. Jamie Foxx, Vivica Fox. Dir: Jeff Pollack	**The Devil's Own**, 3/26, Sus/Thr, Dolby A SR, SDDS, Anamorphic. Harrison Ford, Br Pitt, Margaret Colin, Treat Williams, Ruber Blades. Dir: Alan J. Pakula.
MGM/UA (310) 449-3000 (212) 708-0300		**Turbulence**, 1/31, Act/Dra, R, 103 min., DTS. Ray Liotta, Lauren Holly, Hector Elizondo Dir: Robert Butler.	**Touch**, Dra Tom Arnold, Bridget Fonda, Christopher Walken, Gina Gershon, Janeane Garofalo Dir: Paul Schrader.	**Hoodlum**(formerly Hoods), 3/28, Dra, R. Laurence Fishburne, Tim Roth, Andy Garc Vanessa Williams.Dir. Bill Duke.
Miramax (212) 941-3800 (213) 845-4200	**Everyone Says I Love You**, 12/6 ltd, 1/31 exp, Mus, R, 107 min., Dolby A, SR, Flat. Goldie Hawn, Drew Barrymore. Dir/Star: Woody Allen **Marvin's Room**, 12/18,1/31wide, R, Dolby SR, Flat, 93 min Meryl Streep, Diane Keaton, Leonardo DiCapno. Dir Jerry Zaks **Scream**, 12/20, Hor/Com, R, 104 min, Dolby SR, Anamorphic. Drew Barrymore, Courteney Cox, David Arquette. Dir: Wes Craven.	**Citizen Ruth**, 12/13 ltd, 1/10 exp, Com, R, Dolby SR, Flat, 102 min. Laura Dern, Swoosie Kurtz. Dir: Alexander Payne **Albino Alligator**, 12/13 ltd, 1/17 exp, Dra, R, Scope, 96 min. Dir: Kevin Spacey **The Substance of Fire**, 12/6 ltd, 1/10 exp, Dra, R, Dolby SR, Flat, 101 min. Sarah Jessica Parker. Dir: Daniel Sullivan. **Kolya**,1/24 NY, LA, Dra, R, 111 min., Dolby A, Flat Zdenek Szerak Dir: Jan Szerak.	**Nightwatch** (remake), 2/14, Dra. Nick Nolte, Ewan McGregor, Patricia Arquette, Josh Brolin. Dir. Ole Bornedal. **Cosi**, 2/21NY, LA. Toni Collette, Barry Otto, Ben Mendlesohn. Dir Mark Joffe. **Fist of Legend**, 2/28, Act/Adv. Jet Li. Dir: Gordon Chan.	**Rhyme & Reason**, 3/14, Doc. Features Ic Salt N Peppa. Dir: Peter Spirer. **Wide Awake**, 3/14, PG. Dana Delany, Der Leary. Dir: M. Night Shyamalan. **Mimic**, 3/19, SF, Mira Sorvino, Josh Broli Charles Dutton. Dir: Guillermo del Toro. **Chasing Amy**, 3/28 NY, LA, Rom/Com. Be Affleck, Joey Lauren Adams. Dir: Kevin Sr
New Line (310) 854-5811 (212) 649-4900	**Michael**, 12/25, Rom/Com,PG. SR, SR-D, SDDS, Flat. John Travolta, Andie MacDowell, William Hurt. Dir: Nora Ephron. **In Love and War**, 12/25 ltd, 1/24/97 wide, Rom/Dra, PG-13. SR, SR-D, SDDS, Anamorphic. Sandra Bullock, Chris D'Donnell. Dir: Richard Attenborough.	**Jackie Chan's First Strike** 1/10, Act, PG-13. SR, SR-D, SDDS, Anamporphic. Jackie Chan, Jackson Lou Dir. Samo Hung	**Love Jones**, 2/26, Rom/Com, R. SR, SR-D, SDDS, Flat. Larenz Tate, Nia Long. Dir: Theodore Witcher. **Dangerous Ground**, 2/14, Act/Dra., R, SR, SDDS, Flat. Elizabeth Hurley, Ice Cube, Ving Rhames. Dir: Darrell James Roodt	
Paramount (213) 956-5000 (212) 373-7000	**Beavis and Butt-Head Do America** 12/20, Ani, PG-13, 80 min. Voices. Mike Judge. Dir: Mike Judge. **The Evening Star**, 12/25 ltd, Dra, PG-13, 129 min. Shirley MacLaine, Bill Paxton, Juliette Lewis, Ben Johnson. Dir Robert Harling.	**Mother**, 12/25 ltd, 1/10, 1/24 exp, Com, PG-13, 103 min. Rob Morrow, Debbie Reynolds, Lisa Kudrow. Dir/Star: Albert Brooks. **The Relic**, 1/17, Thr, R. Penelope Ann Miller, Tom Sizemore, Linda Hunt. Dir Peter Hyams.	**Beautician and the Beast**, 2/14, Com. Fran Drescher, Timothy Dalton, Michael Learner, Phyllis Newman. Dir: Ken Kwapis.	**Howard Stern's Private Parts**, 3/14, Com, Howard Stern, Robin Quivers, Fred Norris, M McCormack. Dir: Betty Thomas. **The Saint**, 3/28, Act/Adv Val Kilmer, Elisabeth Shue. Dir: Phillip Noyce **Night Falls on Manhattan**, NY, LA, Dra. And Garcia, Richard Dreyfuss, Lena Olin, Ian Holm. Dir: Sidney Lumet.
TriStar (310) 280-8000 (212) 833-8500	**Jerry Maguire**, 12/13, Com/Dra, R, 138 min., Dolby A & SR, SDDS. Flat. Tom Cruise, Cuba Gooding Jr., Kelly Preston, Renee Zellweger. Dir: Cameron Crow	**Beverly Hills Ninja**, 1/17, Com, PG-13, 90 mins., Flat, Dolby A & SR, SDDS. Chris Farley, Nicolette Sheridan. Dir Dennis Dugan.	**The Pest**, 2/7, Com, PG-13, 88 min., Dolby A, SR, SDDS, Flat John Leguizamo, Jeffery Jones, Edoardo Ballerini. Dir Paul Miller. **Donnie Brasco**, 2/28, Dra, 122min, Dolby A, SR, SDDS, Flat. Johnny Depp, Al Pacino, Anne Heche, Michael Madsen. Dir. Mike Newell.	
20th Century Fox (310) 369-1000 (212) 556-2400	**The Crucible**, 12/13, 12/20 exp, 1/1 wide, Dra, PG-13, 123 min, Flat, Dolby SR & SR-D Daniel Day-Lewis, Winona Ryder, Joan Allen. Dir: Nicholas Hytner **One Fine Day**, 12/20, Rom/Com, PG, 108 min, Flat, Dolby SR & SR-D. Michelle Pfeiffer, George Clooney, Mae Whitman, Alex Linz. Dir. Michael Hottman	**Star Wars Special Edition** (1977 reissue), 1/31, SF, PG, ~125 min., Dolby SR & SRD, SDDS, DTS, Anamorphic. Harrison Ford, Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher, Alec Guiness, Peter Cushing. Dir. George Lucas.	**The Empire Strikes Back Special Edition** (1980 reissue), 2/21, SF, PG, Dobly SR & SRD, SDDS, DTS, Anamorphic. Harrison Ford, Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher, Billy Dee Williams.Dir: Irvin Kershner **Inventing the Abbots**, 2/28, Dra, R, Dolby SR, SDDS, Anamorphic. Liv Tyler, Joaquin Phoenix, Billy Crudup, Jennifer Connelly Dir: Pat O'Conner.	**Return of the Jedi Special Edition** (1983 sue), 3/7, SF, PG, Dobly SR & SRD, SDDS DTS, Anamorphic. Harrison Ford, Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher, Billy Dee Williams. Dir: Richard Marquand. **Turbo: A Power Rangers Adventure**, 3/21 Adv, Dolby SR, Flat. Jason David Frank, S Cardenas, Catherine Sutherland Dir: David Winning.
Universal (818) 777-1000 (212) 759-7500	**Daylight**, 12/6, Act, PG-13, 115 min. Dolby SR, DTS. Sylvester Stallone, Amy Brenneman, Viggo Mortensen. Dir. Rob Cohen	**Fierce Creatures**, 1/24, Com, PG-13, 98 min, Anamorphic, Dolby SR, DTS. Kevin Kline, Jamie Lee Curtis, John Cleese, Michael Palin. Dir: Robert Young	**Dante's Peak**, 2/7, Act/Adv Pierce Brosnan, Linda Hamilton. Dir. Roger Donaldson	**Liar Liar**, 3/21, Com, Dolby SR, DTS. Jim Carrey, Maura Tierney, Cary Elwes, John Lovitz, Swoosie Kurtz, Jennifer Tilly. Dir. Tom Shadyac.
Warner Bros. (818) 954-6000 (212) 484-8000	**Mars Attacks!**, 12/13, SF/Com,PG-13, 105 min. SDDS, Anamorphic. Jack Nicholson, Pierce Brosnan, Glenn Close. Dir: Tim Burton. **My Fellow Americans**, 12/20, Com, PG-13, 101 min. SDDS, Flat. Jack Lemmon, James Garner, Lauren Bacall. Dir Peter Segal. **Indiscretion**(formerly The Honest Courtesan), 12/20 ltd. Catherine McCormack, Moira Kelly, Rufus Sewell. Dir Marshall Herskovitz.		**Vegas Vacation**, 2/14, Com, PG Chevy Chase, Beverly D'Angelo, Randy Quaid. Dir: Stephen Kessler. **Rosewood**, 2/21, Dra. Jon Voight, Ving Rhames, Michael Rooker, Ester Rolle. Dir: John Singleton.	**Leo Tolstoy's Anna Karenina**, 3/7 ltd, Dra, So Marceau, Mia Kirschner, Dir.. Bernard Rose. **Selena** 3/21, Dra. Jennifer Lopez, Edward James Olmos Dir. Gregory Nava. **Cats Don't Dance**, 3/28, Ani. Voices: Scott Bakula, Kathy Najimy. Dir: Mark Dindal. **187**, Dra Samuel L. Jackson, John Heard, Kelly Rowan. Dir: Kevin Reynolds.

FEATURE CHART — MARCH 1997

April	May	Forthcoming	
The Sixth Man, 4/4, Com. Marlon Wayans, Kadeem Hardison, David Paymer. Dir: Randall Miller. **Romy and Michelle's High School Reunion**, 4/18, Com. Mira Sorvino, Lisa Kudrow, Janeane Garofalo, Elaine Hendrix. Dir: David Mirkin.		**ConAir**, 6/6, Act/Adv. Scope. Nicolas Cage, John Malkovich. Dir: Simon West. **Hercules**,6/27, Ani. Voices: James Woods, Danny DeVito. Dirs: Ron Clements, John Musker. **George of the Jungle**, July, Live Act. Brendan Fraser, Leslie Mann. Dir: Sam Weisman. **Gone Fishin'**, Aug, Com, PG. Joe Pesci, Danny Glover. Dir: Christopher Cain. **Nothing to Lose**, Summer, Com. Martin Lawrence, Tim Robbins. Dir. Steve Dedekerk. **Deep Rising**, Act/Thr. Treat Williams. Dir: Stephen Sommers. **In Pursuit of Honor** (formerlyG.I. Jane, Navy Cross), Act.. Demi Moore, Viggo Mortensen. Dir. Ridley Scott. **Playing God**, Dra. Timothy Hutton. Dir: Andy Wilson. **Rocket Man** (formerly Space Cadet), Harland Williams. **The Absentminded Professor**, Com. Robin Williams. **An Alan Smithee Film** (working title), Com. Sylvester Stallone, Whoopie Goldberg, Jackie Chan.	**Buena Vista** (818) 567-5000 (212) 593-8900
Double Team (formerly The Colony), 4/4, Act, SDDS, Jean-Claude VanDamme, Dennis Rodman, Mickey Rourke. Dir. Tsui Hark. **Anaconda**, 4/18, Adv, Dolby A, SR, SDDS. Jon Voight, Jennifer Lopez, Ice Cube, Eric Stoltz, Kari Wuhrer. Dir: Luis Llosa.	**The Fifth Element**, 5/9. Bruce Willis, Gary Oldman, Ian Holm. Dir. Luc Besson.	**Men in Black**, 7/2, SF, Dolby A, SR, SDDS. Tommy Lee Jones, Will Smith, Linda Fiorentino, Rip Torn. Dir: Barry Sonnenfeld. **AFD** (formerly Air Force One), 7/25, Act, SDDS. Harrison Ford, Gary Oldman, Glenn Close. Dir: Wolfgang Peterson. **Excess Baggage**, Aug, Act/Adv, Dolby A, SR, SDDS. Alicia Silverstone, Benicio del Toro, Christopher Walken. Dir: Marco Brambilla **Buddy**, Fall, Com. Rene Russo, Robbie Coltrane, Paul Reubens. Dir. Caroline Thompson. **Gattaca** (formerly The Eighth Day), Fall, SF. Ethan Hawke, Uma Thurman, Jude Law. Dir: Andrew Niccol.	**Columbia** (310) 280-8000 (212) 833-8500
		All Along the Watchtower, Dra. **All the Pretty Horses**, Dra. Dir: Mike Nichols. **Bond 18**, 11/20. Pierce Brosnan. **The Day After Tomorrow**. Sus. **The Fantasticks**. Mus/Com, PG, 108 min. Joel Grey, Joe McIntyre. Dir. Michael Ritchie. **Fireworks**, Dra. Dir: Mark Rydell. **Killer's Kiss**, Act/Thr. Linda Fiorentino. **Kiss Me Deadly**, Thr. Dir. Michael Mann. **Sixteen Pleasures**. Dir: Michael Apted. **Supernova**, SF/Thr. Dir. Joe Nimziki. **To Brave Every Danger**, Dra. **Warriors of Virtue**. Angus MacFadyen, Mario Yedidia, Marley Shelton. Dir. Ronny Yu. **Wild Card**. Dir: Robert Altman. **The Fortune Cookie**, Com, Bette Midler, Candice Bergen. Dir.. John Amiel.	**MGM/UA** (310) 449-3000 (212) 708-0300
Sonatine, 4/4 NY, LA. Dir/Star: Takeshi Kitano. **Talk of Angels**, 4/18, Dra, PG-13, 97 min., Dolby SR. Polly Walker, Vincent Perez. Dir: Nick Hamm. **Office Killer**, 4/23 NY, LA. Molly Ringwald, Jeanne Tripplehorn. Dir: Cindy Sherman. **Brassed Off**, 4/25 NY LA, Dra, Dolby SR, Flat. Pete Postlethwaite, Tara Fitzgerald, Ewan McGregor. Dir: Mark Herman.	**Children of the Revolution**, 5/1, Com, 102 min. Judy Davis, Sam Neill. Dir: Peter Duncan. **Operation Condor** (Hong Kong), 5/2, Act/Adv. Dir/Star: Jackie Chan. **Temptress Moon**,5/2 Dra. Gong Li, Leslie Cheung. Dir: Chen Kaige. **Mouth to Mouth** (Spain), 5/16, Com, R, Dolby SRD, Scope, 110 min. Javier Bardem, Maria Barranco. Dir: Manuel Gomez Pereira.	**Shall We Dance**, 6/6, Com. **Love Serenade**, 6/20. Miranda Otto. Dir: Shirley Barrett. **B. Monkey**,7/18, Dra. Jared Harris, Rupert Everett. Dir: Michael Radford **Copland**, 8/1, Dra. Sylvester Stallone, Robert DeNiro. Dir: James Mangold. **Wings of a Dove**, 8/15, Dra. Helena Bonham Carter, Linus Roache. Dir: Ian Softley. **An American Werewolf in Paris**, 8/29, Hor/Com. Julie Delpy, Tom Everett Scott. Dir: Anthony Waller. **She's DeLovely**, 9/12, Dra. Sean Penn, Robin Wright, John Travolta, Gena Rowlands. Dir: Nick Cassavetes. **Dogwater**, Rom/Com. David Schwimmer, Lara Flynn Boyle. Dir: David Schwimmer. **A Midsummer's Night Dream**. Alex Jennings, Barry Lynch. Dir: Adrian Noble. **Sarajevo**, Dra. Woody Harrelson, Marisa Tomei. Dir: Michael Winterbottom. **Wishful Thinking**, Fall. Jennifer Beals, James LeGros.	**Miramax** (212) 941-3800 (213) 845-4200
Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery, 4/4, Com. Mike Meyers, Elizabeth Hurley, Mimi Rogers, Michael York. Dir: Jay Roach. **B.A.P.s**, 4/16, Com, R. SR, SR-D, SDDS, Rat. Halle Berry, Martin Landau, Ian Richardson. Dir: Robert Townsend.	**Trial and Error**, 5/2, Com, PG-13. Anamorphic. Michael Richards, Jeff Daniels, Rip Torn, Charlize Theron. Dir: Jonathan Lynn. **Most Wanted** (formerly America's Most Wanted), Act/Com. Keenan Ivory Wayans, Jon Voight, Jill Hennessy, Eric Roberts. Dir: David Hogan.	**Boogie Nights**, 7/11, Com/Dra. Mark Wahlberg, Julianne Moore. Dir: Paul Thomas Anderson. **Money Talks**, 7/4, Act/Com. Charlie Sheen, Chris Tucker, Heather Locklear. Dir. Brett Ratner. **Mortal Kombat II: Annihilation**, 8/1, Act. **Spawn**, 8/22, SF. Michael Jai White, John Leguizamo, D.B. Sweeney. Dir: Mark Dippe. **One Night** (formerly One Night Stand), Dra. 9/97, SR, SR-D, SDDS. Flat. Wesley Snipes, Nastassija Kinski, Robert Downey Jr. Dir: Mike Figgis. **Woo**, 9/97. Jada Pinkett, Tommy Davidson, Isaac Hayes. Dir: Daisy Von Scherler Mayer. **Dark City**, Fall, Thr. William Hurt. Dir: Alex Proyas. **Overnight Delivery**, Rom/Com. Jason Bloom. **The Women**. Summer '98, Com. Julia Roberts, Meg Ryan. Dir. James Brooks.	**New Line** (310) 854-5811 (212) 649-4900
'Til There Was You, 4/4, Rom/Com. Jeanne Tripplehorn, Jennifer Aniston, Dylan McDermott, Sara Jessica Parker. Dir: Scott Winant. **Kiss the Girls**, 4/25, Sus. Morgan Freeman, Ashley Judd, Richard Timothy Jones, Cary Elwes. Dir: Gary Fleder.	**The Flood**, 5/16, Act. Christian Slater, Morgan Freeman, Minnie Driver, Randy Quaid. Dir: Mikael Salomon.	**In and Out**, 6/13, Com. Kevin Kline, Tom Selleck, Joan Cusack, Debbie Reynolds. Dir: Frank Oz. **Titanic**, 7/4, Rom/Adv. Bill Paxton, Kate Winslet, Leonardo DiCaprio. Dir: James Cameron. **Face Off**, 7/18, Act. John Travolta, Nicolas Cage. Dir: John Woo. **The Truman Show**, 8/8, Dra. Jim Carrey, Dennis Hopper. Dir: Peter Weir. **Event Horizen**, 8/22. Laurence Fishburne, Kathleen Quinlin. Dir: Paul Anderson. **The Magic Hour**, 9/19. Paul Newman, Susan Sarandon, Gene Hackman, Stockard Channing. Dir: Robert Benton. **Going West in America**, Fall, Thr. Dennis Quaid, Danny Glover. Dir: Jeb Stuart. **Illumination** (formerly One Golden Afternoon), Dra. Peter O'Toole. Dir. Charles Sturridge. **Prince Valiant**, Act/Adv. Stephen Moyer. Dir: Anthony Hickox. **Rainmaker**, Dra. Laurence Fishburne, Claire Danes, Mickey Rourke. Dir: Francis Ford Coppola.	**Paramount** (213) 956-5000 (212) 373-7000
		My Best Friend's Wedding, 6/27, Rom/Com. Julia Roberts, Dermot Mulroney, Cameron Diaz. Dir: P.J. Hogan. **Desperate Measures**, 8/8, Act. Michael Keaton, Andy Garcia. Dir: Barbet Schroeder. **Starship Troopers**, 11/7, SF, SDDS. Neil Patrick Harris, Denise Richards. Dir: Paul Verhoeven. **Kilronen**, Thr, SDDS. Jonathan Schaech, Jessica Lange, Gwyneth Paltrow. Dir: Jonathan Darby. **Old Friends**, Dra. Jack Nicholson, Helen Hunt, Greg Kinnear. Dir: James Brooks. **Peter Pan**, Adv. Dir: John Hughes. **Seven Years in Tibet**, Dra. Brad Pitt. Dir: Jean-Jacques Annaud **Stinkers**, Com. B.D. Wong, Bronson Pinchot. Dir: Barnet Kellman.	**TriStar** (310) 280-8000 (212) 833-8500
Picture Perfect, 4/4, Rom/Com, Dolby SR, Flat. Jennifer Aniston, Kevin Bacon, Olympia Dukakis, Jay Mohr. Dir: Glenn Gordon Caron		**Speed II: Cruise Control**,7/21, Act. Sandra Bullock, Jason Patric, Willem Dafoe. Dir: Jan De Bont. **Home Alone 3**, 7/11, Alex D.Linz. Dir. Raja Gosnell. **Alien Resurrection**, 8/1. Sigourney Weaver, Winona Ryder. Dir: Jean-Pierre Jeunet. **Volcano**, Sum, Act/Adv, Dolby SR, SRD, SDDS, DTS, Flat. Tommy Lee Jones, Anne Heche. Dir: Mick Jackson. **Out to Sea**, Sum, Com. Walter Matthau, Jack Lemmon. Dir. Martha Coolidge. **Anastasia**, Ani. Dirs: Don Bluth, Gary Goldman. **Bookworm**, Fall, Act./Thr. Anthony Hopkins, Alec Baldwin. Dir: Lee Tamahori. **Firestorm**, Fall, Act./Adv. Howie Long, Suzy Amis, Scott Glen. Dir.: Dean Semler. **Great Expectations**, Fall, Dra. Robert De Niro, Gwyneth Paltrow, Ethan Hawke. Dir: Alfonso Cuaron. **A Life Less Ordinary**, Dra. Cameron Diaz, Holly Hunter. Dir: Danny Boyle. **Untitled Bulworth**, Act/Dir: Warren Beatty. Halle Berry, Paul Sorvino.	**20th Century Fox** (310) 369-1000 (212) 556-2400
That Old Feeling, 4/4, Com, Dolby SR, DTS. Bette Midler, Dennis Farina, Danny Nucci. Dir: Carl Reiner. **McHale's Navy**, Com, Dolby SR, DTS. Tom Arnold, David Alan Grier, Dean Stockwell, Tim Curry. Dir. Bryan Spicer.	**The Lost World**, 5/23, Adv, Dolby SR, DTS. Jeff Goldblum, Julianne Moore, Vince Vaughn, Pete Postlthewaite. Dir: Steven Spielberg	**Leave it to Beaver**, 8/1, Com. Janine Turner, Christopher McDonald. Dir: Andy Cadiff. **Kull the Conqueror**, 8/29, Adv. Kevin Sorbo, Tia Carrere. Dir: John Nicolella. **The Fairy Godmother**,Com. Mara Wilson, Martin Short, Kathleen Turner. Dir. Michael Ritchie **Reach the Rock**, Dra. Bill Sadler, Karen Sillas. Dir: Bill Ryan **Untitled Jackal Project**, Thr. Bruce Willis, Richard Gere, Sidney Poitier. Dir: Michael Canton-Jones. **Virus**, Thr. Jamie Lee Curtis, Donald Sutherland. Dir: John Bruno.	**Universal** (818) 777-1000 (212) 759-7500
Murder at 1600, 4/11, Thr. Wesley Snipes, Diane Lane, David Benzali, Dennis Miller. Dir: Dwight H. Little. **Addicted to Love**, 4/18, Rom/Com. Meg Ryan, Matthew Brodenck. Dir: Griffin Dunne. **L.A. Confidential**, 4/25, Dra. Kevin Spacey, Kim Basinger, Danny DeVito, Russell Crowe. Dir: Curtis Hanson	**Father's Day**, 5/9, Com. Robin Williams, Billy Crystal, Natassja Kinski, Julia Louis-Dreyfuss. Dir: Ivan Reitman.	**Batman and Robin**, 6/20, Act/Adv. George Clooney. Dir. Joel Schumacher. **Contact**, 7/11. Jodie Foster, Matthew McConaughey. Dir: Robert Zemeckis. **Conspiracy Theory**, 7/25. Mel Gibson, Julia Roberts. Dir: Richard Donner. **Edwards and Hunt**, July, Com. Chris Farley. Dir: Christopher Guest. **Wild America**, July, Adv. PG. Jonathan Taylor Thomas. Dir: Bill Dear. **Free Willy 3**, 8/1, Fam/Adv. Jason James Richter. Dir: Sam Pillsbury. **Devil's Advocate**, Aug. Al Pacino. Dir: Taylor Hackford. **Steel**, Aug, Act/Adv, Shaquille O'Neal. Dir: Kenneth Johnson. **Mad City**, Dra. John Travolta, Dustin Hoffman. Dir: Constantin Costa-Gravas. **Incognito**, Thr, Jason Patric. Dir: John Badham. **Watch That Man**, 7/97. Bill Murray. Dir: Jon Amiel. **Fire Down Below**, Act. Steven Segal. **Pre**, Dra. Billy Crudup. Dir: Robert Towne. **Home Fries**, Com. Drew Barrymore. Dir: Dean Parisot	**Warner Bros.** (818) 954-6000 (212) 484-8000

BOXOFFICE Independent Feature Chart MARCH1997

FEBRUARY

Artificial Eye
212-255-1922

Le Samourai *(French)*, 103 min. Dir: Jean-Pierre Melville. 2/28 ltd.

Artistic License
212-265-9119

Troublesome Creek, Doc, 88 min. Dirs: Jeanne Jordan and Steve Ascher. 2/7 LA.

CFP
212-995-9662

Margaret's Museum *(Canada)*, Dra, R, 118 min. Helena Bonham Carter. Dir: Mort Ransen. 2/7
The Daytrippers, Com, NR, 90 min. Parker Posey, Stanley Tucci. Dir: Greg Mottola. 2/21

Cinema Parallel
410-442-1752

Satan Tango, Dra, NR, 450 min. Dir. Bela Tarr.

Cinema Village Features
212-431-5119

Screwed, 85 min. Dir: Alexander Crawford. Feb exp.

Dove
310-786-1600

Flipping, Thr, R, 110 min. Keith David. Dir: Gene Mitchell. 2/21

First Look
310-855-1199

Jerusalem *(Sweden)*, PG-13, 166 min. Olympia Dukakis, Max Von Sydow. Dir: Bille August. 2/14

First Run
212-243-0600

Boyfriends *(England)*. Dirs: Neil Hunter and Tom Hunsinger. 2/14
Champagne Safari, Doc. 2/21

Fox Searchlight
310-369-4402

Blood and Wine, Dra, R, 100 min. Jack Nicholson. Dir: Bob Rafelson. 2/14
Smilla's Sense of Snow, Thr. Julia Ormond. Dir: Billie August. 2/21

Goldwyn
310-284-9273

Hard Eight *(formerly Sydney)*, Dra, R, 101 min. Dir: Paul Thomas Anderson. 2/28

Gramercy
310-777-1960

When We Were Kings, Doc, 90 min. Dir: Leon Gast. 2/14
The Eighth Day *(France)*, Dra, 108 min. Dir: Jaco Van Dormael. 2/21

Greycat
702-737-0670

Parallel Sons, Rom/Dra, R, 93 min. Dir: John C. Young. NY
I Was a Jewish Sex Worker, Doc, NR, 74 min. Dir: Phillip B. Roth.

Live
818-778-3174

Hotel De Love, Rom/Com, R, 96 min. Aden Young, Simon Bossell. Dir: Craig Rosenberg. 2/7 LA, 2/14 exp

New Yorker Films
212-247-6110

A Mongolian Tale *(China)*, Dra, NR, 100 min. Dir: Xie Fei. 2/14

Northern Arts
413-268-9301

Drunks, Dra, R, 88 min. Richard Lewis, Faye Dunaway. Dir: Peter Cohn.

October
212-539-4000

Lost Highway, Dra/Thr, R, 95 min. Bill Pullman, Patricia Arquette. Dir: David Lynch. 2/21

Roxie Releasing
415-431-3611

Cobra Verde *(Germany)*, Dra, NR, 110 min. Klaus Kinski. Dir: Werner Herzog.
Scream of Stone *(Germany)*, Adv, NR, 96 min.Dir: Werner Herzog.

Sony Classics
212-833-8851

SubUrbia, Com/Dra, 118 min. Jayce Bartok, Arnie Carey, Parker Posey. Dir: Richard Linklater. 2/7

Strand Releasing
310-395-5002

The Graduate *(1967 reissue)*, Com/Dra, R, 105 min. Dustin Hoffman. Dir: Mike Nichols. 2/14
Message to Love, Doc, NR, 126 min.12/25 NY, 2/21 LA

Tara Releasing
415-454-5838

The Sadness of Sex, Com, NR, 86 min.Dir: Rupert Wainwright.

Theafilm
213-368-1778

A Chorus of Disapproval *(1989 UK reissue)*, Com. Jeremy Irons, Anthony Hopkins. Dir: Michael Wimer.

MARCH

Artificial Eye

Mon Homme *(France)*, Com/Dra, 98 min. Anouk Grinberg, Gerard Lanvin. Dir: Bertrand Blier. 3/7 NY

Artistic License

Sleepover, Dra, 88 min. Michael Albanese, Karl Giant. Dir: John Sullivan. 3/10 NY

East West Film Partners
212-594-3334

Good Luck, 98 min, Gregory Hines, Vincent D'Onofrio, Max Gail. Dir: Richard LaBrie. 3/7 ltd, 3/27 exp

Fine Line
212-649-4800

The Quiet Room, Dra, PG, 93 min. Chloe Ferguson, Celine O'Leary. Dir: Rolf de Heer. 3/21NY, 4/18 exp.
Crash, Dra, NC-17, 100 min. Holly Hunter, James Spader, Dir: David Cronenberg. 3/21

First Look

The Designated Mourner. Dra/Com. Mike Nichols, Miranda Richardson. Dir: David Hare.
A Brother's Kiss, Dra, Nick Chinlund, Michael Raynor. Dir: Seth Zvi Rosenfeld.

First Run

The Watermelon Woman, Com, 85 min. Guinevere Turner. Act/Dir: Cheyrl Dunye.

Fox Searchlight

Love and Other Catastrophes *(Australia)*, Com, 79 min. Frances O'Connor, Alice Garner. Dir: Emma Kate Croghan. 3/28

Gramercy

Commandments, Dra. Courteney Cox, Aidan Quinn. Dir: Daniel Taplitz.

Live

Gentlemen Don't Eat Poets, Dra, R, 98 min. Sting, Theresa Russell. Dir: John Paul Davidson.
Dead Men Can't Dance, Act/Dra, 101 min. Michael Biehn. Dir: Steven Anderson. 3/7

Northern Arts

Hearts and Minds, Thr, R, 105 min. Danny Keogh, Patrick Shai. Dir: Ralph Ziman. 3/14
Gray's Anatomy, Com, NR, 80 min. Spalding Gray. Dir: Steven Soderbergh. 3/19

October

Female Perversions, Dra, R, 114 min. Tilda Swinton, Amy Madigan, Karen Sillas. Dir: Susan Streitfeld. 3/28

Orion
310-282-2948

Independence, Dra. Dean Cain, Drew Barrymore. Dir: Tamra Davis. 3/7
City of Industry, Dra. Timothy Hutton. Dir: John Irvin.

Phaedra Cinema
310-319-5346

Sudden Manhattan, Rom/Com, 85 min. Louise Lasser. Dir/Star: Adrienne Shelly. 3/7
Without Air, Dra, 88 min. Lauri Crook. Dir: Neil Abramson.

Seventh Art
213-845-1455

Salut Cousin *(French Algeria)*, Com, 95 min. Gad Elmaleh, Mess Hattou. Dir: Merzak Allouache.

Sony Classics

Broken English, Dra, 91 min. Dir: Gregor Nicholas.

Strand

Boys Life 2, *(shorts compilation)*, Com/Dra, 90 min. Dir: Four directors. 3/7

Tara Releasing

Mushrooms *(Australia)*, Com, 93 min. Dir: Alan Madden.

Trimark
310-314-3040

Kama Sutra, Dra, 114 min. Sarita Choudhury. Dir: Mira Nair.
Underworld, Thr. Denis Leary, Joe Mantegna. Dir: Roger Christian.

APRIL

Cinema Village Features

Fetishes, Doc. Dir: Nick Broomfield.

CFP

Hollow Reed, Dra, 106 min. Martin Donovan, Ian Hart. Dir: Angela Pope. 4/18

Fine Line

Pink Flamingos, *(1972 reissue)*, Divine. Dir: John Waters. 4/11
Roseanna's Grave, Com, PG-13, 99 min. Jean Reno, Mercedes Ruehl. Dir: Paul Weiland. 4/18
All Over Me, Dra, R, 90 min. Alison Folland. Dir: Alex Sichel. 4/25

Fox Searchlight

Paradise Road, Dra. Glenn Close, Frances McDormand. Dir: Bruce Beresford.

Goldwyn

Kissed, Dra, 80 min. Molly Parker, Peter Outerbridge. Dir: Lynne Stopkewich. 4/11

Live

The Winner, Thr. Rebecca de Mornay, Vincent D'Onofrio. Dir: Alex Cox.

New Yorker Films

Flamenco, Doc, 100 min. Dir: Carlos Saura. 4/4

Northern Arts

Schizopolis, Com, 99 min. Steven Soderbergh, Betsy Brantley. Dir: Steven Soderbergh.

October

Traveller, Crime/Dra. Bill Paxton, Mark Wahlberg. Dir: Jack Green.

Orion

Eight Heads in a Duffle Bag, Com/Dra, R. Joe Pesci, Carol Kane. Dir: Tom Schulman. 4/25

Phaedra Cinema

The Next Step, Dra, 90 min. Rick Negron. Dir: Christian Faber

Rhino Films
310-474-4778

Plump Fiction, Com, 85 min. Julie Brown, Sandra Bernhard. Dir: Bob Koherr.

BOXOFFICE Independent Feature Chart MARCH 1997

Shadow Distribution
207-872-5111

Mondo *(French)*, Dra, 87 min. Philippe Petit. Dir: Tony Gatliff

Sony Classics

The Myth of Fingerprints, Dra. Noah Wyle. Dir: B. Freundlich.

Strand

Late Bloomers, Rom/Dra, 104 min. Dir: Julia and Gretchen Dyer.

Triumph
310-280-8059

Bliss, Rom/Dra. Terence Stamp, Craig Sheffer. Dir: Lance Young. 4/4

Zeitgeist
212-274-1989

Irma Vep *(France)*, Com, NR, 98 min. Maggie Cheung. Dir: Olivier Assayas.

MAY

Artificial Eye

Le Bonheur Dans Lepres *(France)*, Com, 102 min. Michel Serrault. Dir: Etienne Chatiliez. 5/16 NY

CFP

Guantanamera, Com, NR, 124 min. Dirs: Thomas Gutierrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabio Rey. 5/16

Fine Line

Love Letter *(Japan)*, Dra, 116 min. Dir: Shunji Iwai. 5/2 NY, 5/23 LA
Gummo. Dra. Chloe Sevigny. Dir: Harmony Korine. 5/16
Love! Valor! Compassion! Dra. Jason Alexander, John Glover. Dir: Joe Mantello. 5/16

First Run

Brothers in Trouble, Dra, 102 min. Dir: Udayan Prasad. 5/14

Fox Searchlight

Intimate Relations, Dra, 102 min. Julie Walters, Rupert Graves. Dir: Philip Goodhew. 5/9 ltd.

Goldwyn

Paperback Romance *(formerly Lucky Break)*, Rom/Com. Anthony LaPaglia. Dir: Ben Lewin.

New Yorker Films

La Promesse, Dra, NR, 93 min. Dirs: Jean-Pierre Gardenne, Luc Gardenne. 5/23

Milestone Film & Video
212-865-7449

Woman in the Dunes *(Japan, 1964 reissue)*, 72 min. Dir: Hiroshi Teshigahara.
Antonio Gaudi *(Japan, 1985 rerelease)*, Dir: Hiroshi Teshigahara

Strand

Contempt *(1963 reissue)*, Dra/Com, 103 min. Brigitte Bardot. Dir: Jean-Luc Godard.
Timothy Leary's Dead, Doc, 80 min. Dir: Paul Davids.

Triumph

Truth or Consequences, Sus, Kevin Pollack. Dir/Star: Kiefer Sutherland. 5/2
Masterminds, 5/30

JUNE

CFP

The Pillow Book, Dra, 126 min. Vivian Wu, Ewan McGregor. Dir: Peter Greenaway. 6/6

Fine Line

Winter Guest. Emma Thompson. Dir: Alan Rickman. 6/18

First Look

Different For Girls, Rom/Com. Rupert Graves. Dir: Richard Spence.

Kino Intl.
212-629-6880

M *(1931 German re-issue)*, Dra. Peter Lorre. Dir: Fritz Lang. 6/27

New Yorker Films

Deep Crimson, Dra, NR, 114 min. Dir: Arturo Ripstein. 6/20
Gabbeh, Dra, 75 min. Dir: Mohsen Makhmalbas

Orion

Ulee's Gold, Dra. Peter Fonda. Dir: Victor Nunez.

Strand

The Tit and the Moon, Com, 92 min. Dir: Bigas Lunas.
La Sentinelle.*(France)*, Thr, 144 min. Emmanuel Salinger. Dir: Arnaud Desplechin.

FORTHCOMING

Arrow
212-258-2200

Breathing Room, Rom/Com, 90 min. Dan Futterman. Dir: John Sherman. 11/8

Cabin Fever
203-622-3449

The Elevator, Com. Martin Landau, Martin Sheen.
The Secret Agent Club, Act. Hulk Hogan, Barry Bostwick.
Skeletons, Hor. Dir: Ken Russell.

CFP

Bandwagon, Com/Mus, NR, 103 min. Kevin Corrigna, Lee Holmes. Dir: John Schultz. 4/18

Cinema Parallel

To Have (Or Not), Dra, NR, 93 min. Dir. Laetitia Masson.

Dove

Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, Com/SF, 92 min. Dir: Neil Davies.
Inside the Goldmine, Thr, 92 min. Josh Evans, Alicia Tully Jensen. Dir: Josh Evans.

Dreamworks SKG
818-733-7000

El Dorado: City of Gold, Ani. Dir: Will Finn.
Mousehunt, Com/Ani. Nathan Lane, Lee Evans. Dir: Gore Virbinsky.
The Peacemaker, Act/Adv. George Clooney, Nicole Kidman. Dir: Mimi Leder. Fall.
The Prince of Egypt, Ani.
Amistad, (formerly Mutiny) His/Dra, Dir: Steven Spielberg.
Blue Vision, Dir: Neil Jordan.

Fine Line

nowhere, James Duval, Traci Lords. Dir: Gregg Araki. 8/22
Head Above Water, Dra/Com, PG-13, 92 min. Harvey Keitel, Cameron Diaz. Dir: Jim Wilson.
The Tears of Julian Po. Christian Slater, Robin Tunney.

First Look

This is the Sea, Rom/Dra. Richard Harris, Gabriel Byrne. Dir: Mary McGuckian. Sum
Slaves to the Underground, Dra, 92 min. Marisa Ryan, Jason Bortz. Dir: Kristine Peterson. Sum
Mrs. Dalloway, Dra. Vanessa Redgrave. Dir: Marleen Gorris.

First Run

Hamsun. Max Von Sydow. Dir: Jan Troell
Six O'Clock News. Dir: Ross McElwee.
Project Grizzly. Dir: Peter Lynch.

Fox Searchlight

Ice Storm, Dra. Kevin Kline, Joan Allen, Sigourney Weaver. Dir: Ang Lee. Fall.
Cousin Bette, Dra. Jessica Lange, Elisabeth Shue, Bob Hoskins. Dir: Des McAnuff. Fall.

Goldwyn

Napolean, Ani, G, 82 min. Voices: Adam Wylie, Bronson Pinchot. 8/97
The Big Red. Oct
Rough Magic, Rom/Adv, 104 min. Bridget Fonda, Russell Crowe. Dir: Clare Peploe.

Gramercy

Twin Town, Com/Thr. Rhys Ifans, Llyr Evans. Dir: Kevin Allen. 7/97
How To Be a Player, Com. Bill Belamy. Dir: Lionel Martin. 8/97
The Matchmaker, Com. Jeanene Garafalo. Dir: Mark Joffe. 9/97
Dr. Bean, Com. Rowan Atkinson.
The Big Lebowski. Jeff Bridges, John Goodman, Steve Buscemi. Dirs: Joel and Ethan Coen. 11/97

Kit Parker
800-538-5838

Day For Night *(1973 French reissue)*, Dra, PG, 120 min. Dir: Francois Truffaut.
Death in Venice *(1971 Italian reissue)*, Dra, PG, 130 min. Dirk Bogarde. Dir: Luchino Visconti.

Live

No Way Home, Dra. Tim Roth. Dir: Buddy Gioviazzo. 9/97
Critical Care, Dra/Thr. James Spader, Albert Brooks. Dir: Sydney Lumet. 10/97
Boys Night Out, Thr. Christopher Walken, Sean Patrick Flannery. Dir: Peter O'Fallow. 11/97
Wishmaster, Hor. Dir: Robert Kurtzman.

Movieworld Ent.
510-244-5590

The Killing Kind, Dra. Kirk Harris.
The Lost Woman, SF, Jennifer Rubin.

New Yorker Films

Forever Mozart, Dra, NR, 84 min. Madeleine Assas. Dir: Jean-Luc Godard.

October

Kicked in the Head. Linda Fiorentino, Lili Taylor.
Career Girls, Dra. Catrin Cartlidge. Dir: Mike Lee.

Orion

This World, Then the Fireworks, Dra. Billy Zane, Gina Gershon. Dir: Michael Oblowitz. Sum
Gang Related, Dra, R. Tupac Shakur, Jim Belushi. Dir: Jim Kous. 9/10
The Locust, Dra. Kate Capshaw, Ashley Judd. Dir: John Patrick Kelley. 9/97
Sugar Daddy, Dra. 11/97

Rhino Films

Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas, Dra. Johnny Depp. Dir: Alex Cox.

Shadow Distribution

La Petite Apocalypse *(French)*, Com/Dra, 110 min. Pierre Arditi. Dir: Costa-Gavras.

Sony Classics

Call Me Victor *(France)*, Com, PG, 100 min. Jeanne Moreau. Dir: Guy Jacques.

Strand

Nights of Cabiria *(1957 Italian reissue)*, Dra, 110 min. Giulietta Masina. Dir: Federico Fellini. 8/97
Self-Made Hero (France). Fall
Full Speed, Dra. Dir: Gael Murel.

Trimark
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Warrior of Waverly Street, SF. Dir: Manny Coto. Spring
Nothing Personal, Dra, R. John Lynch. Dir: Thaddeus O'Sullivan.
Ripe, Dra. Dir: Mo Ogrodnik.
Sprung, Com., Dir/Star: Rusty Cundieff. Spring
Eve's Bayou, Dra. Samuel L. Jackson, Lynn Whitfield. Dir: Kasi Lemmons. Fall
Chairman of the Board, Com. Carrot Top. Fall

Triumph

Smart Alec, Act/Com. Patrick Stewart, Vincent Kartheiser, Brenda Fricker. Dir: Roger Christian. Spr/97
The Assignment *(formerly Jackal)*. Act. Aidan Quinn, Ben Kingsley. Dir: Christian Duguay. 9/97

THE BOXOFFICE HOME RELEASE CHART

BOXOFFICE

MARCH 1997

HOME VIDEO RELEASE DATE	TITLE	BOXOFFICE GROSS	SCREENS	THEATRICAL RELEASE	THEATRICAL/VIDEO DISTRIBUTOR
March 4	Courage Under Fire	$59,000,000	2,001	July 12	Fox
March 4	Hunchback of Notre Dame	$100,200,000	2,835	June 21	Buena Vista/Walt Disney
March 4	That Thing You Do!	$25,700,000+	1,887	October 4	Fox
March 11	Harriet the Spy	$26,600,000	1,876	July 10	Paramount
March 11	Maximum Risk	$14,100,000	2,358	September 13	Columbia/Columbia TriStar
March 18	American Buffalo	$600,000	73	September 13	Goldwyn/Evergreen
March 18	Basquiat	$3,000,000	109	August 9	Buena Vista/Miramax
March 18	First Wives Club	$105,000,000+	2,406	September 20	Paramount
March 18	The Long Kiss Goodnight	$33,300,000+	2,404	October 11	New Line
March 18	Supercop	$16,300,000	1,469	July 26	Buena Vista/Miramax
March 18	Walking and Talking	$1,300,000	60	July 17	Buena Vista/Miramax
March 25	Flirting With Disaster	$14,700,000	969	March 8	Buena Vista/Miramax
April 22	Set It Off	$34,900,000+	1,016	November 6	New Line
April	The Associate	$12,600,000+	1,781	October 25	Buena Vista/Hollywood
April	Big Night	$11,500,000+	366	September 20	MGM/UA
April	Boogie	$3,800,000	262	October 4	Gramercy/PolyGram
April	Bulletproof	$21,200,000	2,242	September 6	MCA/Universal
April	The Chamber	$14,300,000	2,032	October 11	MCA/Universal

April 22	Set It Off	$24,000,000+	1,775	October 25	New Line
April	The Associate	$12,600,000+	1,781	October 25	Buena Vista/Hollywood
April	Big Night	$11,500,000+	366	September 20	MGM/UA
April	Bound	$3,800,000	262	October 4	Gramercy/PolyGram
April	Bulletproof	$21,200,000	2,242	September 6	MCA/Universal
April	The Chamber	$14,300,000	2,032	October 11	MCA/Universal
April	Emma	$22,000,000	585	August 2	Buena Vista/Miramax
April	Extreme Measures	$17,300,000	2,298	September 27	Columbia/Columbia TriStar
April	Get On the Bus	$5,700,000	1,207	October 16	Columbia/Columbia TriStar
April	The Glimmer Man	$20,300,000	2,236	October 4	Warner Bros.
April	Lone Star	$12,100,000	189	June 21	Sony Classics
April	Looking For Richard	$1,300,000	81	October 11	Fox
April	Michael Collins	$10,800,000	878	October 11	Warner Bros.
April	Rich Man's Wife	$8,500,000	1009	September 13	Buena Vista/Hollywood
April	Sleepers	$52,400,000	2,080	October 18	Warner Bros.
April	Space Jam	$86,000,000+	2,650	November 15	Warner Bros.
May	D3: The Mighty Ducks	$22,700,000+	2,060	October 4	Buena Vista/Walt Disney
May	Ghost and the Darkness	$37,700,000	2,202	October 11	Paramount
May	High School High	$20,900,000+	2,146	October 25	Fox
May	Mars Attacks!	$35,500,000+	1,955	December 13	Warner Bros.
May	The Mirror Has Two Faces	$40,800,000+	2,489	November 15	TriStar/Columbia TriStar
May	Ransom	$130,700,000+	2,768	November 8	Buena Vista/Touchstone
May	Romeo + Juliet	$45,300,000	1,276	November 1	Fox
May	Stephen King's Thinner	$14,800,000	2,009	October 25	Paramount
May	To Gillian on Her 37th Birthday	$4,100,000	5	October 18	Triumph
June	101 Dalmatians	$126,100,000+	2,901	November 27	Buena Vista/Walt Disney
June	Michael	$63,700,000+	2,141	December 25	New Line
June	The Preacher's Wife	$42,100,000+	2,048	December 13	Buena Vista/Hollywood

Compiled by BOXOFFICE MAGAZINE. Numbers for ***Boxoffice Gross*** represent total domestic boxoffice grosses to the nearest $100,000; + signs indicate that films remain in theatrical release. Number of ***Screens*** indicates the maximum number of screens in widest, simultaneous release. Entries in the ***Theatrical/Video Distributor*** column list two names when the video releasing company is different from (or releases through a subsidiary different from) the theatrical distributor. Exact day-and-date specific entries for ***Home Video Release*** are confirmed; in all other cases, the month indicated for a release is forecast by the editors of BOXOFFICE. BOXOFFICE is not liable for errors or omissions in the chart.

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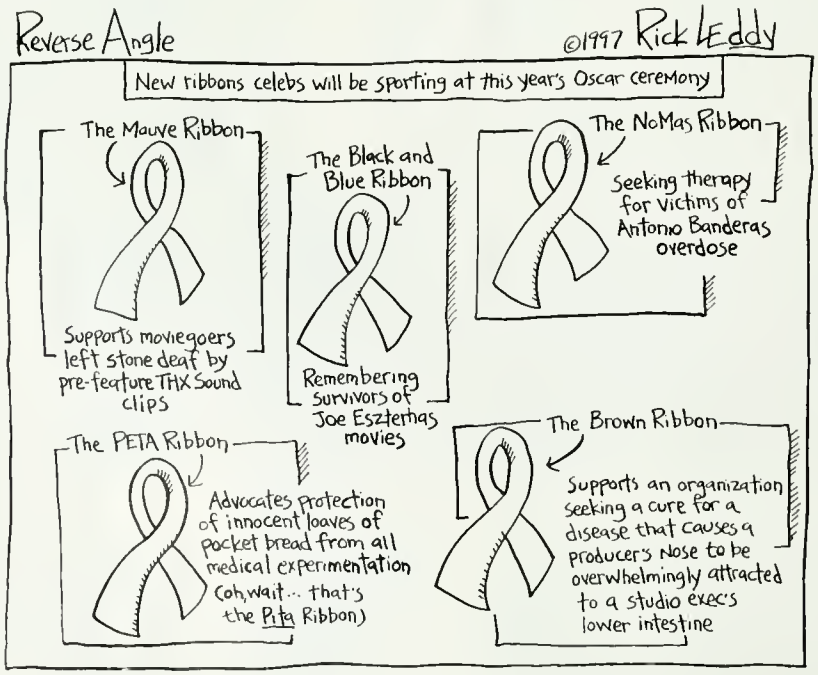
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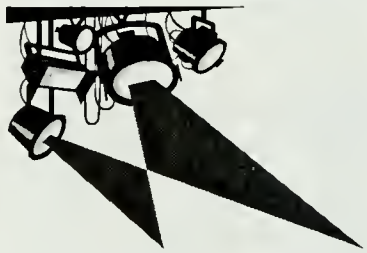
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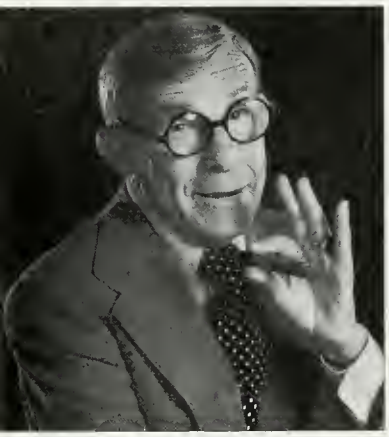
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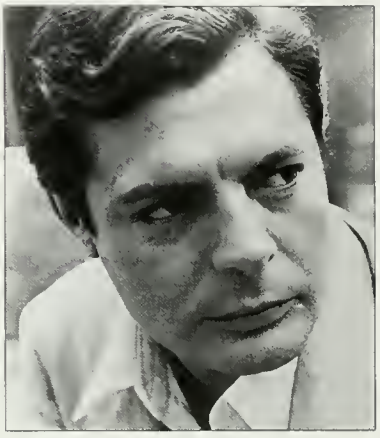
The Big Picture

















We lost some of the greats in 1996—or rather, some much-loved screen immortals graduated to the next level. Since our **Boxoffice Barometer** is dedicated to looking back at the year just passed, we thought we'd use this space to commemorate a few fallen comrades: *(Clockwise from upper left:)* George Burns, comic genius; Gene Kelly, hoofer extraordinaire; Claudette Colbert, showing her good side; Greer Garson, the epitome of English pluck; Ben Johnson, cowboy's cowboy; Juliet Prowse, can-can girl; Dorothy Lamour, queen of the sarong. *(Center:)* The indescribable greatness that was Marcello Mastroianni.

In as few words as possible: gone, but not forgotten. Their achievements live, but we'll miss them anyhow.—***Ray Greene***



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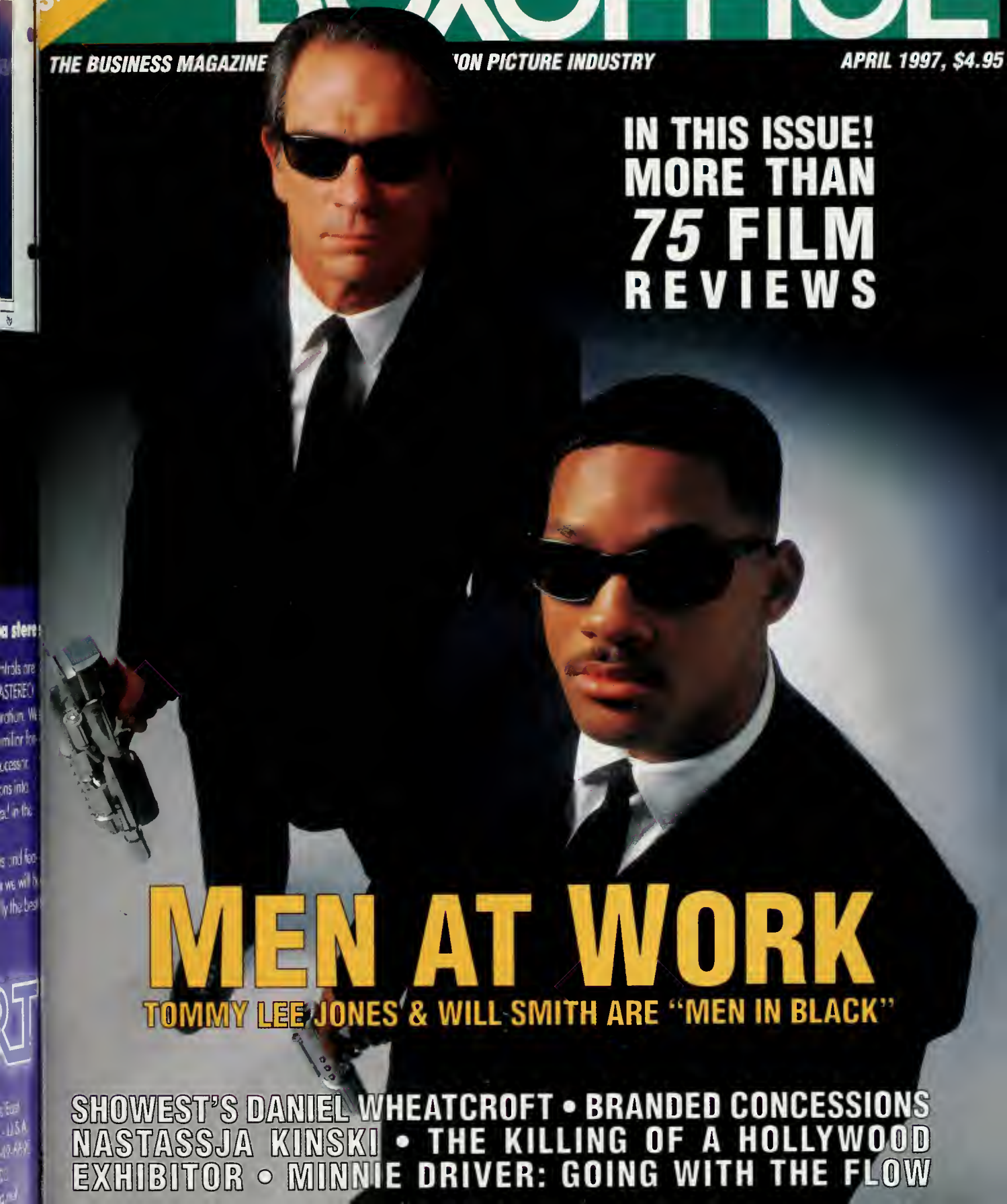
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IN THIS ISSUE! MORE THAN *75* FILM REVIEWS

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TOMMY LEE JONES & WILL SMITH ARE "MEN IN BLACK"

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Response No. 100

OPENING CREDITS

When your office is in Hollywood, Calif. the way the **BOXOFFICE** editorial staff's is, you can't turn a corner on the street without overhearing some piece of news, gossip or disinformation about what's going on in the film biz. So and so's career is in trouble. Such and such is poised to become a breakout star. Blankety-blank Pictures is going to remake "Your Favorite Movie Classic Here." The list goes on and on.

One oft-discussed hot button topic we have strong opinions on is film preservation. As a magazine that's been around for 77 years, **BOXOFFICE** has observed, recorded and participated in the history of movies since before there was sound, and you'd better believe we're four-square in favor of taking care of the priceless legacy of images that over a century of film has bequeathed to us. Fortunately, some very powerful and prominent figures—Steven Spielberg, Martin Scorsese, George Lucas, and on and on—have made the preservation issue (as well as related issues of artists' rights) something of an industry *cause celebre*, and while there's still a great deal to be done, their efforts have gone a long way toward yielding a desirable result.

All this leads us to wonder why it is that magazines like **BOXOFFICE** and organizations like the National Association of Theatre Owners are such lonely voices when it comes to the issue of protecting the moviegoing experience for films that are as fresh as this morning's coffee. You're in the exhibition biz or something related to it, so you probably already know what we're talking about: the video release window, which seems to get shorter and shorter with each passing summer.

NATO president Bill Kartozian has gone on record as saying that if exhibition is to remain healthy, a minimum six-month window of exclusivity has to be afforded movie theatres for the showing of theatrical films. To us, it's just common sense to say that Mr. Kartozian is more than right. We might even go so far as to suggest a two-month extension of that six-month window for blockbusters like "Independence Day," to make absolutely sure the second-run houses get a fair crack at the bigger titles.

The "video release window" is nothing more nor less than an issue of film preservation for movies that are being made now. The net result of getting those cassettes to market in less and less time is to implant an idea in the minds of the audience that if they ignore a movie when it's being played on the big screen the way it was meant to be seen, they can pick it up on the cheap in a "reformatted for your TV screen" edition after just a few weeks. The shortening of the video release window doesn't just cheat exhibitors. It cheats moviegoers, filmmakers and everyone involved with every step in the process.

It seems like a no-brainer to expect that the same leading figures on the film production side who stand united against the panning and scanning of widescreen film prints and the slashing of original running times to fit TV ad schedules would get behind the concept of a six month exhibition window. After all, what are people like Spielberg, Lucas and Scorsese fighting to preserve when they stand up for film preservation? The sanctity of the motion-picture art form, its right to be showcased with all the aesthetic intentions of the people who make each movie intact. So why would these very talented directors want to sit still for a situation that encourages the majority of potential moviegoers to see contemporary films—including the titles they themselves produce and direct—on a cathode tube for which aspect ratio must be severely altered, contrast range must be brutally compressed, and image size on even the biggest home screen can be only a tiny fraction of the artistic canvas the living light of projected film paints on.

It seems like a no-brainer to expect that the same leading figures on the film production side who stand united against the panning and scanning of widescreen film prints and the slashing of original running times to fit TV ad schedules would get behind a six month exhibition window.

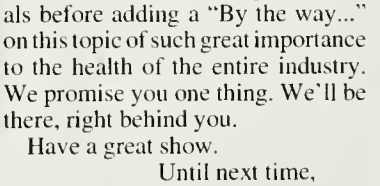
To us, these arguments are self-evident, which is why we're so puzzled that the exhibition industry is still waiting for even one prominent filmmaker or production executive to publicly champion the six-month release window's cause. A cynic might point to the analogy we draw between preserving the films of the past and preserving the moviegoing experience of the present and say something like, "It's easy to stand up for preserving old movies when you have nothing personal at stake in them. But don't forget, the Spielbergs and Lucases of the world are not just filmmakers, they're contemporary producers! Practically corporations! If conventional wisdom says you maximize profits by shortening the video release window, asking them to stand up for the six month window is like asking them to choose between their pocketbooks and their art!" Which is exactly what we're trying to do, if the choice has to be that stark.

One of the great things about the ShoWest convention, for which this issue has been created, is that it brings together people from all aspects of the film industry in a common recognition of exhibition's unparalleled importance to film. Actors, directors, studio execs and circuit chieftains rub elbows with single-screen entrepreneurs as creative equals, and everybody's a star. It's an event not to be missed, and one in which magical things can happen.

So, if anyone reading this should find him or herself standing at a ShoWest event next to Steven Spielberg or Michael Eisner or Ted Turner or Rupert Murdoch, you might want to say something nice, supportive and friendly about our common interests as film professionals before adding a "By the way..." on this topic of such great importance to the health of the entire industry. We promise you one thing. We'll be there, right behind you.

Have a great show.

Until next time,



Ray Greene
Editor-in-Chief
BOXOFFICE



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APRIL 1997, VOL. 133 NO. 4

BOXOFFICE

THE BUSINESS MAGAZINE OF THE GLOBAL MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY

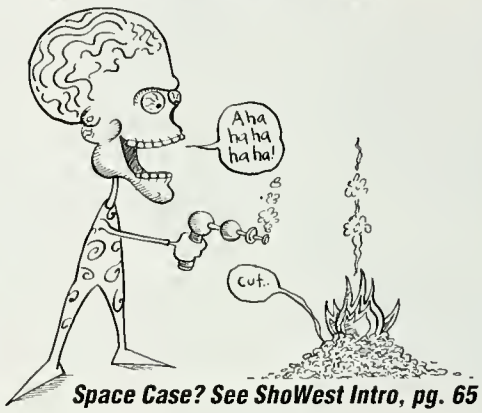
UNQUOTE: *When people come to ShoWest, they're re-energized. This is the community that makes all the decisions about whether someone becomes a big star, or whether a movie succeeds, or whether an audience comes into the theatre.*—**SHOWEST PRESIDENT DANIEL WHEATCROFT**

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Film preservation has enlisted high-level support across the movie spectrum. So where's the support for preserving the movie experience of the here and now? ***By Ray Greene***

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A handy guide to this year's Academy nominees.

LETTERS

Jim Carrey was paid too much. John Travolta will fall again. Barbra Streisand over-hyped.
J. Specauza, art critic

Family movie of the holiday season: "Jingle all the Way." What great fun for all ages!! Schwarzenegger, Sinbad and Hartman were hilarious!
Robert Douvier, Main Street Theatre, Sauk Centre, Minn.

Neve Campbell did an excellent job in "Scream" and "The Craft." I think she is one of the top three promising female boxoffice attractions of the year.
Angelina M. Cistone, SoCal Cinemas, Laguna Hills, Calif.

Glenn Close as Cruella de Vil was perfect casting! Best comic portrayal since Jack Nicholson as The Joker.
Leslie Bracy, Malco Theatres, Roger, Ark.

First choice Male Star: Goeffrey Rush in "Shine."
George Udel, G2 Services, Balto, Md.

A rather below-average year, imploded with a whimper, very little innovativeness.
Avinashk Rangra, Rangra Theatres, Alpine, Texas

Travolta definitely out-does his competition with the excellent job in "Michael." Claire Danes and Natalie Portman are even better than their adult rivals.
Ken Own, RCCL, Miami, Fla.

I know "Barb Wire" was a bad "B" movie, but Ms. Lee has acting talent and will get better roles. After all, "Showgirls" didn't kill off Elizabeth Berkley.
Tim Rogers, Carmike, Butte, Mont.

Lauren Bacall is the best. She needs to do more films. I don't see George Clooney being on "E.R." for long—he's good in "One Fine Day."
Edwin Rosche, Regal, Rock Hill, S.C.

"The English Patient" was the best movie in 40 years!
Jim Nagle, Sony Theatres, Cleveland, Ohio

I don't know why everyone was so down on "The Cable Guy." It was Jim Carrey's finest film since "The Mask." "Trainspotting" lived up to the hype and more. "Mystery Science Theatre 3000" and "Dead Man" were two of the finest films I've ever seen and were sadly underexposed.
Ira Brooker, Star Cinema, Sparta, Wis.

Great new faces in superb independent releases! How refreshing! Thanks.
Raven Earlygrow, Arena Theatres, Pt. Arena, Calif.

1996 was good for Fox and Warner Bros. Disney's last good animated flick was "The Lion King." They need a new outlook in that department. George Clooney was the loser in 1996 due to attitude alone. Disney, no more live action rip-offs of classics and no more sequels!
Charles B., Metroplex Videotaping, Fort Worth, Texas

Natalie Portman is hot!
Dustin Wilson, Just Videos, Richmond, N.Y.

Best star: Val Kilmer. Most underrated, poorly marketed excellent picture was "Ghost in the Darkness" Most oversold poor pictures: Jim Carrey's.
Dennis, Empire Theatre, Wofford Heights, Calif.

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY:
What BOXOFFICE Readers Have to Say About BOXOFFICE

We dish it out regularly. Here's proof we can take it. Reader opinions on what we're doing right and what we're doing wrong are always welcome.

After attending ShowEast in Atlantic City, **BOXOFFICE** is still the best magazine available. Be reading ya in '97.
Patty Gentry, Silver Screen Cinema 8, Va Beach, Va.

BOXOFFICE is a great magazine.
R. C. Leon, Premiere NYC, N.Y.

Your reviews are horrible. They have no taste, no resemblance to reality and are the opposite of what people want.
Dennis, Empire Theatre, Wofford Heights, Calif.

Our company has been receiving this magazine for at least 40 years. We get it at all the subsidiary theatres and main office. Personally, I used articles to write my term paper on cinematography. Thank you!
Angela Cordes, Capital 4 Theatres, Jefferson City, Mo.

More pictures, more info, less ads.
Ken Own, RCCL, Miami, Fla.

Fine magazine. Wish it could go every two weeks.
Charles Sims, Jr., State Twin Theatre, Gainesville, Texas

The best movie-related magazine I've seen.
Ira Brooker, Star Cinema, Sparta, Wis.

BOXOFFICE has come of age, is timely in the reviews sections, readable.
Avinashk Rangra, Rangra Theatres, Alpine, Texas

BOXOFFICE is a really good magazine and I enjoy reading it.
Jamie L. Gilbert, Bad Axe Theatre, Bad Axe, Mich.

I look forward to reading it every month to find out what new movies are coming out.
Susan Keffaber, Eagles Theatre Syndicate Theatres, Wabash, Ind.

BOXOFFICE? Super, super, super!
Kimberly Luna, Super Saver Cinemas, Pomona, Calif.

Great work!
D. Curun, Baseline, Century City, CA

Great. Keep all the info coming. Much success.
D. Blalock, Georgia Theatre, Covington, GA

Your magazine covers everything anyone could want to read about the movies. Keep up the good work.
Edward Ortiz, General Cinema Rancho 6, Colton, Calif.

Best magazine of the '90's. Keep up the good work!!!
Edwin Rosche, Regla, Rock Hill, S.C.

Please put in address and phone numbers for ALL distributors at least once a year.
George Udel, G2 Services, Balto, Md.
[We do. Every September in our annual BUYERS DIRECTORY.—Ed.]

It's getting better with every issue. Indispensable.
Rand Thornsley, Film Gallery, Anchorage, Alaska

As a second-run theatre, I'd like to see **BOXOFFICE** publish dates when movies will open to second run.
Tony Ratcliff, Emerald Theatres and Entertainment, Madison, Ind.

Your editor's remark about Hitler a couple of months ago in his story from Amsterdam was way off. Besides that, great magazine!
L. P., Santa Monica, Calif.
[In the story in question, Editor-in-Chief Ray Greene referred to himself as "Der Fuerher" for humorous effect. No offense was meant, and he extends his apologies to anyone who agreed with the letter-writer that a line was crossed.]

Best in reporting.
Ronald Riege, Ronar Inc, Harrison, N.Y.

I enjoy **BOXOFFICE MAGAZINE**, because of the new and old theatres that it has stories about. Also movies reviews and releasing information.
Scott Tanoory, Hoyts Sangertown 9, New Hartford, N.Y.

The mag is the authority and keeps on improving. You are the bible for exhibitors. Good luck and keep it up in '97.
Phil Herman, N.Y., N.Y.

Do a feature on the greatest star of all: Bette Davis.
J. Specauza, Worcester, Mass.

A fine magazine.
Tim Daubenspeck, Mustang, Oklahoma

Theafilm Congratulates All 1997 ShoWest Award Winners

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DIRTY WEEKEND

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SYLVIA SYMS AND IAN RICHARDSON
PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY MICHAEL WINNER
OPENING SPRING 1997

James Dean
RACE WITH DESTINY

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ROBERT MITCHUM AND DIANE LADD
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OPENING NATIONWIDE FALL 1997

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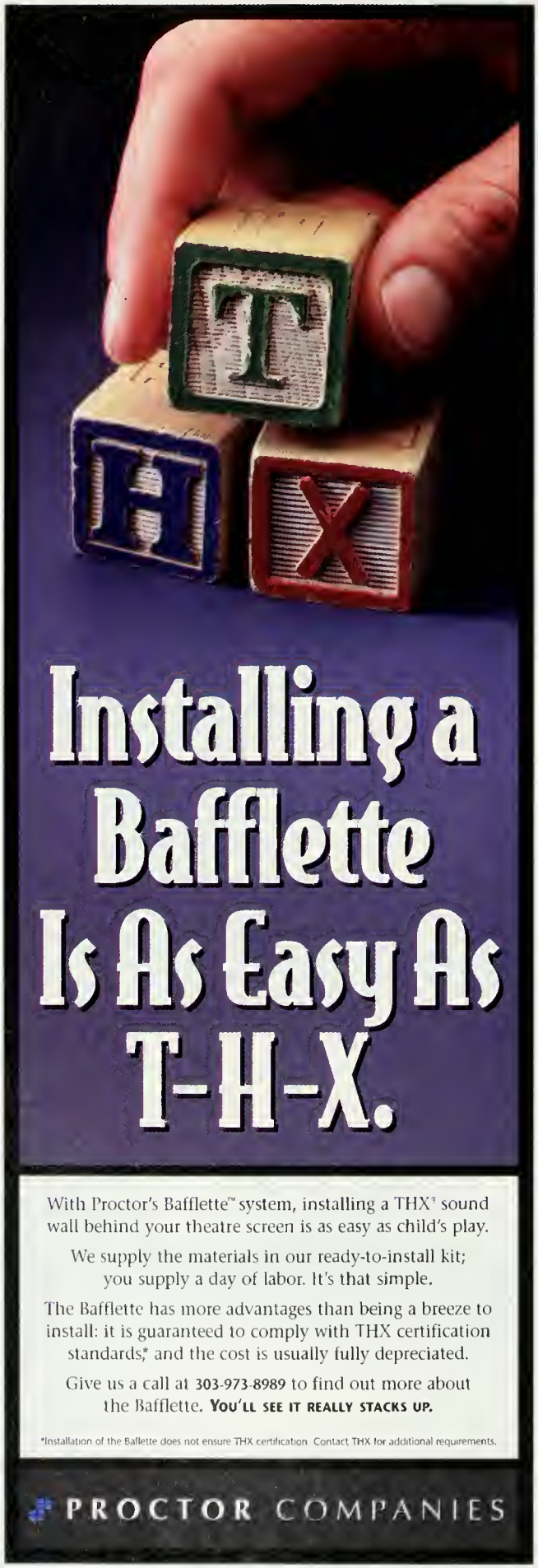
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR (CONT'D)

The ads for "ID4" were very well done. "Ransom" was my favorite of the year. Mel Gibson is such a wonderful actor and Ron Howard's directing was excellent.
Susan Keffaber, Eagles Theatre Syndicate Theatres, Wabash, Ind.

"Shine" is excellent. Great.
Ronald Riege, Ronar Inc., Harrison, N.Y.

It was a great year for indies and art movies. They are developing a strong following and are gaining ground on the big boxoffice movies.
Phil Herman, New York, N.Y.

Why do movie ads use critics quotes from small papers that don't matter?
Keith Altomare, Bilton Theatre, Lincoln City, Ore.

I am very fond of Kate Winslet. I loved her in "Sense and Sensibility." I also feel she needs more exposure. She is not only an extremely talented actress, but an absolute knockout as well.
Tim Daubenspeck, Mustang, Okla.

'96 was a pretty good year for movies. I noticed that the "F" word is finally starting to be used less often. Three cheers to Hollywood for that (Hip, Hip Hooray...)
Patty Gentry, Silver Screen Cinema 8, Va Beach, Va.

Wish studios would release more trailers and promo items to smaller theatres.
Charles Sims, Jr., State Twin Theatre, Gainesville, Texas

Once again, Mel Gibson and Sean Connery, after great films of 1995, explode with "The Rock" and "Ransom", two of my top films of 1996.
Scott Tanoory, Hoyts Sangertown 9, New Hartford, N.Y.

I met John Travolta earlier this year while managing a theatre in Texas. He came in to see a movie while he was filming "Michael." He was very courteous to everyone. He took pictures and signed autographs. His films are awesome and so is he off the screen. That's a good actor!
Angela Cordes, Capital 4 Theatres, Jefferson City, Mo.

I picked Eddie Murphy for his characterizations and humor brought to the "Nutty Professor"—a film which would have bombed without Eddie's talents.
R. C. Leon, Premiere New York, N.Y.

The IMAX title "Special Effects" was the best Hollywood film of 1996. Almost all of the best films of the year were foreign or independently made outside of the Hollywood studio system.
Wendeslaus Schulz, Star Theatre, Bay St Louis, Miss.

Tom Hanks is still the most popular actor, but his one movie this year was not a top attraction.
Dale Haag, Cooper Theatres, Hays, Kan.

Please, please, please, no more Jim Carrey movies! More, more, more John Leguizamo and Tom Cruise—Very, very fine actors.
Kimberly Luna, Super Saver Cinemas, Pomona, Calif.

That Ellen DeGeneres film "Mr. Wrong" was among the worst movies I've ever had the displeasure to sit through. I'm just glad that I didn't pay to see it!
Brian Smyczynski, Dollar Cinema, Houston, Texas

Love us, hate us, but TALK TO US! Send your letter to:

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Response No. 206

THIS YEAR, JUDGE US BY THE COMPANY WE KEEP.

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Response No. 467

HOLLYWOOD UPDATES

Warner Bros. pushed back the release date for their debut animation effort, **"The Quest for Camelot"** from November of this year to summer of 1998 in order to give their production team more time to complete the film. Warner Bros. hopes that giving plenty of warning for the move will allow them to keep all the major merchandising agreements in place. The toy license with Kenner is expected to remain intact, but it's the promotional tie-in with Wendy's fast food restaurant that may not survive the move. Major delays were accrued on the fairy tale project about a strong-willed girl and a handsome young man who are on a quest to save King Arthur's kingdom from the clutches of the evil Baron Ruber, because Warner Bros. had to pull key animators off the project in order to get "Space Jam" out to theatres in time. "Quest" features the voices of Christopher Reeve, Jane Seymour, Gary Oldman and Don Rickles.

Robin Williams won't be tilting windmills anytime soon now that the high-profile, big-budget project **"Don Quixote"** has stalled yet again. The story of the legendary figure, from a script by Waldo Salt, was set to start filming this spring in Spain starring Williams and John Cleese with director Fred Schepisi at the helm. The project lost its financing when Phoenix Pictures pulled out, apparently due to the high $60+ million budget. The project is being produced by Steven Haft, Quincy Jones and David Salzman. This latest development marks the eighth time this version of "Quixote" has been thwarted on the way to the bigscreen. Previously the project was supposed to go with Williams and Sean Connery and before that the cast combination was Richard Burton and Buddy Hackett.

Sony Pictures Classics co-presidents **Michael Barker, Tom Bernard** and **Marcie Bloom** decided to renew with Sony Pictures Entertainment for another five years, despite rumors that they would leave to start Paramount's specialized distribution division. Their new deal with Sony gives the executives more money with which to acquire and co-finance films worldwide and demonstrates Sony's renewed commitment under John Calley to exploit the arthouse market. Calley said he was impressed with the division's ability to market specialty films with international appeal. The New York-based division remained untouched by the upheavals that marked Sony in the last few years. It distributed several Oscar-winning films, including "Indochine," "Burnt By the Sun," "Belle Epoque" and 1995's best documentary "Anne Frank Remembered." 1992's "Howard's End" grossed over $75 million worldwide and Sony Pictures Classics scored two hits last year with John Sayle's "Lone Star" (still in release) and the Sundance pick-up "Welcome to the Dollhouse." Along with three films at this year's Sundance festival, Sony Pictures Classics recently acquired "A Chef in Love" by Nana Djordjadze from the Republic of Georgia.

Frank Darabont, who made his directorial debut with "The Shawshank Redemption," which he adapted from a Stephen King novella, has signed a two-picture deal with **Castle Rock Entertainment.** The first project, "The Green Mile," is also based on a Stephen King work. Darabont will adapt and direct the story, from King's "Night Shift" collection, about a mentally challenged inmate on Death Row and his relationships with his guards. The second project for Darabont to direct is "The Bijou," a romantic comedy set against the 1950s blacklist. Currently Darabont is finishing a re-write on Steven Spielberg's "Saving Private Ryan" for Tom Hanks to star and is adapting a Robert McCammon novel, "Mine." The busy writer/director also just set up a time-travel detective story, "Stitch in Time" with Joel Silver at Warner Bros.

Legendary director **Stanley Kubrick** will receive the prestigious **D. W. Griffith Award** on March 8th at the 49th annual Directors Guild of America awards. Kubrick is currently in production on "Eyes Wide Shut" starring Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman and will not attend the awards, but will send a film or video clip for his acceptance. DGA president Gene Reynolds made note of Kubricks' "unique, audacious, highly inventive and visual style" on films such as "2001: A Space Odyssey," "Dr. Strangelove," "A Clockwork Orange," "The Shining" and "Full Metal Jacket." Past D. W. Grifitth awardees include Orson Welles, David Lean, John Ford, Alfred Hitchcock, Akira Kurosawa and last year's winner, Woody Allen.

Live Entertainment, which made its domestic theatrical distribution debut with the Australian comedy, "Hotel de Love," recently added key players to its distribution team. **Steve Rothenberg,** senior VP of theatrical domestic distribution, brought in a number of distribution veterans from MGM/UA, Orion and Savoy Pictures. Live's regional sales staff includes western division sales manager **David Spitz** (formerly the branch manager for MGM/UA); western district sales manager **Larry McCourt** (former manager of western sales for Gramercy); southern district sales manager **Terry Graham** (formerly the Southern regional sales manager for Orion); eastern division sales manager **John Gruenberg** (formerly VP of eastern/mid-central division of Savoy) and central division sales manager **Frank Patterson** (formerly the eastern/mid-central district sales manager for Savoy). Other members of the new team include **Brad Hartig** as director of national accounts receivable, **Dan Johnson** as director of distributor operations and **Mike Polydroros** as director of exhibitor relations and print control. **Everest Entertainment** will handle Canadian distribution for Live. Orion distributed five Live pictures last year, including "The Arrival," "Trees Lounge" and "Phat Beach." Live will distribute seven films in 1997, including "Critical Care," starring James Spader and Kyra Sedgwick, and "Gentlemen Don't Eat Poets" starring Theresa Russell and Sting.

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HOLLYWOOD REPORT



BILLY CRYSTAL

In Session With "Analyze"



GARY OLDMAN

"Space" Case



TONI COLLETTE

Joins "Gang"

"A FINE AND PRIVATE PLACE" John Avildsen ("8 Seconds") will direct Richard Dreyfuss ("Mr. Holland's Opus") in this fantasy romance about a man who tries to avoid the real world by living in a cemetery. There, he meets two ghosts, and helps them to fall in love. (Distribution is to be set)

"ANALYZE THIS" In this comedy, a psychiatrist (Billy Crystal, "Father's Day") must help a domineering mob boss (Robert De Niro, "Sleepers") overcome his psychological problems. Richard Loncraine ("Richard III") helms. (Warner)

"FLASHBACKS" Director Penelope Spheeris ("Wayne's World") will tune in, turn on and drop into this biopic of '60s counterculture icon and LSD guru Timothy Leary. Randall Johnson, who co-wrote "The Doors" with Oliver Stone, is writing a script based on Leary's autobiography. (Distribution is to be set)

"FOR THE LOVE OF THE GAME" Kevin Costner found moderate success with the golf-themed "Tin Cup," but did better with baseball in "Field of Dreams." In "For the Love of the Game," he'll return to the all-American passtime, playing a has-been pitcher who, during a game, flashes back on his career, trying to figure what went wrong. While he reminisces, he manages to pitch a perfect game. The film's based on the novel by Michael Shaara and is scripted by Dana Stevens. (Universal)

"PRICE BELOW RUBIES" Renee Zellweger ("Jerry Maguire") will star in this Boaz Yakin ("Fresh")-directed drama about a Hasidic Jewish woman who feels stifled by her family and community, and goes against her religious scholar husband when she takes a job in the jewelry district. She soon falls in love with a talented Puerto Rican artist. Christopher Eccleston ("Jude") also stars. (Miramax)

"SLIDING DOORS" This comedy-drama about modern relationships will star Gwyneth Paltrow (who last year charmed audiences in "Emma," a comedy-drama about Victorian relationships). "Sliding Doors" will center on the choices people make and the possibilities of what would happen had different decisions been made. Peter Howitt scripts and will make his directorial debut. (Distribution is to be set)

"LOST IN SPACE" Gary Oldman ("The Fifth Element") is set to star as the selfish, bumbling Dr. Smith in this bigscreen adaption of the '60s sci-fi TV show about a futuristic family travelling the cosmos in their spaceship, trying to get back to Earth. William Hurt ("Michael") plays patriarch John Robinson, with Mimi Rogers ("The Mirror Has Two Faces") as wife Maureen, "Swingers'" Heather Graham as daughter Judy, Lacey Chabert of TV's "Party of Five" as daughter Penny, and newcomer Jack Johnson as son Will. Stephen Hopkins ("The Ghost and the Darkness") will helm; Akiva Goldsman ("Batman and Robin") scripts. (New Line)

"UMP" Sylvester Stallone ("Daylight") is in negotiations to star in this black comedy, to be directed by Frank Oz ("Indian in the Cupboard.") Based on a novel by Jim Cohen, the project is about a hit man who's called Ump because he adheres to a strict set of rules. After knocking off two mob bosses, he hides out in New Jersey and proceeds to straighten out the town. (MGM)

UNTITLED ANDY KAUFMAN BIOPIC Director Milos Forman and scripters Scott Alexander and Larry Karaszewski, the team behind "The People Vs. Larry Flynt," will next bring to the screen the life story of another eccentric figure, the late comedian Andy Kaufman. Kaufman, who died of lung cancer in 1984, was best known for his role as mild-mannered mechanic Latka Gravas on TV's "Taxi." He was also notorious for his outrageous and bizarre stand-up routines and talk show appearances. No star has been attached to play the lead as yet. (Universal)

"POPCORN" Joel Schumacher ("Batman and Robin") will direct this satire of Hollywood, which is based on British comic Ben Elton's best-selling book of the same name. Elton stars as a director with a cult following who grapples with his responsibility to society. (Warner)

"THE JAMES GANG" John Hannah ("Four Weddings and a Funeral"), Toni Collette ("Cosi") and newcomer Helen McCrory will star in this dark comedy about a mother who is forced by a desperate situation to go on a crime spree and then flee with her children. She is pursued by a sympathetic female detective who's a mother as well. (Distribution is to be set)

"FORMULA ONE" Ridley Scott ("Navy Cross") is in talks to direct Antonio Banderas ("Evita") in this actioner about Brazilian race-car driver Ayrton Senna, who was killed in an accident at the 1994 Monte Carlo Grand Prix. (New Line)

"THE BEE" Action star Jackie Chan ("First Strike") is in talks to take the lead in this comedy about an architect and the mayhem that ensues when he tries to develop a farmland—as told from the point of view of the bee that harasses him. John Hughes wrote the script and produces. (Buena Vista)

"ANTS" Hollywood must be bugging out: Here's another film told from a pest's perspective. Woody Allen is the voice of a disgruntled ant trying to escape the drudgery of the totalitarian insect world. (DreamWorks)

"FREAK THE MIGHTY" Sharon Stone will star in this drama about the mother of a boy genius who has a degenerative disease and stops growing at the age of six. Peter Chelsom ("Funny Bones") directs. (Miramax)

"U.S. MARSHALS" In this sequel to "The Fugitive," Tommy Lee Jones reprises his role as the relentless Sam Gerard, who leads a team of marshals in pursuit of a cunningly evasive fugitive on the run ("Murder at 1600's" Wesley Snipes). (Warner)

ET CETERA: Michelle Yeoh, aka Michelle Khan ("Supercop"), takes the coveted Bond Woman role in UA's still untitled **Bond 18,** opposite Pierce Brosnan as 007 and Jonathan Pryce ("Evita") as the villainous leader of a media empire...Matthew McConaughey ("A Time to Kill") is in talks to star with Danny Glover in Steven Spielberg's **"Amistad,"** to be released by DreamWorks...John Malkovich, Jeremy Irons and Gerard Depardieu will play Musketeers Athos, Aramis and Porthos, respectively, and Gabriel Byrne takes on the role of D'Artagnan in UA's adaptation of the Alexandre Dumas classic **"The Man in the Iron Mask,"** which stars Leonardo Di Caprio in the dual lead role...Billy Bob Thornton and Bill Paxton will star in Paramount's John Boorman-directed **"A Simple Plan,"** a thriller about two brothers who discover a huge sum of dirty money.



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MAY TRAILERS

Apres now le deluge: the summer flicks are about to pour forth

Cinema's summer flood begins early this year, aptly with Paramount's "The Flood" (see photo below) on May 2. It represents the people-in-peril action fare that often dominates the season, and it and Columbia's sci-fi flick "Fifth Element" are likely to rule the roost for May's first half. (As will its compatriots later in the month, Warner boards an upstream comedy canoe with May 9's "Father's Day.")

That landscape changes drastically come May 23, and the meteor strike that will transform the cinema



climate overnight is Steven Spielberg's highly anticipated "The Lost World" sequel to "Jurassic Park," wading in (well, more like stomping in) via Universal. Not willing to do battle on the dinosaurs' turf, the other studios for the month's second half offer only comedy counterprogramming with the likes of Buena Vista's "Nothing to Lose" and Fox's Matthau/Lemmon re-pairer "Out to Sea."

Despite this month's big-ticket competition, the independents are still sailing forth. As in April, chief among them are Miramax ("Operation Condor," "Children of the Revolution," "Temptress Moon") and Fine Line ("Letters of Love," "Love! Valour! Compassion!")

Of course, all this is only the beginning of the deluge, with the big-sequel likes of "Batman and Robin," "Speed 2" and "Alien Resurrection" along with such high-profile new fare as "Hercules," "Titanic" and "Men In Black" set to come ashore during summer proper. (See our Summer Heat section in the ShoWest Intro, bound into this issue.)

Who will reign on the plains of summer? One thing is certain: There are paddlers aplenty.

MAY 2

The Flood

This disaster/crime thriller follows a Midwestern sheriff ("ID4's" Randy Quaid) who must evacuate the residents of a small town when torrential rains threaten to flood the area. Meanwhile, an armored car breaks down and the driver ("Broken Arrow's" Christian Slater) is stranded and soon surrounded not only by thigh-high waters but by gunmen. Morgan Freeman ("Seven") and Minnie Driver ("Sleepers") co-star. Mikael Salomon ("A Far Off Place") directs; Graham Yost ("Speed") scripts; Mark Gordon ("Speed"), Gary Levinsohn ("The Real McCoy") and Ian Bryce ("Speed") produce. *See our Sneak Preview in this issue.* (Paramount, 5/2)

Exploitips: *Watching surface water swirl by isn't quite the thrill of watching a whole tornado tear through, and the low-key setting is more Mayberry than Manhattan, so repeat business will depend more on plot and character than did last May's "Twister." But weekend #1 is a virtual lock with mainstream moviegoers; have a bit of Wall Drug promotion fun and offer ticketbuyers free water.*

Warriors of Virtue

Ronny Yu ("The Phantom Lover") directs this action fantasy about a teenage boy ("Jack's" Mario Yedidia) who seeks outside acceptance. One day, he's transported to the land of Tao, where humans and animal-like Warmbloods live among balance and harmony. There, he learns the five virtues from five Warmblood warriors: righteousness, benevolence, integrity, wisdom and loyalty. With that knowledge, he must help them fight the terrible Komodo ("Braveheart's" Angus MacFayden), who wants to rob Tao of its energy. Marley Shelton ("Nixon") and Chao-Li Chi ("The Joy Luck Club") co-star. Michael Vickerman scripts; the Law Brothers produce for their IJL Creations. (MGM, 5/2)

Exploitips: *Expect "Warriors of Virtue," with its kangaroo-like creatures, earnest themes and PG rating, to attract children and young teens; "Operation Condor" will pull the older action audiences. Expect primary business on weekend matinees.*

Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery

"Wayne's World's" Mike Myers plays a Swinging Sixties secret agent frozen in 1967 and now thawed out to match wits with his archrival, Dr. Evil; meanwhile, he must come to terms with his outdated sexuality. The cast also includes Elizabeth Hurley ("Dangerous Ground") as his sultry sidekick and Michael York, Rob Lowe, Mimi Rogers, Christian Slater, Tom Arnold and Carrie Fisher. Jay Roach directs; Myers scripts, and he produces with Suzanne and Jennifer Todd and Demi Moore for Moore's Moving Pictures. (New Line, 5/2)

Exploitips: *However underappreciated, Myers' "So I Married an Axe Murderer"—Myers' only non-"Wayne" star turn—was an underwhelming performer for Tristar in 1993, and his "Wayne's World" sequel, though it did well, was also four years ago. Still, Myers remains a name quantity, and his supporting cast will garner audience attention. Boost media awareness by holding an opening-night worst-dressed contest for moviegoers who come attired in '60s duds.*

Truth or Consequences, N.M.

Actor Kiefer Sutherland directs this thriller about a small-time criminal named Raymond ("Palookaville's" Vincent Gallo) and the love of his life, Addy (Kim Dickens). When Raymond exits prison, he and Addy plan to make enough money to live happily ever after via a drug heist they'll pull with a couple of crooks (Sutherland and "Forrest Gump's" Mykelti Williamson). But the job is a botch; left with two hostages (Grace Phillips and Kevin Pollak), Raymond and Addy are still determined to make their dream come true, but a gangster (Martin Sheen) is on their trail. Rod Steiger co-stars. Brad Mirman ("Body of Evidence") scripts; J. Paul Higgins, Kevin Messick ("Surviving the Game") and Hilary Wayne ("Blank Check") produce. (Triumph, 5/2)

Exploitips: *The R rating here, for violence, sex and language, spells out the demo—male action—so highlight the guns and gal. As with "Paris, Texas," the film's title is that of a real town, so try this catchline: "Love and larceny along the Rio Grande."*

Letters of Love

Still missing her dead fiance Itsuki Fujii after two years, the meek Hiroko Watanabe (Miho Nakayama) on a whim writes him a letter and mails it to his old address. Surprisingly, Hiroko receives a reply, but from a young woman (also Miho Nakayama) who not only shares Itsuki's name

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Operation Condor

Asian action hero Jackie Chan ("Jackie Chan's First Strike") not only stars but directs and co-writes this film about a man hired to find hidden gold buried by German soldiers during World War II. As his search takes him from the South China Sea to European capitols to the Sahara Desert, a legion of criminals are hot on his heels. Carol Cheng, Eva Cobo De Garcia and Ikeda Shoko co-star. Edward Tang ("Rumble in the Bronx") co-scripts; Leonard Ho ("Supercop") produces. (Miramax, 5/2 wide)

Exploitips: *"First Strike" made $13 million in its first three weeks stateside; "Supercop" made $15 million; "Rumble in the Bronx" made $30 million. To increase that level of boxoffice, position this as an exotic Chan take on "Raiders of the Lost Ark." Emphasize Chan's directing and co-scripting roles to lend this film event status for the already converted.*

but who was his classmate and, as it's gradually revealed as the two women trade letters, much more. Etsushi Toyokaya and Katsuyuki Shinohara co-star. Video and TV director Shunji Iwai makes his feature directing/writing debut; Jiro Komaki, Tomoki Ikeda and Mashiiko Nagasawa produce the Japanese-language film. (Fine Line, 5/2 NY, 5/23 LA)

Exploitips: *In a four-star review, our Toronto fest reviewer calls this "lovely and delicate.... 'Love Letter' [as it was then called] goes beyond moving drama to deeper concerns of memory, love, loss and an indefinable mystery.... Dreamlike and haunting." That type of copy has art-house written all over it. In the weeks leading up to the run, specialized exhibitors might offer discounts for moviegoers willing to share their real-life love letters; posted with IDs removed, those letters would make a powerful lobby draw.*

Sprung

After their best friends Clyde ("Poetic Justice's" Joe Torry) and Adina (Paula Jai Parker) abandon them at a party, Montel ("Fear of a Black Hat's" Rusty Cundieff) and Brandy ("House Party's" Tisha Campbell) fall in love. When the happy couple decide to move in together, their purported pals attempt to sabotage the lovebirds' move. Cundieff (who also helmed "Tales From the Hood") directs and co-scripts this comedy, and he produces with Trimark's Darin Scott. *See our Sneak Preview in this issue.* (Trimark, 5/2)

Exploitips: *In the "House Party"/"Friday" tradition, "Sprung" is likely to have the most spring at the urban boxoffice. Aside from the indirect competition provided by "The Flood," "Sprung" will have that dependable demo to itself on opening weekend.*

Children of the Revolution

A "black Red comedy" set in 1989 Australia, "Children of the Revolution" opens as Joe Welch (Richard Roxbough) puts the country in an uproar by immobilizing the government. But there's a history to his story. Back in 1949, Joe's mother (Judy Davis) was a radical who revered Josef Stalin (F. Murray Abraham). Invited to meet her hero, she returns pregnant, marries another man ("Shine's" Geoffrey Rush) and vows to raise her son as a revolutionary. But her little Joe has other ideas. Sam Neill co-stars. Peter Duncan directs and scripts; Tristram Miall ("Strictly Ballroom") produces. (Miramax, 5/1 NY/LA)



Exploitips: *Down Under comedies tend to do well on the specialized circuit Up Here, in good part because there's no language barrier. Although the Davis name is an art-house favorite, the attention paid "Shine" will make the Rush credit equally valuable.*

MAY 9

Father's Day

Based on a 1984 French film, "Father's Day" follows the adventures of two men ("The Birdcage's" Robin Williams and "City Slickers'" Billy Crystal) who have been tricked into looking for an old girlfriend's runaway child because she's made each of them believe that he is the father. Julia Louis-Dreyfus ("National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation") and Nastassja Kinski ("Faraway, So Close!") co-star. Ivan Reitman ("Junior") directs, and he produces this Northern Lights/Silver Pictures effort with Joel Silver; Babaloo Mandel and Lowell Ganz (who've provided Crystal with the likes of "City Slickers," "Mr. Saturday Night" and "Forget Paris") script. *See our Sneak Preview in this issue.* (Warner, 5/9)

Exploitips: *With "Father's Day" boasting the Williams/Crystal teaming and its everybody-loves-comedy genre as its key selling points, Warner has no other studio competition willing to brook the date aside from Columbia. Expect "Fifth Element" to pull decidedly male, and this to pull most everyone else, among them the distaff and date-night demos. Because the real Father's Day isn't far off (June 15), proactive exhibitors can profit by staging a contest honoring dads.*

Temptress Moon

Told he's going to be a student, a boy named Zhongliang is sent to live with the rich Pang family on their country estate. Once there, however, he is forced to become a servant. Years later, the grown and bitter Zhongliang (Leslie Cheung) moves to decadent Shanghai, where he's taken in by a crime family. He becomes a blackmailing gigolo, and soon his assignment becomes to seduce the heir (Gong Li) to the Pang fortune. Chen Kaige ("Yellow Earth") directs and scripts; Hsu Feng (who produced his "Farewell My Concubine") produces. (Miramax, 5/9 NY/LA)

Exploitips: *"Temptress Moon" was banned in China, which will draw select stateside attention. Although the most cinema-savvy among them will recall that "Temptress Moon" received a cool reception at Cannes last year, art-house auds are familiar with and respond to the names and work of Chen Kaige and Gong Li, so those two are the sells.*

Intimate Relations

A black comedy based on a true story from 1950s England, "Intimate Relations" follows the seemingly peaceful family life of Marjorie ("Sister My Sister's" Julie Walters), a lonely wife and mother who seduces a young man ("The Madness of King George's" Rupert Graves). The situation becomes complicated when Marjorie's husband ("Intersection's" Matthew Walker) and 14-year-old daughter ("Jane Eyre's" Laura Sadler) learn of her secret affair. Philip Goodhew directs and scripts; Angela Hart, Lisa Hope and Handmade head Jon Slan produce. (Fox Searchlight, 5/9 ltd)

Exploitips: *Our Seattle fest reviewer gave this "dark and relentlessly bleak film" two stars, saying the characters were so unsympathetic audiences might wish for "a swift end to all of them" and calling the plot "utterly*

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Fifth Element

In a future that's nonapocalyptic, a New York City cab driver is surprised to find himself fighting on the good side in a war between good and the ultimate evil. Bruce Willis ("12 Monkeys"), Gary Oldman ("Immortal Beloved"), Ian Holm ("The Madness of King George") and Milla Jovovich ("Dazed and Confused") star. Luc Besson, director of "La Femme Nikita" and "The Professional," helms this science-fiction fantasy; Besson co-scripts with Robert Mark Kamen ("The Fugitive"); Patrice Ledoux (Besson's "The Big Blue") produces. (Columbia, 5/9)

Exploitips: *Given Willis' presence, even with the nonapocalyptic factor "Fifth Element" is likely to recall "12 Monkeys," which isn't to the bad: That Terry Gilliam film made almost $60 million domestic after its late '95 release. Expect audiences that saw "The Flood" a week ago to turn out here, along with the SF demo that might be called the "Star Wars Special Edition" crowd on the look for something new. While the Willis moniker and film genre are drawing mainstream fans, highlight the Besson credit to also pull in his art-house supporters.*

predictable" ("all that's missing is a red flag marked 'foreshadowing'"). However, she cites Walters' and Graves' work as commendable, and the R-rated subject matter and scenario ("blackmail, twisted sexual mores, and unrequited love") boast a salable salaciousness for specialized moviegoers.

MAY 16

Shall We Dance

In this comic love story, a group of ordinary Japanese people experience the extraordinary when they begin to take ballroom dance lessons. Koji Yasuyo, Tamiyo Kusakari, Naoto Takenaka, Eriko Watanabe and Akira Emoto star. Masayuki Suo ("Sumo Do, Sumo Don't," which won Japan's equivalent of the best picture Academy Award in 1992) directs and scripts; Shoji Masui and Yuji Ogata produce. (Miramax, 5/16 NY/LA)

Exploitips: *This is specialized fare, likely to attract the same type of folks who attended Miramax's "Small Wonders" this past October, and it should pull Asian-film devotees. Tie-ins with local dance studios and dance clubs could expand the take.*

Love! Valour! Compassion!

Joe Mantello directs the film version of Terrence McNally's Tony winner about eight gay friends who gather in a country house over three summer weekends. Jason Alexander ("Dustin Checks In") joins the original ensemble. McNally adapts; Doug Chapin and Barry Crost (who partnered on "What's Love Got to Do With It") produce. (Fine Line, 5/16 ltd)

Exploitips: *Expect heavy select-site attendance from gay audiences and art-house support in large cities. Although Alexander is well*



known among mainstream audiences for his small-tube turns on "Seinfeld," that's less likely to pull crossover interest than is the Tony credit. As with Roxie's "The Last Time I Committed Suicide," good Sundance reviews can be exploited here.

Gummo

Harmony Korine (who scripted "Kids") directs and scripts another tale of bored and rebellious youth, this time focusing on two teens, Solomon and Tummler, who wile away their days in the nowhere town of Xenia, Ohio. Chloe Sevigny (also "Kids," "Trees Lounge"), Max Perlich ("Rush"), Nick Sutton, Jacob Reynolds and Linda Manz star. Cary Woods (also "Kids") produces. (Fine Line, 5/16)

Exploitips: *The "Kids" connection is the key sell here. Position this as a Kids 2 to overcome the cartoony name.*

Guantanamera

Set in current-day Cuba, this Spanish-language film follows the chance encounters between the passengers of a truck and the mourners in a funeral car as they travel from town to town. The seductive Mariano drives the truck with his good friend Ramon, while the funeral car holds Gina, Mariano's lost love, and her husband. Carlos Cruz, Mirtha Ibbara and Salvador Wood star. The late Tomas Gutierrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabio Rey (who paired for "Strawberry and Chocolate") direct, and they script with Eliseo A. Garcia Marruz; Gerardo Herrero and Camilo Vives executive produce the 1995 Cuban project for UGC. (CFP, 5/16)

Exploitips: *Making a reference to "Strawberry and Chocolate," which generated a decent art-house till ($2 million) for Miramax after a Jan. '95 release, will attract attention from the foreign-language set. CFP originally had this slated for 1/24.*

La Promesse

Fifteen-year-old Igor (Jeremie Renier) lives a life of corruption taught to him by the father he reveres. He steals money from customers at the local garage and believes his father is right in hiring illegal immigrants. When his father inadvertently commits murder, however, Igor's conscience forces him to honor the promise he made to a dead man. Olivier Gourmet co-stars. Jean-Pierre Dardenne and Luc Dardenne direct and script this French-language film. (New Yorker, 5/16 NY)

Exploitips: *Expect the usual Francophile audiences at the art-house turnstile. Attract their attention by focusing on the brother creators through a catchline like "In the tradition of the Tavianis come the brothers Dardenne with 'La Promesse.'"*

Happiness

In this 1995 French-language film ("Le Bonheur Est Dans Le Pre"), an unhappy man uses a case of mistaken identity in order to escape his miserable family life and begin a new existence. Corporate greed, sexual entanglements and country romance figure into the comic mix. Michel Serrault ("Nelly and Monsieur Arnaud") and Eddy Mitchell star. Etienne Chatiliez directs. (Artificial Eye, 5/16 NY)

Exploitips: *Since launching a stateside operation last year, Artificial Eye has built a commendable French-language slate (including Claude Sautet's "Nelly and Monsieur Arnaud," Eric Rohmer's "Rendezvous in Paris" and Bertrand Blier's "Mon Homme"). This is likely to ring in similar art-house numbers.*

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THE LOST WORLD: JURASSIC PARK

This sequel to the 1993 blockbuster again follows the adventures of mathematician Dr. Ian Malcolm (Jeff Goldblum, more lately of "ID4") after his shocking realization that not everything was destroyed in the dinosaur disaster four years ago. Julianne Moore ("Nine Months"), Vince Vaughn ("Swingers"), Arliss Howard ("Johns"), Richard Schiff, Pete Postlethwaite ("Dragonheart") and Peter Stormare ("Fargo") and Vanessa Lee Chester ("Harriet the Spy") star. Steven Spielberg directs; David Koepp ("Jurassic Park") scripts; Gerald R. Molen and Colin Wilson produce for Amblin. (Universal, 5/23)

Exploitips: *This will be a tough sell—you'll have to open for business. The most valuable other Exploitips will be to have plenty of tickets on hand and perhaps retrofit your ticketing machinery with a cooling system so the system doesn't melt down. Most of the original's key cast members—Sam Neill, Laura Dern, Joseph Mazzello and Ariana Richards—don't return, but "Jurassic Park" was never about the people anyway. As long as the dinos are there, audiences will be. Expect a very fast start (the original made about $50 million on its first weekend), but will "The Lost World" top its predecessor's eventual $357 million domestic? Consider this one to be like an atom bomb: Close is good enough.*

MAY 23

Nothing to Lose

In this comedy written and directed by Steve Oedekerk ("The Nutty Professor"), Tim Robbins ("The Player") stars as Nick Beam, an advertising exec who realizes his whole life is a lie. When a carjacker ("Bad Boys'" Martin Lawrence) attempts to rob him at a traffic light, Nick takes him hostage—but it's not long before the two develop a friendship. John C. McGinley ("Hard Eight"), Giancarlo Esposito ("Fresh") and Kelly Preston ("Addicted to Love") co-star. Martin Bregman and Michael S. Bregman (who partnered for "Gold Diggers: The Secret of Bear Mountain") produce with Dan Jinks for Touchstone. (Buena Vista, 5/23)

Exploitips: *Its casting to attract both suburban and urban audiences is of secondary importance; the comedy genre is the key element that will allow "Nothing to Lose" to counterprogram the weekend's leviathan, "The Lost World." Maximize revenue from those looking for something other than dinosaurs by emphasizing the Oedekerk lineage.*

Boogie Nights

In this comedy, a group of filmmakers try to revamp the adult entertainment industry. Spanning the '70s and '80s, "Boogie Nights" follows the ups-and-downs of the players. The acting ensemble includes Mark Wahlberg ("Fear"), Julianne Moore (also in "The Lost World"), Burt Reynolds ("Striptease"), Don Cheadle ("Devil in a Blue Dress"), William H. Macy ("Fargo"), Heather Graham ("Swingers") and John C. Reilly (also in "Nothing to Lose"). Paul Thomas Anderson ("Hard Eight") directs, scripts and produces. (New Line, 5/23 NY/LA/SF/Tor/Chi, 6/13 wide)

Exploitips: *With Disney's "Nothing to Lose" as its real competition (given that "The Lost World" rules the 5/23 world), New Line was wise to put this out in only the heaviest moviegoing cities, which could support two same-genre, similar-demos releases. Expect "Boogie Nights" to pull the younger comedy crowd.*

MAY 30

Out to Sea

In this romantic comedy, the Grumpy Old Men make mischief on the high seas: A rogue (Walter Matthau) persuades his brother-in-law (Jack Lemmon) to be a dance instructor on a cruise liner so they can meet women and con money from them. Elaine Stritch, Dyan Cannon and Gloria DeHaven co-star. Martha Coolidge ("Three Wishes") directs; Robert Jacobs scripts; John Davis and David T. Friendly (who paired on "Daylight") produce. (Fox, 5/30)

Exploitips: *Neither "My Fellow Americans" nor "I'm Not Rappaport" swept the movie world away during the holidays, so what the public might want from Matthau and Lemmon is them together again. Which this delivers, so that's the sell.*

Masterminds

After being expelled from the Shady Glen School by the principal ("A Time to Kill's" Brenda Fricker), 14-year-old Ozzie ("Alaska's" Vincent Kartheiser) decides to play one more practical joke. But, when he ventures into the school basement to do the deed, he learns the security guard ("Star Trek: First Contact's" Patrick Stewart) has taken all the students hostage. That leaves just Ozzie and his penchant for pranks to lead the kids to triumph. Roger Christian ("The Sender") directs; Floyd Byars ("Mindwalk"), Alex Siskin and Chris Black script; Byars produces with Robert Dudelson. (Triumph, 5/30)

Exploitips: *Even on weekend #2, no distributor cares to go against "The Lost World" except with comedy. "Masterminds" could be effective counterprogramming for the early-teen set, so emphasize Kartheiser's presence and the start-of-freedom date. Catchline: "School's out, but the students are being held hostage. Only one boy can save the summer."*

MAY UNDATED

Paperback Romance

In this romantic comedy (aka "Lucky Break"), a writer of erotica ("Two If By Sea's" Gia Carides) lets her tales take her where she thinks her crippled leg would never allow her. When she breaks her leg, however, she has the perfect "disguise," claiming it was a skiing accident. Freed from her inhibitions, she goes after the man of her dreams—a handsome but engaged jeweler ("Trees Lounge's" Anthony LaPaglia). Comic catastrophe follows. Rebecca Gibney co-stars. Ben Lewin ("The Favor, the Watch and the Very Big Fish") directs and scripts; Bob Weis ("Heartbreakers") produces. (Goldwyn, May)

Exploitips: *The name change is a wise one, as those who read paperback romances are often female—the very demo for this. Try a catchline like "She wrote tales of love and lust until she began to live one herself."*

Tetsuo II: Body Hammer

In this surreal thriller, a mutant skinhead and a businessman who mutates into a half-metal fighting machine do battle. Japanese filmmaker Shinya Tsukamoto ("Tetsuo: The Ironman") helms the sequel. (Manga)

Exploitips: *Two-year-old Manga, the Island-owned distributor that had success with last year's "Ghost in the Shell" and followed with this March's "Mandela," returns to Japanese action territory. Expect similar numbers and demos as with "Ghost in the Shell."*

Timothy Leary's Dead

Filmmakers Paul Davids and Todd Easton Mills chronicle the life of psychedelic guru Timothy Leary, mainly focusing on his death and the last year of his life. Featuring music from the Moody Blues, this documentary includes archival footage and interviews with Dr. Richard Alpert, Ralph Motzner, Zach

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Leary, Vicki Marshall and Michael Bowen. Davids and Mills produce. (Strand, May)

Exploitips: *Expect twentysomethings who want to know what the '60s were about and fortysomethings who wish they could remember them. For specialized houses who consider double bills, "Timothy Leary's Dead" might make a match with a tale of the '50s, "The Last Time I Committed Suicide."*

The Last Time I Committed Suicide

Based on a Beats-era letter from pal Neal Cassady to writer Jack Kerouac, this Kushner-Locke/Tapestry production stars Thomas Jane and Keanu Reeves along with Tom Bower, Adrien Brody ("King of the Hill"), John Doe ("Roadside Prophets"), Claire Forlani ("Basquiat") and Marg Helgenberger ("Species"). Stephen Kay ("Intimate Power") directs and scripts; Edward Bates and Louise Rosner produce. (Roxie, May platform)

Exploitips: *Like K-L's "Freeway" acquired at Sundance by the expanding Roxie, this "artsploitation" effort boasts a name cast but will interest only the specialized demo. A cross-promo with a bookstore that's heavy on Kerouac would reach that literate audience.*

Contempt

Jean-Luc Godard's 1963 French/Italian production spoofs the international moviemaking business. While filming a version of "The Odyssey," a screenwriter (Michel Piccoli) tries to maintain his integrity while dealing with a sleazy producer (Jack Palance).

LATE MOVIE MOVES INTO APRIL/SPRING...

Reach the Rock

In this dramatic comedy, a young man named Robin (newcomer Alessandro Nivola) over the course of one hot summer night goes to extreme measures to outwit two policemen ("Solo's" William Sadler and Bruce Norris) and win back a beautiful young woman (Brooke Langton of TV's "Melrose Place"). William Ryan (associate producer on "Dennis the Menace") directs; comicmeister John Hughes scripts, and he produces with Ricardo Mestres ("101 Dalmatians"). (Universal, spring)

Exploitips: *The catchline "From the makers of '101 Dalmations'" could broaden the pull, but expect males and date-nighters to dominate. So try "1 hot night + 1 beautiful girl – 2 policemen = 1 young man on the run."*

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In this dramatic thriller, an inner-city high school teacher is attacked by a student who he'd given a failing grade. When a year later he returns to his profession as a substitute, the teacher finds he's recovered on the outside but has changed on the inside. Samuel L. Jackson ("A Time to Kill"), Kelly Rowan ("Candyman: Farewell to the Flesh") and John Heard ("My Fellow Americans") star. Kevin Reynolds ("Waterworld") directs; Scott Yagemann scripts; Bruce Davey ("Leo Tolstoy's Anna Karenina") and Steve McEveety ("The Man Without a Face") produce for Mel Gibson's Icon Prods. (Warner, 4/25)

Exploitips: *Reynolds' work ("Rapa Nui" is another example) is message prone, damaging the drama, and given the plot setup that remains a worry here. But Jackson has a way of cutting through dross in his performances, so his credit and that of the "Braveheart"-making Ican are the sells.*

Rough Magic

In this romantic adventure, Bridget Fonda and Russell Crowe star in a tale (adapted from "Miss Shumway Waves a Wand" by James Hadley Chase) involving magic, mysticism and Mexico. Jim Broadbent, D.W. Moffet and Paul Rodriguez co-star. Clare Peploe ("High Season") directs, and Peploe also scripts with Robert Mundy ("Chattanooga Choo Choo") and William Brookfield; Laurie Parker ("Even Cowgirls Get the Blues") and Declan Baldwin ("The Dark Half") produce for UGC/Recorded Picture in association with Martin Scorsese; Goldwyn handles the stateside release for Rysher. (Goldwyn, spring)

Exploitips: *Bookstore tie-ins are worth a try, but the Fonda/Crowe pairing is even more promising and should be empha-*



sized to attract date-nighters looking for something off the studio mainstream path.

Volcano

L.A.—having suffered through riot, trial, earthquake and fire—now faces new trouble as the city goes vesuvial. Tommy Lee Jones ("Men in Black"), Anne Heche ("Walking and Talking"), Gaby Hoffmann ("Now and Then"), Don Cheadle ("Boogie Nights") and John Corbett star. Mick Jackson ("L.A. Story") directs; Billy Ray ("Color of Night"), Barbara Benedek ("Sabrina") and Jerome Armstrong script; Neal Moritz ("Juice") and Andrew Z. Davis ("Lost Angels") produce. (Fox, April)

Exploitips: *Pompeii and circumstance: Universal's "Dante's Peak" beat this Fox 2000 effort to theatres, but this inferno epic still has the big-canvas narrative advantage. ("Dante's Peak" was set in the rural outback.) So emphasize the L.A. hook—that it's disaster hitting L.A., not that the disoster is a volcano.*

Keys to Tulsa

In this thriller, the black-sheep son of a wealthy Tulsa family grudgingly returns to the existence he left behind and the ties that still bind. His life worsens when he's blackmailed by the husband of his former sweetheart. Revenge becomes his only chance for redemption. Eric Stoltz, James Spader, Mary Tyler Moore, Joanna Going and Cameron Diaz star. Leslie Greif (producer of "Heaven's Prisoners") directs, and he produces with Harley Peyton, who adapts a Brian Fair Berkey novel. (Gramercy, 4/11 ltd)

Exploitips: *The cast is an impressive one likely to bring in the twentysomething audience that would be most interested in a prodigal-son story. Although "Heaven's Prisoners" was not an audience hit, it fared decently with critics, so citing that Greif credit (over his more recent "Meet Wally Sparks") could drow reviewer attention.*

A Chorus of Disapproval

Its legal problems resolved, this 1988 British film (which barely received a U.S. release a decade ago) arrives stateside. In the adaptation of Alan Ayckbourn's play, a shy widower moves to a seaside town; there, he becomes involved with an amateur troupe in which amour runs amuck. Jeremy Irons, Anthony Hopkins, Prunella Scales ("Freddie as F.R.O.7") and Patsy Kensit ("Angels & Insects") star. Michael Winner ("Appointment With Death") directs and scripts. (Theafilm)

Exploitips: *"A Chorus of Disapproval" has long been on the video shelves, but the Irons/Hopkins teaming could win a second look from specialized audiences. Given its plot, the film could draw older audiences looking for an option to the usual multiplex offerings. (Also: See our Nov. '94 Theafilm article.)*

Fritz Lang, the director of "M," plays himself. Brigitte Bardot and Giorgia Moll co-star. Joseph E. Levine produces. (Strand, May)

Exploitips: *Expect response in the largest specialized markets to the Godard name.*

Woman in the Dunes

Hiroshi Teshighara's 1964 Oscar-nom Japanese film, "Woman in the Dunes" follows a sand-beetle entomologist (Eiji Okada) who seeks shelter with a widow (Kyoko Kishida). Her hut is at a pit's bottom, which continually fills with sand. In order to survive, the trapped man must constantly shovel; before long, his hatred changes to passion. (Milestone, May)

Exploitips: *Emphasize the film's exotic nature and its 33rd anniversary to draw specialized Japanophiles. Expect interest from only the largest art-house markets.*

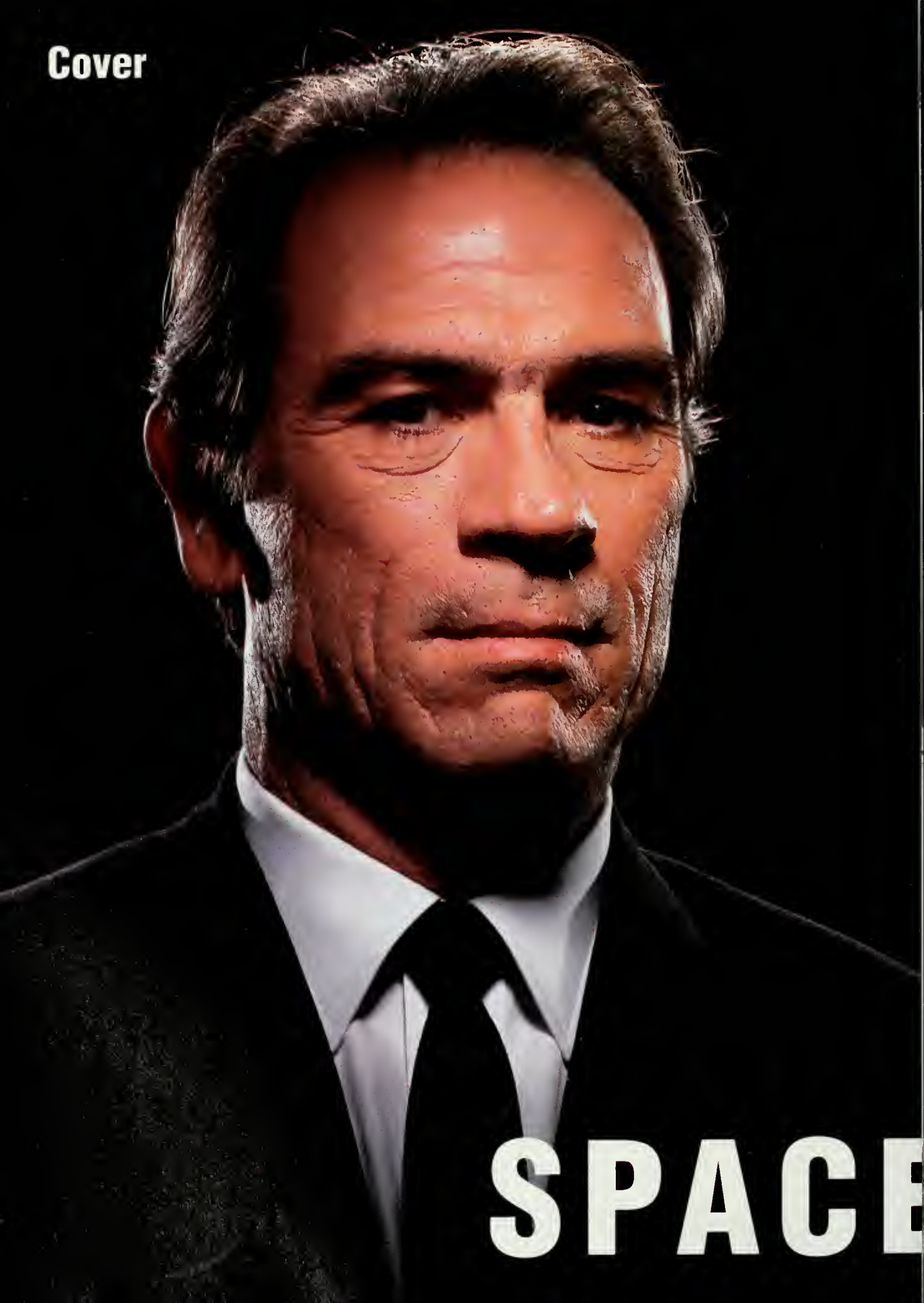
Antonio Gaudi

This 1985 Japanese film, like "Woman in the Dunes" directed by Hiroshi Teshighara, explores the life of early 20th century architect Antonio Gaudi. Influenced by the architecture of the Spanish Middle Ages, Gaudi transforms the buildings of Barcelona, with the Temple of Sagrada Familia his crowning achievement. (Milestone, May)

Exploitips: *Although newer than "Woman in the Dunes," this will be a tougher sell—it lacks the Oscar-nom panache, and architecture is less compelling than romance to most. Art-house exhibitors would be wisest to program "Woman in the Dunes" first to interest unfamiliar moviegoers with Teshighara's work.*



Cover



SPACE

Tough as Texas, Tommy Lee Jones Takes on the Alien Nation in the Sci-Fi Comedy "Men In Black"

INT. - "TEX'S" RESTAURANT - SAN ANTONIO - DAY
A rainy morning in February, 1997. Tex's is typical of chain restaurants in the modern American south—a not entirely successful amalgamation of the authentic (real saddles and branding irons hung on rough-hewn walls) and the ersatz (plastic signage molded to look like weathered wood; piped-in music that's supposed to be country but sounds more like Foreigner).

ON A DARKENED BOOTH
Absolutely the last booth in absolutely the last row in the room. A surprisingly remote space given how public the location is—the one niche where a man might attempt a murder and get away with it, as long as he was quick and quiet in the way he did the job.

IN THE BOOTH - TWO MEN
are seated facing each other. There is an EERIE INTENSITY to the **FIRST MAN**, *and his face looks somehow familiar. He leans forward, speaking quietly but with utter conviction, his words striking terror into the* **SECOND MAN'S** *heart --*

FIRST MAN: *(slight drawl)* What I liked about our outlook was the chance to do some thinking... Thinking about the definition of 'alien.' What's an alien, what isn't. What is a morally correct alien. Are you an alien? Am I? Those are good questions for us to ask ourselves in America here every day. Was your mother an alien? Was your grand-dad an alien? Somebody was at some point.

The SECOND MAN *nods uncertainly, as if unsure about whether or not he's being put on.* **The FIRST MAN** *continues:*

FIRST MAN
Our enemies are within. They look like us. The alien is in you...

THE CAMERA *drifts slowly down to the tabletop, across a half-finished country-style breakfast and an untouched plate of toast, coming to rest on* **A TAPE RECORDER,** *which CHURNS noiselessly in the grey LIGHT...*

Actually, Tommy Lee Jones may or may not believe in aliens. But it makes sense for him to talk about them on this rainy morning in this hotel restaurant in his hometown of San Antonio, Texas, because one thing Jones surely *does* believe in is *movies* about aliens—and he has since he was a kid. Along with childhood interests in John Wayne, Gene Autry and Johnny Mack Brown, this son of Texas who grew up to be both a film star and the owner and operator of two functioning cattle ranches is perfectly capable of waxing nostalgic about his "science fiction period." "On Friday," Jones says, in his lilting Texas twang, "I'd go see the movie about the space ship that crashed, and the fuel leaked out on an ant-bed and all the ants became the size of boxcars. And then on Saturday, it would be all the crabs on the island that became giants. And there'd always be these big, big guys who looked like hot water heaters coming out of these saucers, with little rayguns and little flashing lights on top of them. I went to see every one of them."

> "People like to believe that there's some darker force and greater authority with an unknown objective, controlling things. There's comfort in that for those people who feel out of control in their own lives."

Jones' early passion for B-movie sci-fi has born unexpected fruit with "Men In Black" (aka "MIB"), the upcoming film in which Jones plays a top-secret government agent who hunts space invaders for a living. "It's very important for these characters to be cool," says Jones, "and for the audience to like them for being cool. I just hope they're cool enough. You can't be too cool in this movie."

Think action. Think comedy. Think "Ghostbusters" with a dash of "Pulp Fiction" and a spoonful of "Independence Day" thrown in. Then add "ID4" break-out artist Will Smith as Jones' co-star, "Get Shorty"/"Addams Family" *auteur* Barry Sonnenfeld as "MIB's" director, and Steven Spielberg as the film's executive producer, and start thinking blockbuster. Columbia Pictures certainly does: It spent a small fortune to advertise "MIB" to the largest TV audience of the year during the Super Bowl—even though the Super Bowl occurred some six months before "MIB's" scheduled July 2 release.

If "MIB" is the kind of boxoffice draw which beleaguered Columbia parent Sony Pictures so clearly hopes it will be, it will be just the latest Jones-starring commercial juggernaut in an impressive string. In 1993's "The Fugitive," he upstaged Harrison Ford's unjustly accused man on the run with his detailed and startling portrayal of Sam Gerard, the federal marshal trying to catch him—a role that won Jones a Best Supporting Actor Oscar, despite the fact that "The Fugitive" was the kind of movie-movie the Academy rarely takes note of. Under Andrew Davis' astute direction, Jones transcended what even he says was iffy material by, among other things, personally authoring two of his most memorable moments: Gerard's utterly frank reply of "I don't care" when Ford tells him he didn't kill his wife; and the moment when he snaps at sidekick Joe Pantoliano after a manhunt ends violently, shouting "I don't bargain!" So strong was Jones' performance that, when the studio started casting around for a sequel idea, the unavailability of Harrison Ford and the ridiculous prospect of the same man being unjustly accused twice was never an issue: "U.S. Marshals," in which Jones reprises Gerard for editor-turned-director Stuart Baird and puts him on the trail of a different fugitive, goes into production this spring.

As the demented Two-Face in 1995's "Batman Forever," Jones gave the "Batman" franchise its most virile villain since Jack Nicholson's Joker. His performance as an unscrupulous prosecutor in 1994's "The Client," meanwhile, gave life and dimension to everyone's worst fears about amoral attorneys—and the O.J. trial hadn't even happened yet.

Few actors with the depth and complexity of Tommy Lee Jones have ever had their talents so perfectly embodied by the way they look. The weird and often exciting duality Jones brings to his characterizations—not just to big, grandstanding acting challenges like playing Ty Cobb in the underrated sports bio "Cobb" but even to the cookie-cutter Hollywood character parts he used to specialize in before becoming a bigtime star—is etched in Jones' facial features: He is either ruggedly handsome in the classically American

COWBOY

by RAY GREENE

Spencer Tracy mode or worthy of playing a real-life Dick Tracy villain named Forehead, depending on the quality of the light.

His weathered features have been compared not infrequently to those of Humphrey Bogart, a movie star and actor's actor who, like Tommy Lee, had a long apprenticeship making lesser talents look good before reaching the pinnacle of his profession. Publicity stills bear out the fact that Jones has a certain Bogey-esque quality in repose, but Jones is rarely, if ever, in repose. This is particularly true of him onscreen, where his best characterizations often seem to be caught in the grip of dark compulsions and subterranean energies they themselves only dimly understand. He is a Bogart, perhaps, in the scale of his talent, but with the raw, muscular gregariousness of a Jimmy Cagney coiled around his actor's heart.



STRAIGHT "MEN": *Jones and Will Smith take lessons in deadpan comedy from Sonnenfeld.*

By a strange twist of fate, on the very same February Friday on which this conversation is taking place, a $100 million volcanic disaster movie named "Dante's Peak" is slated to open. As the star of "Volcano," a rival project with a similar premise and an equally enormous budget which was originally supposed to come out at roughly the same time, Jones could be expected to have more than a passing interest in that fact. Jones does, after all, have a track record as a ferocious competitor: He was an outstanding football player during his college days at Harvard (where his roommate was a future vice president by the name of Al Gore, with whom he is still friends and of whom he rarely speaks to the press) and he is an avid polo player today, dedicated to the continuation of what he refers to as his "athletic life."

The "Volcano"/"Dante's Peak" contest has kept Hollywood insiders entertained for the better part of a year, with the entire film industry following the multi-million-dollar race for earliest release date as if it were the greatest spectator event since the days of the Roman Coliseum. But despite the fact that "Volcano" will now be the second of the two to make it to market, Jones disavows any interest in "Dante's Peak," and seems plainly annoyed with the idea of a competition. "On the playing fields, I'm competitive," Jones says slowly. "But I don't work in distribution—or at least I did not have anything to do with distribution or production on 'Volcano.' The idea of competing with another movie was somebody else's job. Mine was acting. In all good humor and good spirits, those are the facts of life."

Jones is much more comfortable talking up "Men In Black"—a project that has taken nearly five years to come together. "They offered me a job," says Jones. "And I thought it was just a terrific idea. Much of that time, I've stood right with it."

Based on an obscure cult comic book series by Lowell Cunningham *(see sidebar)*, "MIB" takes as its jumping-off point an actual piece of UFO. mythology which could have come straight from "The X Files." Thanks to films like "Close Encounters of the Third Kind" and "nonfiction" books from "Chariots of the Gods" to "Communion," the bulbous heads and large, pupil-less eyes which UFO. "abductees" have attributed to their captors have become so ubiquitous that they are even the subject of a humorous and highly-popular T-shirt line, which parodies everything from Calvin Klein ads to celebrity portraits. Far less well-known but equally entrenched in UFO lore are the shadowy "men in black" who are said to visit abductees, sometimes repeatedly, after they have returned to their previous lives.

Cunningham's comics used the known "facts" about the "men in black" to create a kind of pan-galactic version of the Immigration and Naturalization Services, whose responsibility it is to keep the extraterrestrial invaders under control. Jones describes the MIB forces this way: "A group of special agents who wear black suits and dark sunglasses, and have access to technology from all over the universe to make you forget anything they want to simply by zapping you with one of their brain neuralizers. They have these enormous ray guns on the top of their cars. They drive 1962 Ford LTDs that can zoom at 200 miles an hour upside down in the Lincoln Tunnel. They're just so cool—and nobody knows they're there!"

The hypnosis-inducing "neuralizers" are how MIB agents keep the multitudes of earthlings who witness extraterrestrial activity believing that the saucer that just flew in over the cornfield was actually a weather balloon, or Saint Elmo's fire, or swamp gas. The whole premise is a kind of burlesque of populist paranoia, but it's a burlesque with roots in actual American space lore. Part of the cleverness of Cunningham's original conceit is that, if you accept the fantastic technical prowess he posits, it's just possible that his variation on the "men in black" mythos could be true.

It's an interesting irony that Jones, whose 1990s career renaissance really got started when he began to team up regularly with Oliver Stone, finds himself in "MIB" doing a sort of parody of the "government conspiracy" movie. In Stone's "JFK"—the first of three movies (the others were "Natural Born Killers" and "Heaven and Earth") on which Jones and Stone worked together—Jones nabbed a Golden Globe nomination for his depiction of Clay Shaw, a real-life figure who Stone (and one-time New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison, on whose investigation "JFK" was based) proposed as the central figure of the alleged conspiracy that killed J.F.K.

The fey, aristocratic and openly homosexual Shaw was a breakthrough role for Jones, allowing him to remind Hollywood of what a superb actor he is by playing a character well off what was then considered to be Jones' established "type." But "JFK" was also as controversial a film as has been made in the past decade, and one of the many tactics used by those who sought to discredit it was to liken Stone's political speculations to exactly the kinds of "fringe" conspiracy theories about space invaders and government cover-ups that "Men In Black" draws upon. "People like to believe in conspiracy," Jones says, "that there's some darker force and greater authority with an unknown objective, controlling things. There's comfort in that for those people who feel out of control in their own lives. I don't know how healthy it is, but I thought 'JFK' was a pretty healthy movie. Oliver called it 'alternate mythology,' the idea being that the greatest fiction was the Warren Commission Report. It makes far more sense to believe every line of 'JFK' than it does to believe one line of the Warren Commission."

Perhaps out of respect for his friend Stone's achievement, Jones resists seeing any parallels between plot elements in "JFK" and those of "MIB." "People have always got to believe in conspiracies," he says. "'JFK' is not the first dramatic event structured around conspiracies. What about 'Julius Caesar?' It's an old way of structuring a story. The idea, of course, [with 'Men In Black'] is mostly not to deal with conspiracy, but to be just cool as *hell*! That's really more important than being part of a conspiracy."

Though Cunningham's original comic books have no more humor in them than the

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average "Lethal Weapon" movie (the lead characters banter, but are generally serious about everything else), the makers of "Men In Black" opted for a much more directly comedic approach in bringing the "MIB" premise to the screen. "It's an actorly movie, 'Men In Black,' and it also is full of special effects. What's different for me is that it's driven by humor—something I don't get a chance to address very often. And I was in very good company with Will Smith and Barry Sonnenfeld—two very sophisticated people when it comes to humor."

Humor was the element of the project that fascinated Jones, who, despite broad comedic turns in both "Natural Born Killers" and "Batman Forever," is convinced he has no sense of humor. "I had to be pretty much led by the hand through a lot of these scenes by Barry," he says. "I really don't know much about comedy, and often don't really understand what's funny and what is not. Irony I have a pretty good grasp of, but not humor."

Sonnenfeld's judgement was validated even by the limited audience of technicians and crew members on the set. "I would often feel as if I achieved a scene or a moment or a line reading, and Barry would say, 'That's great, we have that version. Now let's do the "G-Man" version.' He would make things straighter. That was a direction that he often used, 'Do it a little flatter.' And I wouldn't really understand what the hell he was talking about, but I would try it, and look up and find the crew laughing—for reasons that I did not understand." It was only later, when Jones saw some of the cut footage, that he spotted the method in Sonnenfeld's madness. "He was encouraging me to relax and to quit trying to be funny, so that the humor could express itself, rather than being forced at the audience. You can't be funny by trying to be funny."

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as a **YOUNG, FRECKLE-FACED WAITRESS** *with braces on her teeth clears away dishes, lays out the check. She has noticed that one of the men at this particular table is famous, and she is flush with excitement, although the object of her sidelong glances doesn't seem to notice. It's a wonder something doesn't get spilled.*

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FIRST MAN: I've enjoyed your company. Take care.

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FADE TO BLACK

MAN AMONG "MEN"

Meet "Men In Black" Creator Lowell Cunningham



Just about everything about Lowell Cunningham is down-to-earth. Everything except his imagination, that is. Unassuming and genteel, Cunningham is precisely what one would expect of a Tennessee gentleman. But not of the creator of the far-out "Men in Black" comic book. On the eve of the movie adaptation based on his work, Cunningham spoke to **BOXOFFICE:**

BOXOFFICE: Could you talk about the urban legends that started this whole idea?

LOWELL CUNNINGHAM: The general folklore of the Men in Black is that they're not very personable. They may even be robots or aliens. They look odd, they act odd and they may even be threatening. My characters are a little more protective. They can be threatening if they need to be, but their function is mostly to protect people, whereas in the UFO folklore they're there to hush things up.

BOXOFFICE: When did you hear of them and how did your concept come together as a result?

CUNNINGHAM: About a decade ago, I was driving with a friend when we saw this big car. And he commented that it looked like the car the "Men in Black" would drive. Now, I had never heard of the Men in Black with regard to the UFO legends prior to this, but when he told me about it I started to put an idea together for a television project. But I decided I wanted to stay away from the typical UFO material because I didn't want to be bogged down into some pre-established folklore. So I made up the characters and the background to make them distinctive as opposed to faceless zombie-like characters, which they are in most UFO tales.

From there I realized it would be hard to break into television. But I knew people who had gotten into the comics industry. So I showed the proposal around for a couple of years until I finally hooked up with Malibu Comics and I had a contract with them within a week. Then we published the miniseries and it did well enough that we did another one. Ironically, the series was out of print when the studios expressed interest in it.

BOXOFFICE: It seems to ride the alien invasion wave on the one hand, yet on the other it's a bit of a "noir" detective approach. Why did you go this route?

CUNNINGHAM: I had the basic concept and I wanted to find a way to present it so it would be accessible and let me do the weird stories I wanted to do, but still not be too far removed so that the average audience wouldn't be able to follow it. I also wanted any production or comic book company to see it as something the audience would understand. I don't want to say I went to a buddy format, but that's what it boils down to.

BOXOFFICE: You obviously love both science fiction and detective stories.

CUNNINGHAM: I would tend to say I was more a science fiction reader, although when I was in high school I was an avid reader of detective stories as well, particularly Ellery Queen. Also when I was in high school there was a big UFO craze. But it was almost a decade later when I heard the stories of the Men in Black that I was able to turn it into a story like this.

BOXOFFICE: Did you ever research any of the traditional UFO stories?

CUNNINGHAM: I deliberately stayed away from researching the supposedly "true accounts" because I wanted this to be something I could claim as coming from my own mind. The legend of the Men in Black has been out there for 50 years or more, depending on which version you listen to. I should also point out that only a couple of my six issues had aliens. I decided early on that UFOs all the time wasn't the best way to go. So I had supernatural creatures, artificial creatures and things like that.

BOXOFFICE: Which sounds a little like "The X Files." Do you feel like maybe they were equally inspired by your work?

CUNNINGHAM: Not really. I can see some similarities, but I think they can be explained by them using the same logic I did. Plus, we both have "The Night Stalker" TV series to point to as an inspiration. "The X Files" is like Kolchak meets "The FBI" whereas mine is like Kolchak meets The Man From U.N.C.L.E." There's a tongue-in-cheek approach with "The Man From U.N.C.L.E." that I tried to do as much as possible throughout the series. And I believe that comes across even more in the movie.

BOXOFFICE: What are your own personal feelings about UFOs?

CUNNINGHAM: I believe in the possibility of extraterrestrials, but I don't necessarily believe that they've been here. I'm taking sort of a pragmatic approach. I can't deny the possibility, but I can't accept the facts.—*Wade Major*

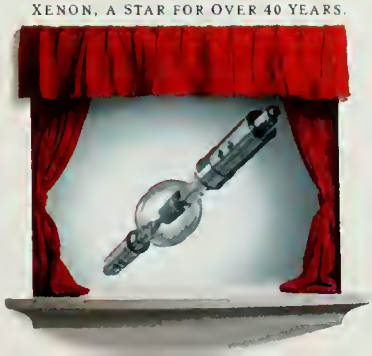


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A FEW GOOD *MEN*

BEHIND THE SCENES WITH THE CREATORS OF "MEN IN BLACK"

by Lea Russo



KICKING E.T.'S BUTT: *Will Smith and Tommy Lee Jones show Washington how to deal with illegal aliens in "Men In Black."*

From the outside, Men In Black (MIB) Headquarters looks like any other gray, square building in lower Manhattan. But after you travel past the giant ventilation covers, into a dingy elevator, and through a bland corridor, another world emerges. Aliens of all shapes, colors, and sizes mingle with humans in this vast, high-ceiling sea of chrome. Part airport, space-shuttle control room, and police station, MIB Headquarters looks like a real-life rendering of a Dr. Seuss fantasy. Yet as tangible as this room is to its inhabitants, it doesn't exist to the outside world—literally or figuratively.

In fact, MIB Headquarters is a beautifully designed set in Amblin Entertainment/Columbia Pictures science-fiction adventure comedy, "Men In Black." In the movie, it's the heart of a top-secret government agency in charge of alien immigration, unofficially devised to keep the streets clean from cosmic riff-raff.

"I thought of the MIB Headquarters not so much as a headquarters, but as a terminal or Ellis Island for aliens designed in the 1960s," says production designer Bo Welch ("Batman Forever"), discussing his inspiration for the set. "At that time, we had a space program and an optimistic view of space travel and the world in general. Flying saucers were part of the [1964] World's Fair architecture."

Into Welch's wonderland step two black-clad, sunglass-wearing MIB agents ("Batman Forever's" Tommy Lee Jones and "ID4's" Will Smith), stripped of their identity, street clothes, and even their fingerprints. Their mission: to stop a terrorist extraterrestrial from causing an intergalactic disaster.

Husband and wife producer team Walter Parkes and Laurie MacDonald ("Twister"), also the co-heads of DreamWorks' motion picture division, first learned of "Men In Black" from Lowell Cunningham's Malibu comic book.

"What we liked about the comic book was that it kind of posited the idea that there were these 1500 or so aliens living among us that needed to be policed," says Parkes. "Since no one [from an alien world] chose to live on Earth, it attracts low-life scum from around the universe, and that's why you need guys like the Men In Black to shake them up. One of the writers on this, Ed Solomon, described Earth as kind of like Barstow, which is a place to stop for gas on the way to Yosemite, but otherwise has no inherent value."

After buying the rights to "Men In Black" back in 1992, Parkes and MacDonald began the tough process of developing a script. "The comic book gave us a great title and an alluring concept," Parkes and MacDonald told **BOXOFFICE** in a joint written statement. "But there were no characterizations, nor any hint of a story that could be expanded to a feature film. This is a problem with most graphic novels as source material: they are structured to roll out over many issues, and gradually establish characters and storylines."

Around the same time, Parkes and MacDonald began the search for a director and immediately sent the script to Barry Sonnenfeld ("The Addams Family"), who at the time was developing "Get Shorty" with Jersey Films.

"We chose Barry after assessing his work and the particular challenges of 'Men In Black,'" say Parkes and MacDonald. "Tonally, the movie tries to hit a very specific target. It is comedic, but the comedy is played straight. It is stylized, but it takes place in the real world. It's science fiction, but the story owes much to tough police melodramas like 'French Connection.' There are very few directors who could balance these disparate elements, and do so with real visual flair."

As an esteemed cinematographer on such movies as "Raising Arizona," "Three O'Clock High," and "Misery"—to name just a few—Sonnenfeld indeed has a strong, refreshing style. But he says he was drawn to the project for its script.

"I felt that it was quirky and I could find a way to make it a little different," recalls Sonnenfeld. "I don't know if aliens exist or not, but I do truly believe we don't have a clue about what's really going on."

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Response No. 2



TAKE ME TO YOUR LEADER: *An otherworldy space vehicle makes a difficult landing on the set of "Men In Black."*

Judging from the resurgence of science fiction, Sonnenfeld is not alone. From "The X Files" and "3rd Rock From the Sun" to "ID4" and "Mars Attacks!," aliens are *the* hot trend in Hollywood. "I think there's a lot of science fiction stories because the year 2000 is coming up," Sonnenfeld explains. "Suddenly, the future is now. The other reason is that as the U.S. gets more and more politically correct, it's hard to pick bad guys that don't disturb some organization or group. You can pretty much feel fine about getting rid of aliens."

Eliminating aliens may be easier than creating them. In "MIB," there's an inch-high critter that lives inside a human brain, a couple of foot-high, pink wormy-looking creatures that work in MIB headquarters (and who, naturally, steal office supplies), a bug that resides inside the skin of a rotting human carcass, and Mikey, a humongous purplish beast who kind of resembles a rabid Barney with scales and flippers. The only thing these space monsters have in common visually is their combination of menace and/or humorousness.

"The hardest thing to figure out in the beginning was what the tone of the film was," says legendary makeup effects guru Rick Baker. "When you read the script, it can be taken a couple of different ways. So we did a lot of drawings. But there wasn't any one kind of concept for the look of the aliens."

For Sonnenfeld, designing believable creatures posed several problems. "I'm always amused when people say 'There can't be life on Mars, there's no oxygen,'" he says. "Well, that's just like a totally tunnelvisioned concept that, for life, you need water and oxygen. But how do you create aliens that don't look like our idea of aliens, meaning creatures with two eyes, a nose, a mouth, two arms and two legs?

"On the other hand, Rick would design aliens that didn't have human characteristics, and I'd say, 'Without eyes, how do we know where this thing is looking? Without a mouth, how do we know it's talking?' You're in this strange situation where you're trying to create totally unique and unusual aliens, who still look familiar enough that the audience knows anger or sadness."

Once the creature designs were approved, Baker teamed with the effects wizards at Industrial Light & Magic to bring the aliens to life using a complex combination of animatronics, computer imaging, and makeup.

> ***"Without eyes, how do we know where this thing is looking? You're in this strange situation where you're trying to create totally unique and unusual aliens who still look familiar to the audience ."***

"We started with a drawing," Baker says. "Then we'd do a small scale model. That scale model was then scanned at a laser scanning place that would record the information in a way that could be used as a computer model. When we finished the life-size version of the rubber suit, ILM would come out and photograph the paints we had put on it, so they could map that onto the computer model."

Sonnenfeld then had to make sure the computer animated creatures gave acceptable performances. "It's a creature, but it's still a character in the movie," says Sonnenfeld. "So you have to teach animators comedy. They're great, but they're computer guys. What they think funny is, 'Hey, did you hear that, we got 12 megabytes of RAM, ha ha ha.'"

While his aliens could be troublesome at times, Sonnenfeld thoroughly enjoyed working with Will Smith and Tommy Lee Jones. "Will is incredibly funny, nice, and charming," he says, "and Tommy is incredibly intimidating but incredibly bright and not arbitrary. We would start a shooting day with a rehearsal without the crew. Tommy would say, without fail, 'The words suck, the writer didn't know what he was doing, what he meant, why this scene exists at all. It's overwritten and it doesn't make sense and it's not funny, but hey, I'm getting too much money to complain. So tell me where to stand, what to say, and I'm there for you.'"

Steven Spielberg, who serves as executive producer on "Men In Black," also helped influence the story. "Steven had great ideas not only in preproduction," Sonnenfeld remarks, "but I would show him stuff in post, and he would say, 'You know, would it be funny if you got an additional shot of Will looking through the window?' I'd say, 'You know what? I don't know, but I'll shoot it because...' Well shit, it's Steven Spielberg. I don't think it's funny, but what the hell. I did it, cut it in, and it was hilarious."

"Men In Black" is scheduled for a July release, but the fun doesn't stop there. Parkes and MacDonald are developing an animated children's series based on the film that will incorporate more alien characters. There's also the Galoob toy line, featuring Men In Black and alien dolls.

For now, though, Sonnenfeld is content with putting visions of aliens in his viewers' heads. "My hope is that when you leave the movie theater, you'll see who's waiting in line for the next show—if there is anyone waiting in line for the next show—and you'll sort of elbow your friend and say, 'Look at that guy. Tell me he's not a Regick.'"

"Men in Black." Starring Tommy Lee Jones, Will Smith and Linda Fiorentino. Directed by Barry Sonnenfeld. Screenplay by Ed Solomon, based on the comic book series by Lowell Cunningham. Produced by Walter F. Parkes and Laurie MacDonald. Executive producer: Steven Spielberg. A Columbia Pictures release. Opens July 2.

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SHOW MAN

Daniel Wheatcroft Takes the Reins of ShoWest With One Goal: To Make the Film Industry's Best Business Show Even Better

by Kim Williamson



"It's going great." That's the way Daniel Wheatcroft, in his first year as president of ShoWest, describes the inside-the-whirlwind role he's taken on as the head of the movie business' biggest annual gathering. "All of the planning that has taken place since last year, when I went as a registrant myself, is coming together."

But it's been a formidable period for Wheatcroft, who for a dozen years has attended the show and so knows it intimately. Now its chief strategist, Wheatcroft wants to aim the convention toward the millennium by, paradoxically, returning ShoWest to its original focus. "I think I've brought a perspective of what I feel ShoWest could be in the future, and that is a place to bring together all the sides of the motion picture business: the creative experience, the distribution experience and the exhibition experience.

"The original intent 22 years ago was to create a forum for distribution and exhibition, to have an exchange of ideas and a flow of information. As things grow, sometimes those perspectives get a little out of skew—strictly due to growing pains, nothing else. One of the major things I focused on when I came aboard was to ask myself, 'What is the intent of this convention?' When you bring all the sides of moviemaking together, there's a potential for education, and I think at this year's convention the registrants will see we've tried to take it back to that original purpose."

As Wheatcroft sees it, ShoWest after two decades of growth had become such a success that some registrants were beginning to feel it had grown too large for its own good. But Wheatcroft, who spent a number of years at Universal overseeing 170 premieres and so well understands the importance of perception in Hollywood, contests that evaluation. "There is a misconception out there that ShoWest has grown over the past few years," he says. "As a matter of fact, ShoWest made a bold move last year—and I think a correct one—and actually reduced the number of people in the main [events] room to make it a better presentation for everyone.

"We've made a concerted effort to cap the registration. We could sell more and more and more—after all, we sell out in one month. But we agonized over this: Where do we take this convention? I decided that I would not come in here and say, 'Okay, let's become a giant convention. Let's just throw out a registration for anybody who wants to come. Even if they've just taken Film 101 in high school, they are now a legitimate member of our community.'" Clearly, Wheatcroft insists, that is not the intention of the gathering. "The focus of ShoWest is to bring the community together—and that community is those people who are *working* in it."

BOXOFFICE
SPECIAL REPORT:
SHOWEST
1997

Accordingly, Wheatcroft has chosen to make both significant and smaller changes to the way ShoWest runs, as detailed in his "Open Letter to All ShoWest Delegates" (*see* BOXOFFICE's *ShoWest Intro, page SW-6*). The first difference is that the keynote speech—this year by MGM Inc. chairman and CEO Frank Mancuso—has been moved to Monday evening, along with the ShoWester of the Year Award presentation, which in 1997 goes to Sony/Loews Theatres' Barrie Lawson Loeks (*see our Intro cover story*). It's a sure signal of how important that first international day has become. "I don't see this as one side of the ocean or the other. We're drawing closer," Wheatcroft says when asked about ShoWest's recent doubling of overseas registrants. "And, although the rest of the days focus on domestic distribution, the international community certainly gains the benefit of the entire convention."

A second essential change is that the ShoWest Awards will be cablecast live on TNT, this time from the MGM Grand Garden (*see*

sidebar, this page). Third, improvements have been made to the trade show's Pavilion facilities. And fourth, mirroring Wheatcroft's belief that personal interaction and communication are what give ShoWest value for the industry, the large-scale seminars of the past have been replaced in part by small workshops.

"The perspective I bring is all about the unity I spoke of—to bring all the sides of the motion picture industry together. By putting workshops in—and by limiting the number in those workshops, breaking down the seminars into smaller groups, allowing people to sign up for whatever topic they might like—it creates more of a dynamic, where the heads of our industry can speak more about where we're progressing, rather than having people sit in on a seminar where questions are unsystematic and answers have to be restricted. We've tried to break down those barriers."

This year, each workshop will hold from 100 to 150 attendees. Because some workshops will run simultaneously, a one-page roundup of each workshop's discussions will be available after ShoWest.

Another avenue by which Wheatcroft hopes ShoWest can foster a freer flow of information is by allowing the studio sponsors to retool the big midday and evening gatherings that had been called lunches and dinners. "We're giving the studios more of a free forum to create within their own events," Wheatcroft says. "And we've changed those names from lunches and dinners to 'events,' because the [entertainment] world is changing, and from a studio standpoint they need to have the same creative freedom as they do in other things they market. They need the freedom to make their best presentation to exhibition and the rest of the worldwide entertainment community."

In recent years, industry watchers had commented on the steep rise in studio costs associated with putting on a ShoWest event; MGM decided last year to hold its own function in New York, and Paramount also did not sponsor an event at the 1996 show. Noting that Paramount has returned for 1997, Wheatcroft says, "It goes to the question of, 'What is ShoWest?' ShoWest is really the *business* of what we do. I think refocusing attention on that subject is why studios are interested in being here.

"This is the one place you can come and talk to the world community about your product. You can do things [like MGM's New York gathering], but you're speaking only to one audience, you're speaking only



THE MARQUEE AWARD

EXHIBITION'S ANSWER TO OSCAR

For 22 years, ShoWest has been a closed convention," says Daniel Wheatcroft, freshman president of ShoWest. With year 23, all that is changing. ShoWest is coming out of its closet with its final-night awards show.

"We've transformed the television show, the ShoWest Awards, into a live television show, which is not only a very bold effort but also a very difficult one. There are restrictions on what we can show [live], because we all work in a business where we show each other a rough cut or a work in assembly, but we want the public to see the finished product in its pristine and beautiful state.

"Yet [with the live show] we have the chance to say to the world, and to this convention: 'Here's who we are, here's what we do, and here's what's coming up for the year.' So the television show is our way to be able to channel some of the information that has been so valuably put together in the past, and condense that, along with our traditional awards, into a show that lets the public know about future product.

"It's a value to exhibition, because it promotes moviegoing. It's a value to the studios, because it allows them the opportunity to show what they already are to the exhibition community to the rest of the world. And it's a value to the consumer, because it provides advance information. You know, we're in the unique position on that final night to satisfy the needs of all of us in the entertainment industry. With the live show, we now have the ability to promote to the consumer, or the viewer at this stage, the idea not to choose one film over another, but to choose to spend their entertainment dollar at the movies."

To further give the TV show event status, ShoWest this year is unveiling its new Marquee award design. Developed over 11 months, the Marquee is a gold-plated human figure holding aloft a crystal torch; the base is gold and steel. Surrounding the figure is a brushed-steel S that resembles film spooling from a reel. "Unlike any other film award, the ShoWest Award is given for past achievement, current success and future potential," Wheatcroft says. The torch is meant to symbolize the light that projects images onto screens today; the burnished-steel S is reminiscent of film with a look forward to the digital age; and the upreaching of the human figure represents a striving for excellence. "I felt that it was necessary, when you make a quantum leap like this [going live], to create a look—to standardize a look. The award has changed over the years in different ways and shapes. What we've created, we feel, is a significant look to the award—it's now one that will endure over time."

Attendees will notice other alterations to the night's event—other than the move to the MGM Grand Garden. "The overall look of the show will change in the presentation. We're an entertainment business, so it would not be constructive for us, as distributors and exhibitors, to present something on television that wasn't entertaining. So we changed the format so it could be truly an entertainment show. We now have Sinbad as our host—it's a live show, and so it's necessary to have someone who does live TV well. We will have surround sound. We are creating, as much as we can inside the site, a theatrical experience.

"And so the focus of the show is the screen. What is driving our change of format is the desire to make this show unique, in that this award show is not a look backward. This show is 75 percent a look forward, 25 percent a look back. The awards are for what has been done and what will come, but everything else in the show is to talk about what we do in our community, to tell people what motion pictures are coming out."

There will also be a newfound element of suspense to this year's presentation. Unlike the night's other awards, the recipients of which are announced in advance of the show, the name of the film which receives the inaugural Favorite Movie of the Year Award will be up in the air. "I think it will be a lot of fun," Wheatcroft says, to find out which among "Independence Day," "Twister," "Mission: Impossible," "The Rock" and "The Nutty Professor" emerges victorious. "People have said that the outcome could be very obvious—but don't bet on that. I don't think there's any guarantee. Who knows what can happen?

"We now as exhibitors have our award show," Wheatcroft says, summing up. "The Academy has theirs, the Emmy has theirs, and we have ours."



Wheatcroft at an editing bay, viewing a working version of the first-ever ShoWest trailer. Commemorative images from the ShoWest trailer appear in this issue in a special section on page 40.

to whoever is in that room. At ShoWest, you are speaking to the world. You speak to the worldwide press, you speak to worldwide exhibition, you speak to worldwide distribution, and now with the ShoWest Awards show you speak to a worldwide consumer base. There is no other place that you could go, as an exhibitor, a studio or a marketer, to position yourself in all those different ways, for all those different audiences, in one place at one time. I truly think ShoWest is the one place to go. There isn't anything else like it."

On the trade show side, Wheatcroft had to develop solutions to concerns often made audible at last year's show, most centering around the move of the trade floor outside of the hotel to Bally's backlot. "The trade show in my estimation is running quite well," Wheatcroft says, "and what we want to do is take something that is running quite well and make sure that the experience and the benefits to the registrants and the trade fair exhibitors are maximized. Last year's move into the Pavilion was a very bold move, and I think it worked. Now, there were concerns that were brought up, and I think we've addressed them." Key among them, Wheatcroft says, were the most basic needs: "How do you get there? How many telephones are there? How many restrooms are there?" His response was to reorient most of the walk to the Pavilion back inside the hotel, to add a business office area at the entrance and to double the number of restroom facilities.

But, given the added space that the Pavilion setting provides fair exhibitors (it allows almost 70 more companies to display their wares), he felt there was little need to alter the essential ShoWest trade fair experience itself. "When I go to a trade fair, what I always want to see is: Is it easy to get in? Does the exhibitor in the trade fair have enough space to present their products? Does the person walking by have enough time to stand back, look at what the booth is and then choose to stay a little longer? When I went into the Pavilion last year, I spent more time in there than I ever have [at a show] because it was fun. I looked around and thought that the ceiling height was great, the light inside was great, and the area to move around in was great."

> ***"At ShoWest, you are speaking to the world. There isn't anything else like it."***

One worry that Wheatcroft does have about the trade fair has to do with simple geography: Attendees must go down a level to reach the Pavilion. "We feel that the experience of going to the trade fair should be as focused and as unique as any other event at ShoWest," he says. "So it is not a stepchild, it is not a second cousin. The trade fair is extremely important to me. I don't want anyone to get the impression, just because they're going downstairs to the Pavilion, that means in any way that's what ShoWest believes about the value of the trade fair. Because it isn't. [The location] is simply a function of space."

Perhaps the ultimate question is, Why come to ShoWest? Wheatcroft is ready with an answer. "When people come to ShoWest, they're re-energized. This is really the community that makes all the decisions, about whether someone becomes a big star, or whether a movie succeeds, or whether an audience comes into a theatre."

If Wheatcroft sounds excited about what ShoWest has been and what it can become, it's because he is. As an example of what makes ShoWest essential, he recounts an experience from last year's show, when he stood next to Jeff Goldblum (who he'd met at Universal while working on "Jurassic Park") and they watched the reel of debut footage Fox had brought of "Independence Day" for its packed-house luncheon event. "It really could have been [any movie]—I'm picking 'ID4' only because it's a good example of what happens.

"And what happens in that room is magic. The stars saw for the first time their work on the screen, the exhibitors saw for the first time that work on the screen, the distributors watched their work being displayed to people—there was an interaction that happened in the room that happens nowhere else in the world. And the reaction you get you can get nowhere else. Three thousand people in that room at one time, all focusing on the very same thing. That moment in time—that shared 'what's this picture going to be like for us?' moment. That is invaluable at ShoWest, because nowhere else can that happen.

"*This*," Wheatcroft says, "is where it happens."

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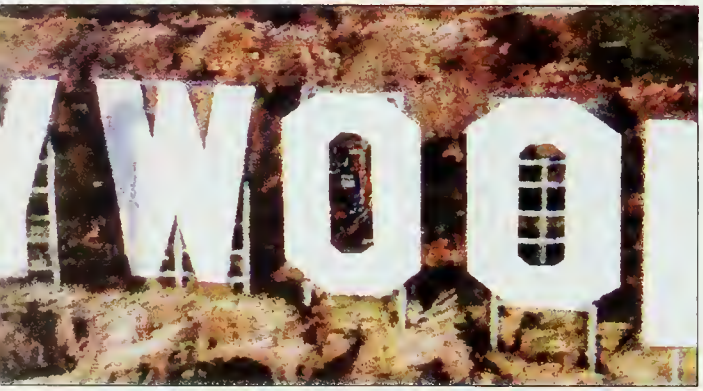
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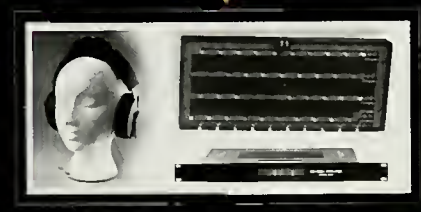
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IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

"Circle of Friends" Star Minnie Driver Revs Up With a "Flood" of Interesting Roles

She came to fame in America as Benny, the somewhat insecure but spirited, individualistic heroine in the 1995 coming-of-age romance-drama "Circle of Friends." Given the media attention to her physical transformation from the plump Maeve Binchy protagonist back to her slim, statuesque self, Minnie Driver, who has temporarily relocated from her homeland of England to Los Angeles while filming several projects, has some strong feelings about Hollywood attitudes and the industry's fixation on looks.

"Apparently in Hollywood, the aesthetic is meant to take the limelight," says Driver (while semi-ironically munching on a typically Southern California health breakfast of scrambled egg whites and melon that might betray a figure-watching regime). "You're meant to be this kind of ideal. And if you're anything less than perfect, they're going to point it out. It's hard, because you're sort of like, 'Well, what does that mean, [a reporter] sitting there saying I've got a jaw as square as a window frame and I'm not classically pretty? What does that say about me other than what I'm not?'

"It still bothers me when people start saying, 'You're kind of like the plain Jane who made good.' It's like, well, *thanks!*"

She doesn't exactly have to worry about Tinseltown's obsession with beauty: Having long ago shed the extra 30 pounds she gained for her star-making "Circle" turn, the 5'10" Driver is luminous in person, with huge golden-brown eyes, long dark curls, and a flawless pale complexion. But positive or negative, she's fed up with comments on her looks. "It doesn't say how big my laughter is, how big my heart is, how bright my brain is, or whatever it is we find interesting in other people," she remarks. "If it were as simple as the way you look, then all the beautiful people would be fantastically happy and living on an island somewhere being fantastically beautiful. It doesn't work like that."

"It's hard not to become glib, especially in an action film. Often I'd think, 'If this person was really in this situation, would they honestly be this light-hearted about stuff?'"

Besides which, Driver has no choice but to look decidedly non-glamorous, in fact, antithetically glamorous, in her next film: Paramount's action-thriller "The Flood" will have her drenched in torrential waters for the majority of the movie, and it's hard to keep your make-up and hair looking "just so" under those conditions.

In "The Flood," Driver plays a woman who's passionate about her job restoring a church. So passionate, in fact, that when a major flood hits, she disobeys citywide evacuation orders to stay with her edifice. "And then the flood hits, and basically the entire place is destroyed," says Driver. "Because she stays to look after her church, she's one of the only people left in town. She gets caught in the crossfire of the unfolding dark story that is taking place between mercenary Americans." Driver's character teams up with Tom (Christian Slater), an armored car driver whose $3 million bank shipment has been commandeered by a group of armed criminals (whose leader is played by Morgan Freeman). "They look out for each other, just try and get through it. He saves my life, I save his life. We basically try and muddle through this 19-hour period and stay alive."

What is with this recent resurgence of the disaster film genre? "I think it's clearly economic," Driver observes pragmatically. "Those movies last year made an enormous amount of money. And now everybody is going after that. But the difference with this film is it's a suspense thriller. There is a lot of action in it, [but] it's an incredibly fascinating story. It's kind of that idea of human nature against Mother Nature, and it's a good one, because which is ultimately more devastating?"

Driver does acknowledge that the conventions of moviemaking don't always inter-

By Christine James

sect with reality. "It's hard not to become glib, especially in an action film. Often I'd think, 'If this person was really in this situation, would they honestly be this light-hearted about stuff?' It's a balance you've got to think about. Try to maintain some sort of truth, even though it's completely a kind of unreal, surreal set-up."

The drawback of starring in a disaster movie is that "it's a f—ing disaster, that's what it is!" she laughs. "The hardest thing is keeping good humor when you're physically uncomfortable. You're irritable if you're damp or cold and you're filming in the middle of the night. That's why I take my hat off to Christian Slater. He was indomitably good-humored. He always was—as was pretty much the whole crew. And they suffered more. [Christian and I] could get out of the [floodwater simulation] tank. They couldn't. They were in it."



Minnie Driver and Christian Slater in Paramount's "The Flood."

Driver calculates she was wet about "85 percent of the day." "We could get out [of the tank], but the thing is that if you got out and changed out of your wet clothes, it would only be for like 15 minutes in between set-ups. But it's worth it," she adds with emphatic conviction. "You suddenly start buying dry time. 'Okay, it's gonna freeze getting out, and I'm going to have to quickly rip all my clothes off and try to get warm. And then I'm going to have to put other clothes on and get back in and get wet again.' So you just start making deals with yourself. You know, ridiculous deals. Your mind starts working in a funny way. It's like, 'If I do this, then I'll go and eat some candy,'" she laughs. "Like that'll be my reward. So then you end up looking like the side of a house."

Driver, who enjoys writing as a creative outlet, says that her psychological mindframe during the shoot was captured in both content and format in her diary. "My journal entries were disconnected rhetoric throughout 'The Flood,'" she says. "Just pages of bizarre prose. Also filled with filthy expletives. Some days I'd write two sentences. And other days I'd written a dissertation on what it is to be wet. It depends. It doesn't take the form of 'Today I got up. I went to Craft Service and I had a breakfast burrito.' It's more like [melodramatically:] 'Today. [Weary, burdened pause]. The water was wetter than usual.'"

This project is only the latest in a "flood" of interesting roles Driver's had since "Circle of Friends": a tone-deaf Russian honky-tonk singer in "GoldenEye"; Brad Pitt's girlfriend in Barry Levinson's all-star drama "Sleepers" (which also places her one degree from the subject of the popular movie trivia game "Six Degrees Of Kevin Bacon"—"I'm in the center circle. Right on!"); Stanley Tucci's long-suffering amour in "Big Night"; and John Cusack's love interest in "Grosse Pointe Blank."

"[Sometimes you want] the sense of solidarity [of a smaller, independent film], where you're all in it up to your eyeballs. You're totally immersed in the whole process, and that's what I love. And sometimes you want it big. I'm glad to have the opportunity to do both."

Driver is considering three scripts in particular that have come her way that she's really liked. "And I can't do all of them, which is a real problem. It's like men and buses. They don't come along, they don't come along, and then like 10 come along at once. It's always the way. Feast or famine."

"My journal entries were disconnected rhetoric throughout 'The Flood.' Pages of bizarre prose. Some days I'd write a dissertation on what it is to be wet. 'Today...the water was wetter than usual.'"

Right now, Driver's very excited about her next project, in which she joins the Disney mythos, voicing Jane in the animated version of "Tarzan," due out in June of 1998. "I'm loving doing this job!" she gushes. "To be English, to be a hoity-toity little madam, to improvise in my voice, in my tongue, with my humor, and them loving it, and them asking me to do more, it is just so much fun. Heaven. I'm absolutely loving it. It's incredible, the posterity—to be animated by Disney, to be the voice of something forever! It's just incredible!"

So will Jane resemble her voice counterpart? "This is the thing, it's very funny," begins Driver with a smile. "They started out with pictures of [model] Christy Turlington on the wall. Which bothered me slightly. She's fantastically beautiful, but I was kind of like, 'Come on.' But they start out with ideas, and then it changed—it's a constantly evolving process. They video you when you're doing it, they see how your face works. They let the voice that comes out dictate a little bit. It all becomes clearer, you know. I'm psyched. I'm so psyched to be in it."

Despite her numerous recent high-profile projects, Driver is still fairly anonymous stateside. "If you go somewhere where there's press, there's a publicist who's telling them, 'Okay, this is Minnie Driver,' so they all start shouting your name. [But] it's not like I go into a restaurant and they'll give me the best table in the house and be falling all over me," she says. "People might vaguely recognize me—they just don't quite know why.

"It's funny," she continues, "because you're trying to build a career—rather that trying to attain superstardom, you want to be around longer than the premiere of the movie. I feel unbelievably lucky. And it *was* luck. It was luck that I walked into a casting director's office and ["Big Night's"] Stanley Tucci and Campbell Scott were sitting there—and I wasn't coming to meet them. It was luck that I had an hour instead of half an hour lunch break so I could go meet ["Sleepers'"] Barry Levinson on the one day that he was in town. It was luck that he didn't know that I was English—he'd seen a tape of me, and he thought I was American. All those things are luck—for me, fate. And that they've been successful in that they've been wonderful films I hope is a mark that I have good counsel, and I was encouraged to read enough to recognize when there was a good story put in front of me."

All indications are that luck, fate and talent will work in combination to put Minnie Driver at the top of the industry, including all the elite restaurant lists, inciting Hollywood *maitre d's* into a silver-polishing frenzy in the very near future.

"The Flood." Starring Christian Slater, Minnie Driver, Morgan Freeman and Randy Quaid. Directed by Mikael Salomon. Written by Graham Yost. Produced by Mark Gordon, Gary Levinsohn and Ian Bryce. A Paramount release. Action-thriller. Opens May 2.



"DAY" TRIPPER

After A Career Focusing On Dramatic Films, Nastassja Kinski Goes For The Laughs In The Warner Bros. Comedy "Father's Day"

By Bridget Byrne

Robin made me laugh so much that the director [Ivan Reitman] got terribly mad. Then, when I felt myself bursting with laughter and knew I mustn't, he gave me this one little thing, this help that actors of that caliber can offer, which made me able to string along, to hang in and not disappear through the floor."

Nastassja Kinski is talking about working with Robin Williams on the set of Warner Bros.' "Father's Day," a comedy about (apparent) parentage that opens wide May 9. But keeping a straight face proved doubly difficult for Kinski, because her other co-star is comedian Billy Crystal. "Basically the whole set was in stitches most of the time because of Robin, and also Billy," she says.

Kinski says she felt blessed to be surrounded by so much laughter during the making of the movie, because too much of the time the world is not a happy enough place. "Sometimes when I haven't laughed, I realize how much I miss it. When you laugh a lot, you feel it with your whole body and mind. They say if you laugh enough it prevents being ill, and I think that may be true," she says.

The Berlin-born Kinski, who became a working actress as a teenager, shot to fame when she was only 19, thanks to her turn as the tragic heroine of "Tess," Roman Polanski's 1979 interpretation of Thomas Hardy's gloomy "Tess of the D'Urbervilles."

Still bearing a beauty a contemporary teenager could envy (she does commercials for L'Oreal), Kinski is now the mother of three: a 12-year-old boy, Aljosha, and two girls, 11-year-old Sonja and four-year-old Kenya. She's spent the morning before her conversation with **BOXOFFICE** like many another mother does, making sure her children got off to school on time. She arrives for the conversation at a Beverly Hills patisserie with a sincere apology for being a little late, though she admits she's often tardy. Kinski also laughingly apologizes at one point for talking too much, but she is open and emotional in a way that's markedly different from the American-style angst of some stateside actresses.

Kinski emphasizes that her "need to take care of my family" is and always will be her first priority, but she's happy to be back working after some time out of the Hollywood limelight. After "Father's Day," she'll next be seen in New Line's "One Night," directed by Mike Figgis ("Leaving Las Vegas"), which is tentatively slated for late September. She also appears in an independent film, "Somebody Is Waiting," in which she and Gabriel Byrne play the parents of five children.

The hazel-eyed and hazel-haired actress seems more interested in talking about facts than feelings, evincing a reluctance to discuss plot and character in too much detail, because she believes movies should hold surprises for the audience. In "Father's Day," Kinski plays a mother whose teenage son goes missing; in order to find him, she resorts to implying separately to two former boyfriends that each needs to help find "his son." The resulting comedy and confusion stems from the two "maybe" fathers crossing paths during their efforts to find the boy.



Kinski stars with Robin Williams in the Ivan Reitman comedy "Father's Day."

Kinski says she was "super nervous" auditioning for the role. Once she had the part,

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however, both Williams (who plays an artistic poet) and Crystal (a lawyer) proved to be "generous and loving to work with," she says. "The speed of their minds is incredible, and I wasn't on top of it all the time. I was sometimes a little behind getting the joke and, with a director who is very fast and witty too, I was intimidated, but in a good way." Kinski adds that relating to the character of a mother who would do anything to find her son was the easiest aspect of the role.

In "One Night," she stars with Wesley Snipes and Robert Downey Jr. in a story about the havoc a brief encounter causes five people. An admirer of the rawness of "Leaving Las Vegas," Kinski says she found Figgis to be "very much a musician, and you know what musicians are like." She smiles; the musician Quincy Jones is the father of her younger daughter. She says the film is about "coming to terms" and "bringing everyone to the truth"—about "how not to waste time not being honest."

Though she's the daughter of a famed actor—Klaus Kinski, star of such films as "Aguirre: The Wrath of God" and "Nosferatu"—Kinski wasn't raised in the business, because her father wasn't around much when she was little. "I grew up with my mom, and the only thing I really knew about acting because of my father was that it took you away from home, made you busy and not available." But then German filmmaker Wim Wenders cast her in the second of his road movies, "Wrong Move" (released in 1975 as "Wrong Movement"), and her life changed.

"It was a blessing for many reasons, because it brought me out of what was not good in my life into a life full of possibilities, and it helped my mom and I financially," Kinski says. But the 37-year-old actress also acknowledges the pressures that fall on those to whom fame comes early. "I took success for granted at first, but it's hard to hold up to expectations, and I couldn't always hold up," Kinski says. Sometimes it was the projects that didn't hold up: Paul Schrader's "Cat People" remake in 1982, Francis Ford Coppola's "One From the Heart" the same year, 1985's "Revolution."



Kinski stars with Wesley Snipes in New Line's "One Night."

"My children caught a glimpse of ["Cat People"] on TV once and exclaimed, 'You were completely nude!' I found myself explaining, 'Well, as a cat, wouldn't you expect me to be nude?'" Kinski laughs, noting she hasn't appeared in many films her kids can watch yet.

But Kinski has made winning choices, including reteamings with Wenders: 1984's "Paris, Texas" and his 1993 film about heavenly creatures on earth, "Faraway, So Close!" And she remains hopeful about the quality of her recent acting choices. "I need to work, because I really want to be able to get better, because I feel a need to do justice to the fact that people believed in me when I was 12. So I'm happy to do a role, however small, as long as I find some truth in it.

"The years went by so fast and, even though I've had children, which makes me feel I've lived a long time, I feel I didn't really grow up. I kind of felt I was standing still for a while, and I don't want that. I feel I want to grow up.... I want to fulfill the desire I have to do things that are beautiful and meaningful.

"I'm so grateful for what happened when I was young, and I must never forget. I remind myself of that," Kinski says, and for a brief moment she almost slips back into her "Faraway, So Close!" character. "It was like an angel came."

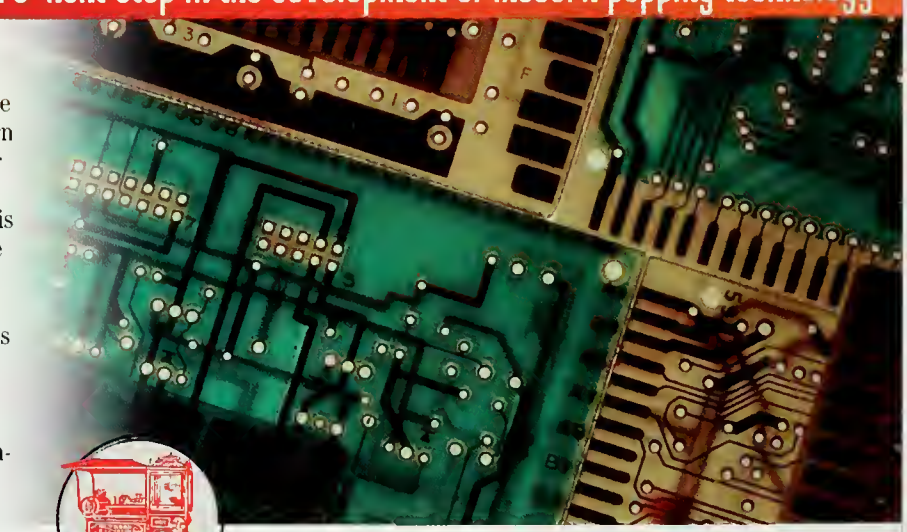
"Father's Day." Starring Robin Williams, Billy Crystal and Nastassja Kinski. Directed by Ivan Reitman. Written by Babaloo Mandel and Lowell Ganz. Produced by Ivan Reitman and Joel Silver. Comedy. A Warner Bros. release. Opens May 9.

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"SPRUNG" FEVER

Triple-threat Rusty Cundieff directs, scripts and stars in his third film, Trimark's "Sprung"

by Sean O'Neill

Life has a way of dealing out nice little ironies, and some of the most enjoyable come from people with completely inappropriate names. Actor Brad Pitt, for example, rides high in Hollywood. And show business hyphenate Rusty Cundieff has become a well-oiled moviemaking machine.

Since the 1992 release of his debut feature, Goldwyn's farcical "rapumentary" "Fear of a Black Hat," Cundieff has kept his creative wheels turning. He followed with a brief stint on Michael Moore's deliciously cynical but short-lived "TV Nation" series, and then Cundieff resurfaced with his sophomore cinematic effort, the Savoy horror anthology "Tales From the Hood," whose gross doubled its modest budget.

Now Cundieff is ready to unleash "Sprung," a romantic comedy that's his funniest and most accomplished work. "Sprung" tells the story of two sets of best friends: ambitious law clerk Brandy ("House Party's" Tisha Campbell) and avaricious golddigger Adina (Paula Jai Parker), and aspiring photographer Montel (Cundieff) and his buddy Clyde ("Poetic Justice's" Joe Torry), a fast-food franchise manager who fancies himself the consummate player.

The two pairs of pals intersect at a party. After Adina and Clyde spend an evening of mutually deluded passion, they realize they detest each other (as opposites attract, likes repel). Montel and Brandy, in the meantime, progress past an initial animosity and begin to fall in love. As their romance blossoms, though, their best friends—feeling threatened—reluctantly join forces to break up the couple. Comic catastrophe follows.

The story might sound generic, but it's ultimately saved by Cundieff's wit, his penchant for the outrageous, inspired sight gags and, most of all, his generosity and evenhandedness as a writer. His characters are archetypes rather than stereotypes, and they all have their reasons. They're given time to display a variety of sides, and in the end they come off as real flesh-and-blood human beings, even as their attributes are stretched for comic effect.



Rusty Cundieff on the set of "Sprung."

Though Cundieff is on a creative roll, his success is the result of years spent in the entertainment trenches. Fresh out of the University of Southern California in the early 1980s, he gravitated toward standup comedy, following the lead of personal heroes like Richard Pryor, George Carlin and Flip Wilson. After drifting into bit parts on sitcoms like "Benson," plus a year-long stint on the soap opera "Days of Our Lives," Cundieff formed a partnership with producer Darin Scott ("Menace II Society," "To Sleep With Anger"). They decided to set their sights on bringing the black audience a new brand of African-American filmmaking—a diverse, far-reaching and inclusive approach that didn't center on gangland escapades.

"Some black directors enjoy doing that whole violent gang thing," Cundieff says, by way of explaining his genre hopping. "And there's nothing wrong with that. It's the equivalent of Scorsese doing 'Mean Streets,' 'GoodFellas' and 'Casino.' I like telling stories from the black experience, but the last thing you want is to become known as a black director who does only one kind of movie.

"I'm interested in a wide variety of things, and I make sure to see a broad range of films," Cundieff says. "Most directors want to stretch out and try different things, but they never get the chance. Hollywood pigeonholes you, and I understand that.

"But, probably because I've written most of what I've done so far, I've been allowed more freedom than most directors get, and I can kind of bounce around from project to project."

While "Fear of a Black Hat" (an African-American "This Is Spinal Tap") and "Tales From the Hood" (a "Creepshow" of color) were pure exercises in imagination, "Sprung"—with its subplot of people feeling cut off when their best friends fall in love—hews closer to the bone than Cundieff's previous projects.

The film is pure fiction, he insists. Yet Cundieff admits that some real-life experiences might have made their way into the narrative. "I used to date this girl, and then Darin started hanging out with her sister," Cundieff recalls. "They never really dated, but they became close. Of course, I broke up with my girl, and now she hates me, and her sister does too. Then the sister starts dancing on tour with Janet Jackson, and who gets invited to the show? Not me. Darin got to go to the concert, and I was like, 'Man, you never would have gotten those backstage passes to meet Janet if it wasn't for me!'"

Like the old song (and Cundieff's new movie) says, Love hurts. But chances are that Cundieff will get over it. After all, like another song says, Cundieff's future is shining so bright he's gotta wear shades.

"Sprung." Starring Tisha Campbell, Paula Jai Parker, Rusty Cundieff and Joe Torry. Directed by Rusty Cundieff. Written by Darin Scott and Rusty Cundieff. Produced by Darin Scott. Romantic comedy. A Trimark release. Opens May 2.



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3. There will be a daily drawing on each day of the Trade Show. You need not be present to win. In the event that we are unable to reach you before the close of the show, another prize-winner may be selected.
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5. YOU ABSOLUTELY MUST BE A THEATRICAL EXHIBITION PROFESSIONAL TO ENTER THIS CONTEST.

Please, please, PLEASE, only one entry per theatrical exhibition professional, and you can win only once (so last year's winners are inelgible). Again, there's no need to be present to win—we will contact you at the show. (But if you're not there, you *will* miss seeing the disappointed and jealous faces of your exhibition peers!).

ShoWest Trade Show Day One: Tuesday, March 4



Prize: QSC MX 1500a AMPLIFIER

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ShoWest Trade Show Day Two: Wednesday, March 5
Prize: The SMART CITI-TELL DIGITAL MESSAGE SERVER



OUR DAY 2 DRAWING WILL BE HELD AT

THE BOXOFFICE BOOTH (#406) at 5:30 P.M. SHARP!

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Printed literature on the SMART Citi-Tell Digital Message Server will be available at the show. Prize value: $1250.00.



ShoWest Trade Show Day Three: Thursday, March 6
GRAND PRIZE: COMPLETE DTS SOUND SYSTEM

DAY 3 DRAWING HELD AT BOXOFFICE BOOTH

(#406) AT 11:00 A.M. SHARP!

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Operation of the DTS system is automatic, fail safe and compatible with all existing cinema processors. Because DTS prints have a conventional stereo-optical track as well as DTS timecode, a single inventory of prints works for all theatres. Installation and operation are simple and foolproof: in the event of a rare technical problem, DTS automatically defaults to the stereo-optical track.

The DTS system gives you ultimate sound performance. With the "Jurassic Park" sequel ready to invade your market, this system could have those Jurassic age creatures stomping through *your* theatre the next time 'round! Don't let the digital revolution leave you behind! Stop by the **BOXOFFICE** booth at ShoWest and enter for your chance at a *free* DTS system today!

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TALK OF THE "TOWN"

Carole and David Trepeck prove that you *can* go home again—particularly if you revitalize your hometown cinema into a state-of-the-art eight-plex

by Susan Lambert



Carole Ilitch Trepeck and David Trepeck say restoring their hometown Birmingham Theatre was a labor of love.

Carole Ilitch Trepeck and David Trepeck always loved the movies, but they never thought they'd be running a theatre, much less the successful eight-screen palace that their New Birmingham Theatre has become less than a year since the grand re-opening of the long-shuttered 1926 movie house in May of 1996. There were two significant events that led David and Carole to the Birmingham Theatre. The first was they each grew up in the suburbs of Detroit, Michigan, next door to Birmingham, a town of 50,000 located 25 miles north of the famed auto industry city. They met as high school friends and sometime later things changed, Carole laughs, "We always say 'When Harry Met Sally' is our story." But the second contributing factor to becoming theatre owners came when the couple left their hometown. Just after they were married, Carole and David temporarily relocated to Dallas, Texas where Carole finished law school and David built a practice facility and headquarters for the Dallas Stars Hockey Club. So how did a lawyer and a general contractor end up running a movie theatre and what does any of it have to do with Texas?

While in Dallas, the young couple fed their personal love of movies with frequent visits to the local Highland Park Village AMC Theatre. They also befriended one Bill Herting, a man with 20 years experience in the movie business. These two factors came into play when, upon their return to Michigan, Carole and David found the old Birmingham movie house [which had been converted to a legitimate theatre in the '80s] was shuttered and dark. "This is our hometown and our heart was crushed when we saw that the Birmingham Theatre was closed," explains Carole. "It was just so sad to us. It's in the center of town and with the close of the theatre, the town was really dead." But then, inspired by their time in Dallas, they said to themselves, "It's a sign. We saw so many wonderful things in Dallas. Here we've been frequenting this Highland

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The New Birmingham Theatre lights up the local downtown area with a replica of its historic 1926 marquee.

Park Village that we love so much—we can do that right here." David adds, "I called Bill [Herting] and talked to him about the Detroit market and the movie business in general and he said, 'Gosh, it sounds great. Let me come up and take a look.'" He liked what he saw and soon Bill was on board as a minority partner when Carole and David jumped into the deep end of exhibition with both feet. David admits,"There's no question there was a learning curve that was very steep." Carole says that Bill's exhibition experience made it possible to face the challenge. She adds the three of them make a good team."We all have such different qualities that complement each other."

The New Birmingham Theatre sports eight large-screen cinemas, ranging from 70 seats to 450 seats, and includes the latest in theatre-going amenities: DTS, Dolby Digital, THX and Ultra Stereo sound, stadium seating and love seats scattered in every auditorium. The largest theatre includes a balcony, one of the many special features which David says gives people an opportunity to enjoy movies the way they were originally designed to be experienced. "This is an event. It's downtown. It's an urban setting. We have art deco decor. We have a lot of attention to detail." David and Carole want people to feel the environment adds to the entertainment value. David says,"It's inviting. It's not just somewhere in the middle of a mall and you're in for two hours and you're out and you don't care. We think that movie-going is an event and there should always be something for everyone."

That "something for everyone" extends to the theatre's unique concessions which have been a favorite draw among the patrons. They offer Lone Star gourmet coffees, Little Caesar's Pizza and Twist and Shout Pretzels, which Carole asserts"are not like your typical frozen-to-heated pretzels. They are fresh, gourmet pretzels made next door." The Birmingham also serves up goodies from a nationally known locally-based company called Gayle's Chocolates.

The Birmingham's movie selection is equally eclectic; the theatre plays both Hollywood fare and art-house specialties, which Carole says keeps it exciting. "That was a potential challenge and something that a lot of people were skeptical about—'You can't play both. You shouldn't play both.'—And it's been, knock on wood, very successful playing both. I think the city that we're in demands both. People really demand diversity here, as it's a very diverse city." David agrees, noting "we seem to be able to play everything from studio features and G-rated films all the way through the heavy art, and we've done relatively well with everything."

It was that particular ability that got some distributors to pay attention to the little independent that could."We opened 'She's the One,' one of the first projects out by Fox Searchlight, and we were number one in the market," recalls David. "The response to that was a big eye-popper for a lot of the studios. It caught a lot of people's attention and was kind of a feather in our cap as well."

Carole says that attention from the studios is a great benefit. "You know, when you're new and independent you've got to prove to them that you can play and we can definitely play. We've been drawing great crowds. It's been better than we could have ever expected."

Carole cites opening night as the highlight of her exhibition career because it was "seeing a final product from a vision to a reality." David says for him it's the successful fruition of an idea—that people would love to go to the movies in Birmingham and it was something that was missing—despite the doubters. "Now we're open and, so far, we've been successful. People are coming out. They love the theatre and it seems to have been a catalyst and spark plug for the downtown area. So that's a nice feeling." David says nearby merchants and restaurant are claiming a 40 to 50 percent increase in sales since the reopening of the cinema. The theatre has revitalized the community, which has been thrilled to support their local cinema. But Carole says they're not resting on their laurels."I don't want to take anything for granted. We're still learning. We're still the new kids on the block. And we're little kids—we're independent."

David sees a laundry list of reasons to stay independent, "from what you're able to play to guest service to employee relations to giving back to the community. We can't say for sure because we've never been part of a circuit, but



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The largest auditorium of the Birmingham includes a balcony and the occasional loveseat.

our partner has and he points out several things, like, 'If you were part of a circuit, you're mandated to play this feature even though it might not work at your place, or you have to run this special or your ticket prices have to be so much.' I say there are many advantages to independence."

Carole adds that the ability to be completely unique will keep independent theatres competitive."That is the one advantage that will keep them very, very viable." She and David find ways to offer specialty services whenever possible,"whether it's gourmet coffees or tickets by phone or valet parking or a website (www.uptowntheatres.com) These are all things that we have, and we just won't stop. We really won't stop trying to be different, or trying to be unique and I think that is vital for all independents."

David says it takes constant effort from them and their 80 part-time and full-time employees to maintain the quality standard and level of service they demand for their theatre. David explains,"We want to be the industry leader in guest service and we strive for that. On a day-to-day basis, that is probably one of the biggest challenges—to maintain that level and to keep people coming back and to keep them happy. Make sure that our standards are being met." With that kind of company policy, Carole and David could be at the start of something big. They are, in fact, thinking about adding another theatre to their current 'circuit of one', under the parent company name Uptown Theatres. David says,"We are in the preliminary stages of looking to expand in metro Detroit."

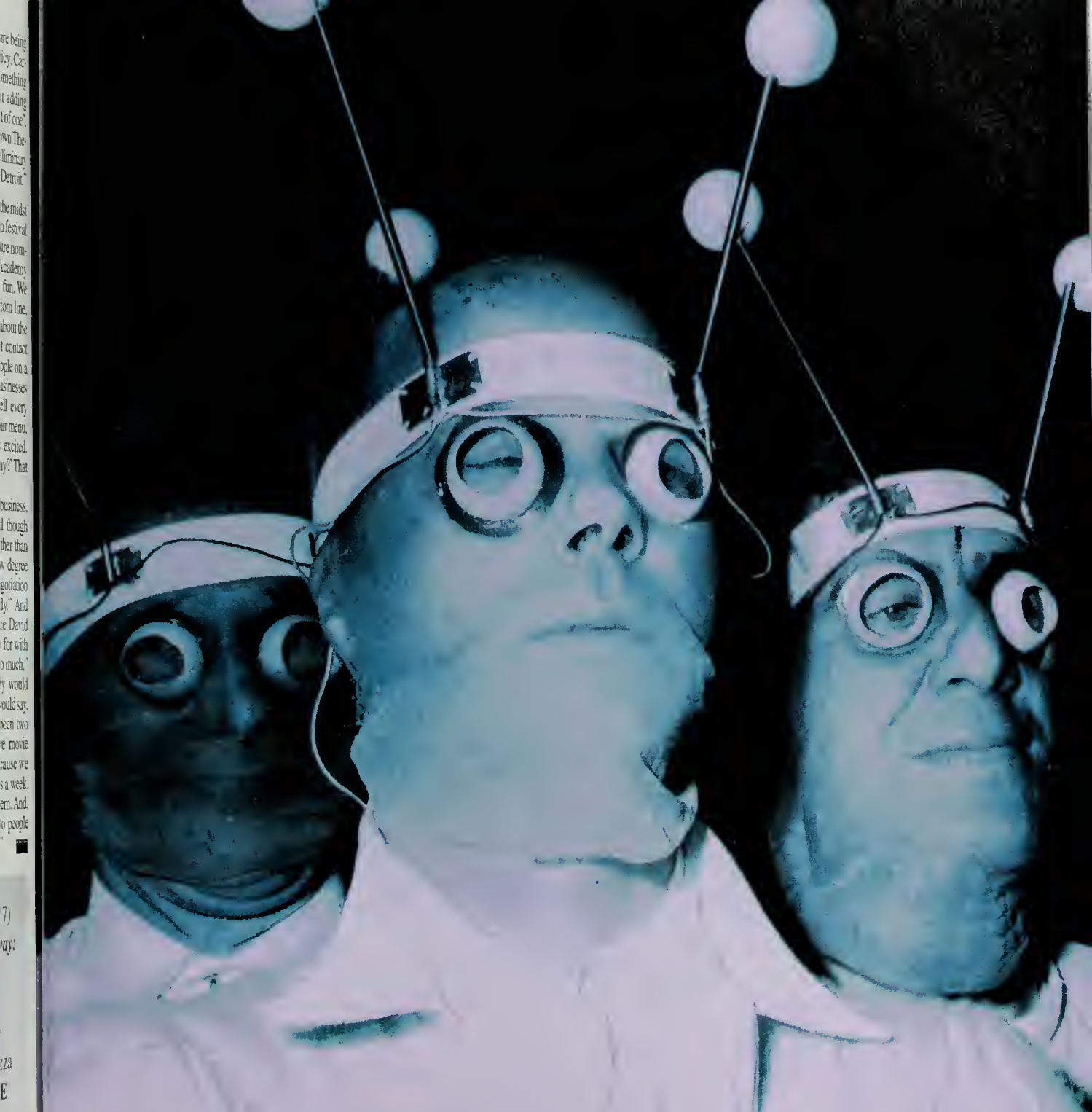
Currently, the Birmingham is in the midst of a "Best of the Academy" film festival that highlights all the best picture nominees and culminates in a huge Academy Awards night gala. Carole adds,"It's fun. We try to have fun. I guess that's the bottom line, right?" David says his favorite thing about the movie business is twofold: "You get contact with just a tremendous amount of people on a daily basis and it's one of the only businesses where you get a new product to sell every week. You're constantly changing your menu, so to speak. And people are always excited. 'Oh, what do you have opening Friday?' That makes it very rewarding."

Carole, who grew up in a family business, loves running one of her own. And though she's now focusing on exhibition rather than jurisprudence, she does find that law degree quite useful. "Whether it's a lease negotiation or whatever, it really comes in handy." And what they lack in exhibition experience, David and Carole have more than made up for with their passion. "We love the movies so much," says Carole. "Every time somebody would hear about us getting involved, they would say, 'You know what, it couldn't have been two better people because you guys are movie nuts.' People would laugh at us because we go to the movies probably four times a week. We go all the time. We just live for them. And, of course, we imitate every line. So people thought it was just such a perfect fit."

The New Birmingham Theatre
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Birmingham, MI 48009
(810) 647-5678
Owners: Carole Ilitch Trepeck, David Trepeck, Bill Herting

Earliest Movie Memory:
Carole: "The Strongest Man in the World" (1975). I just thought was so great to be independent at what, 11 or 12 or whatever we were. To go to the movies was so fun—such freedom.

David: "Star Wars" (1977)
Favorite Vacation Getaway:
David: Aspen
Carole: Telluride
Favorite Concession:
Both: Little Caesar's Pizza
Favorite* BOXOFFICE *Feature:
Carole: David likes the Trailers.
David: The Independent Showcase is obviously close to our hearts. It's a great honor to be considered.
Advice to other Independents:
Both: Keep things unique and give a choice of product.



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SERVICE MAN

R/C Theatres President and CEO J. Wayne Anderson Follows in the Footsteps of B.V. 'Sturdy' Sturdivant

by Pat Kramer

President and chief operating officer of R/C Theatre Management Corporation J. Wayne Anderson is this year's winner of ShoWest's B.V. Sturdivant Award. Presented each year to an individual for his or her extraordinary service to and on behalf of the exhibition industry, the Sturdivant honor is going to Anderson for his work in exhibition on both the state and national levels.



As head of the 150-screen R/C Theatres chain where he's worked for over 25 years, Anderson last year received NATO's Gold Medal of Exhibition Award. Now serving his 10th year on NATO's board of directors, Anderson has certainly been one of its most active representatives: He is the founder and chairman of the newly-formed NATO Blue Ribbon Committee; he's served as chairman and co-chair of the Technical Advancement Committee, as well as the chairman of the Codes Task Force Committee; he's a member of the food and building code committees; and he co-authored the NATO ADA Handbook. Through his extensive efforts, he has helped raise technical standards for the entire industry.

Key to that process has been Anderson's work in bringing polyester film into wider usage in America and pushing to have film distributed on 6,000 foot reels. "For about the past 20 years, I've put a lot of time into trying to get our film distributed on 6,000 foot reels. With a 'big thanks' to D. Barry Reardon [president of Warner Bros. Distribution] and people like him, I think it's really going to come into being. We should see film going out in April or May on 6,000 foot reels delivered to the theatres. That's a big accomplishment."

In the case of bringing polyester film into wider use here in America, Anderson journeyed to Europe as chairman of NATO's Technical Committee, along with vice chairman Larry Jacobson of AMC, and studied the use of polyester film. What he discovered is revolutionizing the industry. "We feel it decreases potential breakdowns, it's stronger, it seems to scratch less, it provides better presentations and the film itself is much, much longer." As a result of Anderson's efforts, 80 to 85 percent of the film stock used in distribution prints is now on polyester film.

Commenting on the work he's done on behalf of improving technology, Anderson credits all those on NATO's technical committee in helping emphasize the importance of quality sound and projection. "In the old days, they put a whole lot more emphasis on the marble and chandeliers, the glitz and the glamour. Now, you have glitz and glamour, obviously, but there's more emphasis being put on the projection and the quality of sound on the screen than before."

To remain competitive in this industry, Anderson believes theatre owners must continue to build the best theatres featuring the latest technology, something he says is not so easy to do. "It's very difficult to do today because the big circuits are building better theatres. I give everybody credit for building better theatres today.

"Those that don't build the best, the latest in technology, will not be in business for long in the 21st century," he notes. "The best theatres are going to survive and the ones that are not as good will go by the wayside."

Regarding his years of service to NATO, Anderson expresses his dedication and love for exhibition, saying "Many people feel that I've put a lot of volunteer time in to do things for the good of our industry. I just love the industry—I want it to be strong and I want it to stay forever and ever. And we have to give it a lot for it to be strong. If it's strong, everybody benefits."

On being chosen to receive the B.V. Sturdivant Award, Anderson says he couldn't be more honored. He recalls some advice his father gave him: "When you do a job, do it to the best of your ability and try to exceed even beyond that. Because just doing the job, that's what you're getting paid to do, and you should not expect anything for it. But if you excel and do more than is expected, and you continue to do your best, somebody's going to recognize it and you will be rewarded in life with great things. And this award certainly seems to be one.

"I honestly couldn't be more overwhelmed to be given an award named after B. V. Sturdivant. I know there's a lot of other prestigious awards out there. But 'Sturdy' Sturdivant put more into the industry than he took out and that to me is a great, great man." He adds, "I'm trying to follow in 'Sturdy' Sturdivant's footsteps; I hope I can put more into the industry than I take out."

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Steve never realized how much he liked Swedish Fish... until he took them to the movies.

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MAKING A STAND

Bruce Proctor Receives NAC'S Bert Nathan Memorial Award

by Pat Kramer

For demonstrating a positive leadership direction, contributing significantly to the development and professionalism of the concessions industry, and making honorable accomplishments adding to the longevity of the industry, the National Association of Concessionaires has chosen Bruce Proctor, president of Proctor Companies, as the recipient of the 1997 Bert Nathan Memorial Award. The award is named after the late Bert Nathan, a past president of the NAC and a leader in the industry.

An active member of the NAC Board of Directors since his election as a director in 1989, Proctor was named chairman of the NAC's marketing/membership committee in 1994. Under his direction, the committee produced a high-tech promotional video, spotlighting NAC's benefits and promoting the concession industry. The video went on to win the 1996 Gold Circle Award, sponsored annually by the American Society of Association Executives, for the best in association publishing and public relations work. In addition to his leading role with the NAC, Proctor has been active in the International Theatre Equipment Association.

Acknowledging his receipt of the Bert Nathan Award, Bruce Proctor states, "I feel flattered to be included among such an elite group of individuals. I admire and respect those who have been previously recognized," adding "Bert Nathan was indeed a good friend of the family."

Bruce Proctor comes from a family dedicated to improving and enhancing the exhibition industry through the creation of innovative concession counters and quality equipment. Having joined his father's business 25 years ago, Proctor worked his way up through all phases of the company's operations, including counter installation, the design of concession stand layouts and the running of company operations. Since Proctor was named president in 1986, revenues have doubled.

Proctor attributes this success to Proctor Co.'s innovative concession stand designs. "My company builds the best-looking money printing press in the business," he jokes, alluding to the money well-organized concession stands help exhibitors generate. Says Proctor, "We build very efficient concession stands and also dress them up and make them look very attractive. They crank out revenues like crazy!"



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Proctor Co.'s current claim to fame is the state-of-the-art concession stand it built for General Cinemas' Shoppers World complex in Framingham, Mass., which is among the most successful theatre concession operations in the United States. Featuring an expanded menu and a custom-designed concession stand over 120 feet long, the complex incorporates a "pass-through" design borrowed from fast-food chains. Consisting of three separate bars—one for food preparation, a second for storing pre-boxed popcorn, pre-poured drinks, hot foods and other concession foods, and the third for displaying concession tools and candy—the Proctor design offers faster accessibility and thus better service to patrons.

Commenting on the innovations his company has brought to the concessions industry, Proctor states, "We've built a solid reputation for providing innovative revenue-generating concession stands where a pass-through design is incorporated to accommodate an expanded menu—that's the latest, greatest thing in my business. When you have expanded menus to attract more people and you have large venue complexes, you have to turn up the heat and do it faster. [Our design is] faster, and that's what makes Framingham so successful."

To stay on top of changing trends, Proctor says he is constantly doing research, exploring other food service venues to find applicable ideas for an evolving industry. "I'll tour stadiums and look at food courts—it's a drag to go out for a quick bite to eat with me. We're constantly working on the ergonomics of food court design: how can we serve customers quicker? It really becomes a mathematical game. If there are too many people in line, the people in the back of the line tend to lose interest. We have to make transactions happen faster."

Paying tribute to Proctor's accomplishments, NAC president David R. Scoco says, "His family legacy of service to the industry, commitment to customer service and willingness to embrace technological advances in the design and programming of concessions facilities are just three indications of his worthiness to receive this coveted award. Since accepting my appointment to serve as chairman of the marketing/membership committee, Bruce's contributions are significant, yielding a new and improved approach to the promotion of our association."

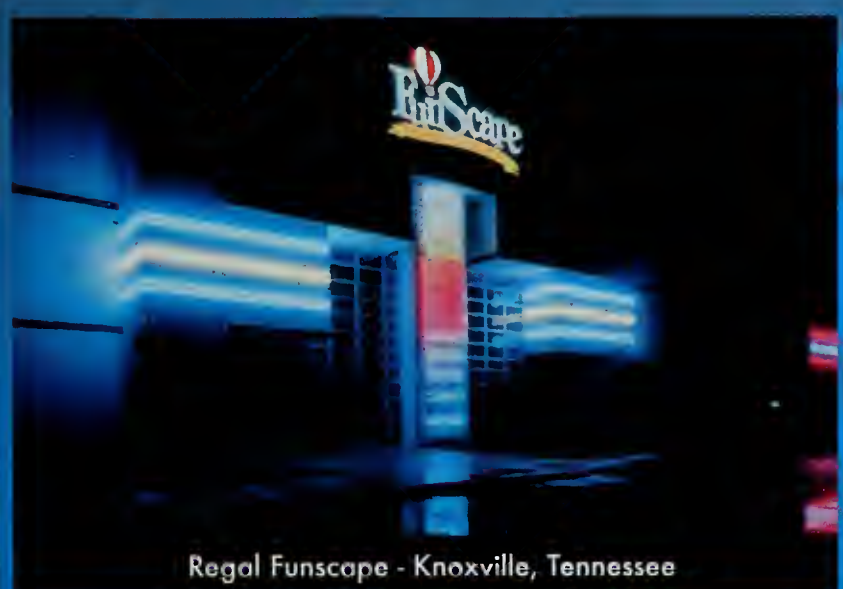
Bruce Proctor joins previous recipients Bill Chaplain, Norman Chesler, Evan Gordon and Jack Leonard, among many others, in receiving the Bert Nathan Award.



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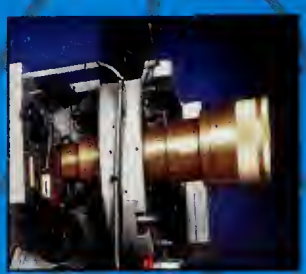


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FRONT & CENTER

John Greiner's Better Idea Nabs 1997 Customer Service Award

by Wade Major

In the "Information Age," there's nothing more frustrating than insufficient information, and nowhere has there been a more dire need for information than the current and ongoing expansion of multiplexes. With larger complexes now showing upwards of 20 different films, many patrons have begun to find convenience supplanted by confusion, overwhelmed by too many choices and too little guidance.

But there is light at the end of the tunnel, and plenty of it according to John Greiner, West Division Training Manager for AMC Theatres. "What we do is to take a highly-trained employee on with strong people skills and given them the tools to proactively help patrons as they approach the theatre. This is mainly done during high-volume periods where they're able to intercept customers before they have questions. Or, if they have questions, they're able to find this person because they are highly visible."

Greiner's innovative "411 Front Pad Person" program, originally implemented at AMC's Burbank 28 complex, has already earned him widespread accolades, including ShoWest '97's coveted Customer Service Award. The idea is elegantly simple: informed employees are made available near a larger complex's admissions area to help customers decide on what film they'd like to see.

The industry hosannas are appreciated, but Greiner's greatest satisfaction still comes from the reaction of customers and patrons, many of whom have written letters in praise of the Front Pad Person program, named for the one-hundred square foot "Front Pad" area immediately adjacent to most AMC multiplex boxoffices. "The response from the public was overwhelming," says Greiner. "We found we were not only meeting the customers' expectations, we were exceeding them. We were making it much more convenient for them, taking a little bit of the hassle out of the experience. Our patrons are now at a point where they look for this person if there's a lot of activity."

Greiner is quick to point out, however, that the Front Pad Person is more than just a theatre employee with a showtime schedule. "They have brochures with synopses of the movies, showtimes, maps for parking, restaurant information, locations of ATMs, directions to the freeways, information on our MovieWatcher program, information on when movies are available for seating, release dates of coming attractions and sometimes even detailed information on stars, directors and the credits of films. Most importantly, they're in communi-



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cation with theatre operations to facilitate crowd control, so they know if a film is sold out, whether seats are available for a given film and when a customer can next see it. When it gets extremely busy, like it did for 'Independence Day,' we provide two people and a manager as well as a mobile concession stand."

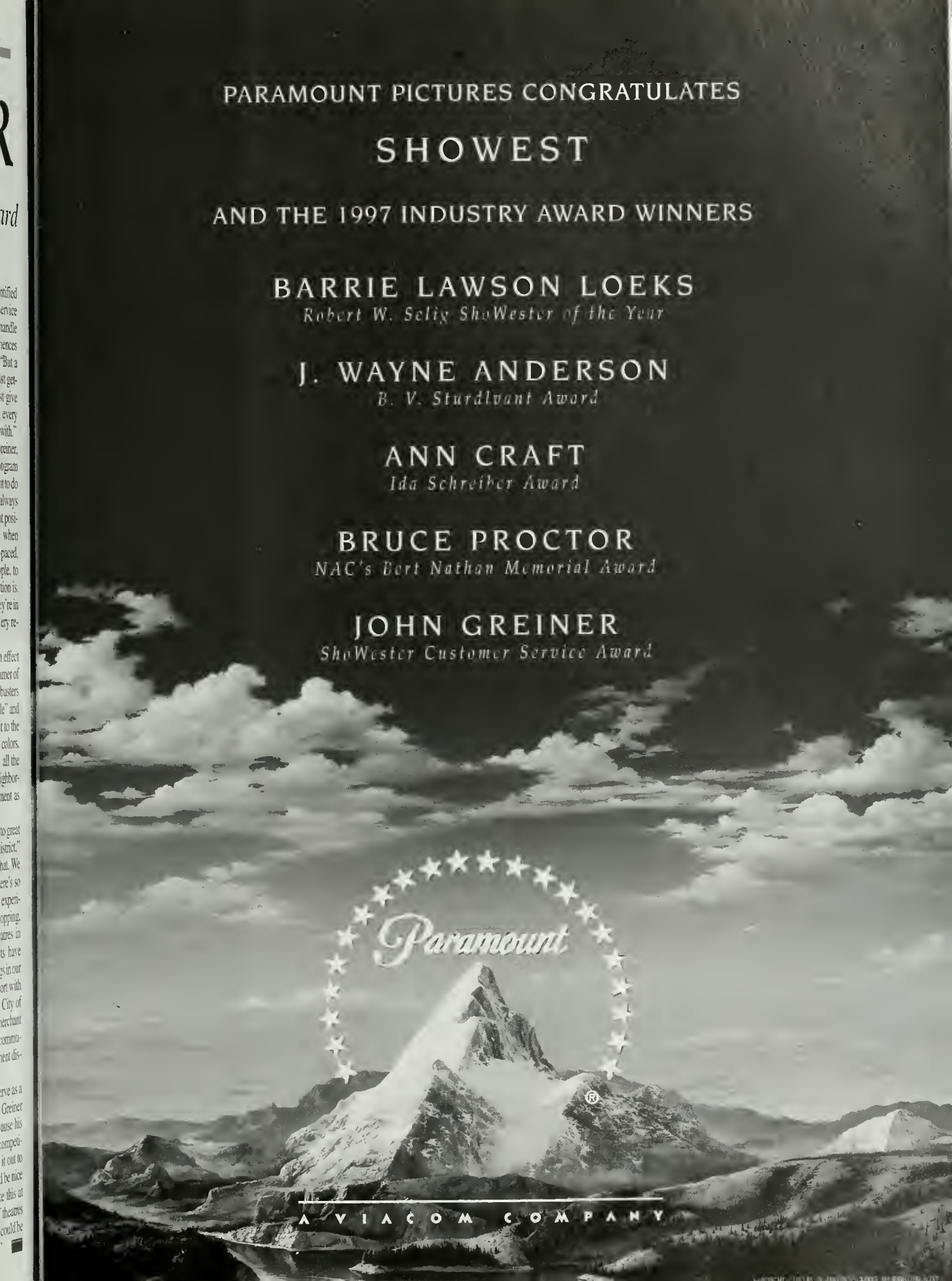
Key to maintaining such a high level of service is AMC's specialized training, wherein staff members with exemplary communications and customer service skills are identified and recruited for a series of customer service seminars. "We teach things like how to handle customers, how to turn negative experiences into positive ones," says Greiner. "But a lot of it comes from experience, just getting used to the operation. We just give them the tools to answer virtually every question a customer can come up with."

An unexpected bonus, adds Greiner, has been the enormous effect the program has had on staff morale. "They want to do it. It's a fun job. Staff members are always trying to be trained into getting that position. And they're very excited when they're scheduled for it. It's fast-paced, they get to deal with a lot of people, to move around and be where the action is. Most importantly, they feel like they're in charge of something. And that's very rewarding for them."

While the program has been in effect since late 1995, it wasn't until summer of 1996 that the release of such blockbusters as "Twister," "Mission: Impossible" and "Independence Day" finally put it to the test, which it passed with flying colors. Greiner, however, refuses to take all the credit, citing cooperation with neighboring merchants and local government as equally essential components.

"The City of Burbank has gone to great lengths to create an entertainment district," says Greiner, "and AMC is a part of that. We have three complexes in Burbank. There's so much more than just the moviegoing experience to this area. Burbank provides shopping, nightlife, restaurants, with movie theatres in the heart of that. A lot of merchants have bounced back promotions, and meetings in our mall have produced an excellent rapport with other businesses in the area. And the City of Burbank is very cooperative as far as merchant meetings and developing a sense of community with merchants and the entertainment district. It's very easy in Burbank."

But will the Burbank experience serve as a model for the rest of the country? Greiner thinks it can, and judging by the applause his idea has generated even among his competitors, he may be right. "I'd like to roll it out to the entire company," he says. It would be nice if we had an established program like this at every AMC. It is currently in a lot of theatres and every one is unique, but I think it could be incorporated by the whole company."


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HONING HER CRAFT

Theatre Owners of Indiana's Ann Craft Wins Ida Schreiber Honor for Philanthropic Contributions to the Industry

by Pat Kramer



Ann L. Craft, whose involvement with the Theatre Owners of Indiana has spanned 50 years, serving as general manager and corporate secretary among other titles, is this year's recipient of ShoWest's distinguished Ida Schreiber Award. The Schreiber Award honors women who have made significant philanthropic and/or humanitarian contributions to their communities. Serving as a NATO board member and on the board of Variety Club of Indiana, Ann Craft has been invaluable to the industry—and Indiana.

As a registered lobbyist, Craft has bolstered the efforts of the Theatre Owners of Indiana for the past 30 years, representing them on all important issues including legislation, public relations and all types of business codes, rules and regulations. For instance, Craft was instrumental in writing Indiana's obscenity statutes to reflect the language of Supreme Court rulings so that Indiana theatres would not be harassed by unconstitutionally harsh laws. "Indiana has no admissions taxes, no censorship and no sales tax on tickets or film rentals," says Craft. She adds, "Indiana was the 17th state to pass anti-blind bidding legislation in the late '70s." Thanks to Craft's lobbying, "trade screenings are now regularly held in Indianapolis."

She has also represented theatre owners in defeating a proposed requirement that would have forced those operating motion picture projectors to be licensed by the state. Another coup for Craft was getting legislation passed in the early '70s that abolished daylight savings time in the eastern time zone of the state. Says Craft, "Drive-in theatres and other exhibitors were noticing a drop in admissions during the two years we were on daylight savings time." Since that time, Craft has lobbied each year to maintain that status. Additionally, Kentucky theatre owners have also benefitted from her work in the form of tax relief legislation.

As an executive officer with the Theatre Owners of Indiana, Craft has handled all the association's corporate matters, developing a possible business climate for owners and operators of Indiana's motion picture theatres.

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1997

Craft has also been active in bringing the state's filmmakers recognition, helping create an annual film directory for the State of Indiana, which includes all the information of interest in the exhibition industry. She's also been involved with the Indiana Division of Film Development since its inception, serving as event coordinator for the highly-lauded world premiere of "Hoosiers." (Released in 1986, the film stars Gene Hackman as a small-town high school basketball coach and is based on the true story of a team in Milan, Indiana that won the state title). Craft also sits on the advisory board of the Heartland Film Festival.

For her multifaced efforts in the state of Indiana, Craft has received several prestigious awards including the Governor's Award for Sagamore of the Wabash, the highest honor in the state; and Kentucky's honorary title as a Kentucky Colonel for her association work. From the Indiana Academy of Family Physicians, she has earned a certificate of commendation while the Indiana Society of Association Executives awarded Craft the President's Award in 1989 and the Association Executive of the Year in 1990. Continuing to make contributions whenever she can, Craft regularly speaks to students at Purdue University, sharing her insight on women in business and legislation at college seminars.

Despite her many accomplishments, Craft is humble about winning ShoWest's Ida Schreiber Award. "It's an honor I never would have thought would come my way. I'm thrilled beyond belief that it would be awarded to me. In this industry, it's pretty much the highest honor I could get."

Having worked in the exhibition industry for 50 years now, Craft says of her longevity, "I think this industry, like no other that I'm aware of, is one you either like or you don't. And if you like it, it hooks you—it's what you want to do. Everything else pales in comparison. Branches of it are very demanding, you work strange and different hours and it can be extremely frustrating. But it's one of the most active and exciting of all industries." To that she adds, "The award is the icing on the cake—it's something very special. It sort of tells me that someplace, somewhere, the way I chose to do [my job] must have been right and helpful."

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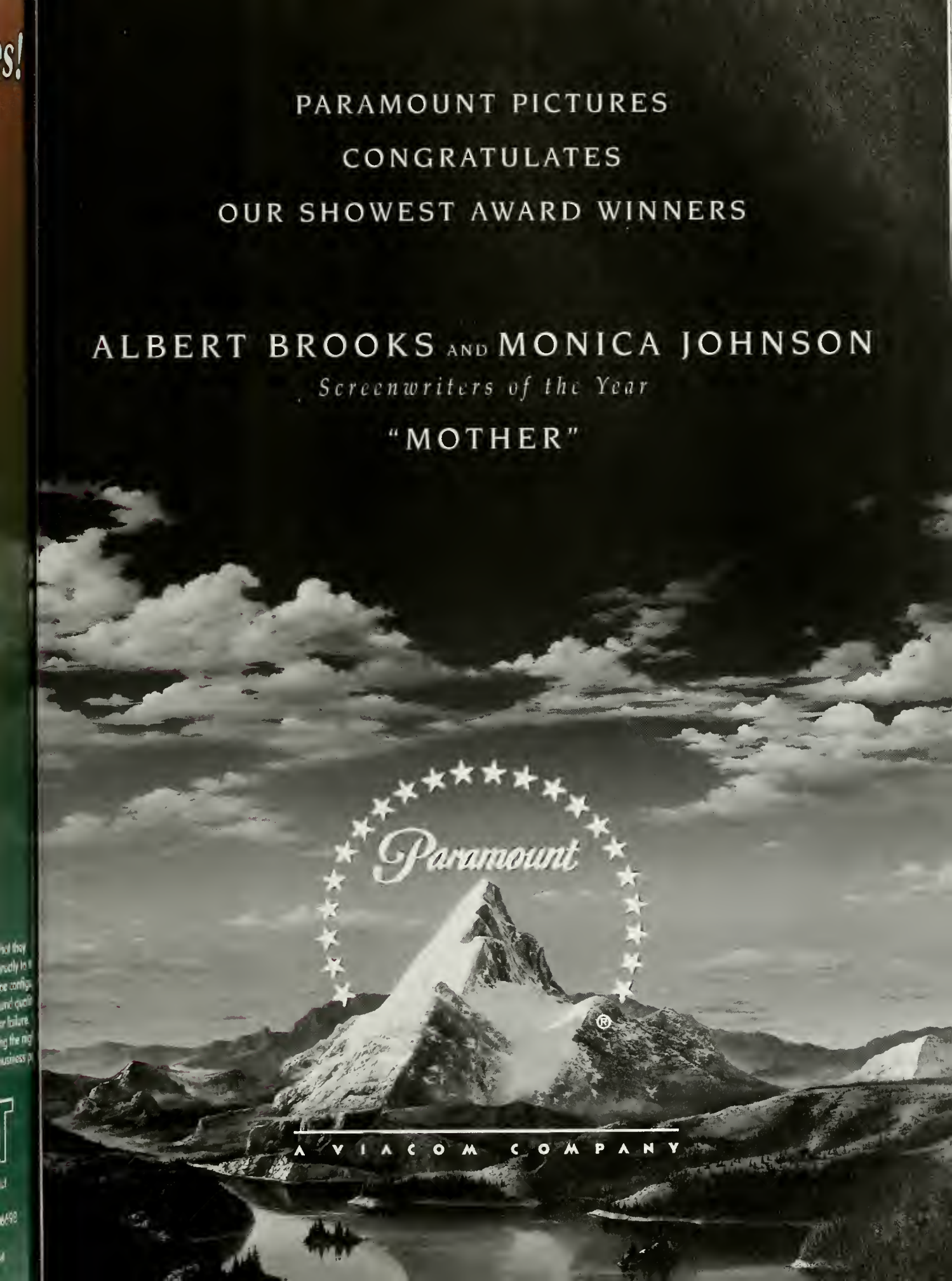
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Ann L. Craft

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Barrie Loeks

Customer Service Award

John Greiner

Star Awards

Actor Of The Year

Denzel Washington

Actress Of The Year

Winona Ryder

Director Of The Year

Joel Schumacher

Producer Of The Year

Arnon Milchan

Screenwriter Of The Year

Albert Brooks & Monica Johnson

Supporting Actress

Elizabeth Hurley

Supporting Actor

Cuba Gooding, Jr.

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Supporting Actor of the Year

ELIZABETH HURLEY
Supporting Actress of the Year

HOWIE LONG
Male Star of Tomorrow

CLAIRE DANES
Female Star of Tomorrow

WILL SMITH
International Box Office Achievement (Actor)

ALEX LINZ
Young Star of the Year

ALBERT BROOKS
MONICA JOHNSON
Screenwriter of the Year

BARRIE LAWSON LOEKS
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JOEL SCHUMACHER
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DENZEL WASHINGTON
ACTOR OF THE YEAR

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B.V. STURDIVANT AWARD

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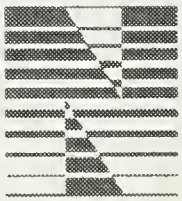
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J. Wayne Anderson

B. V. Sturdivant

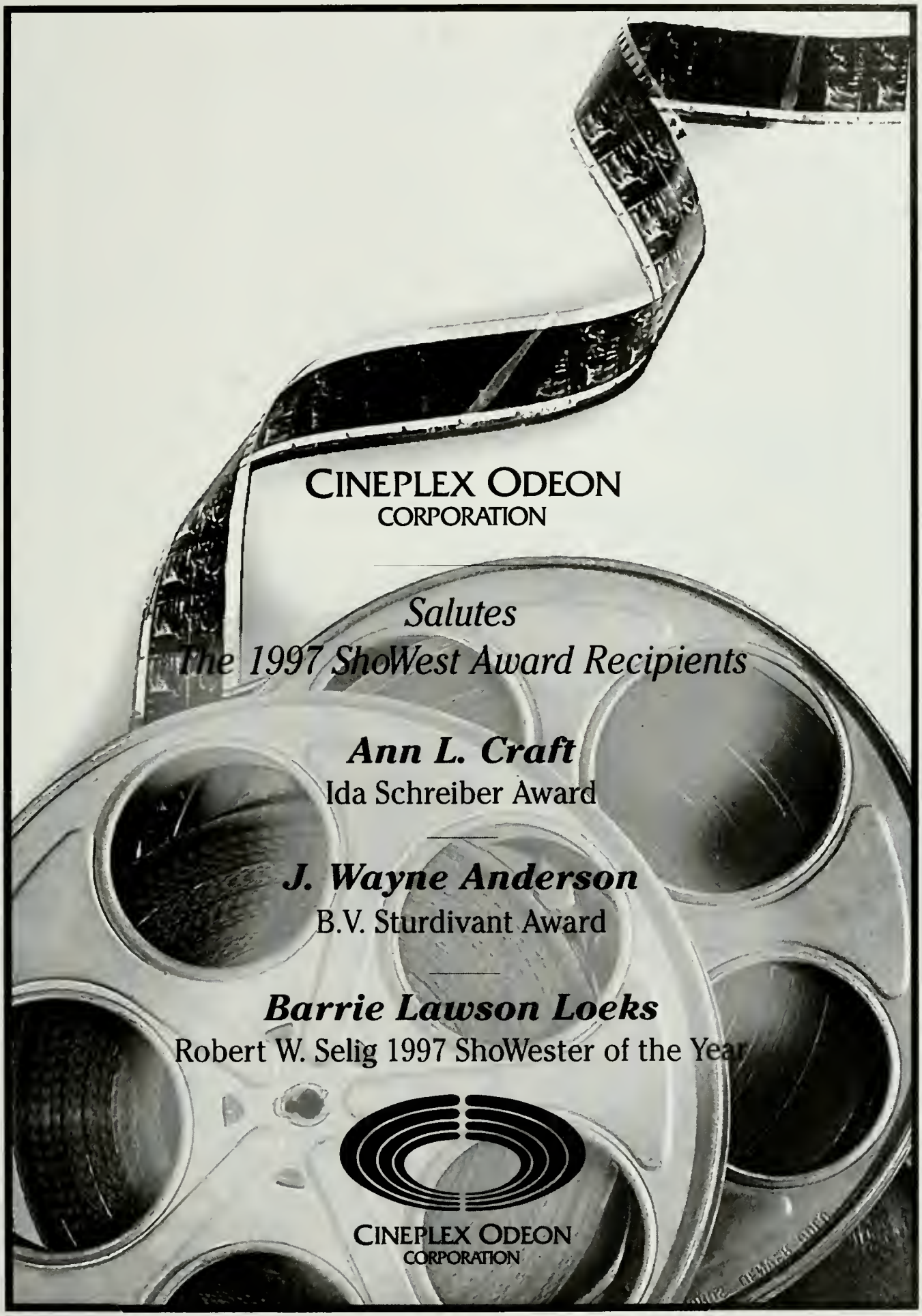
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Ida Schreiber Award



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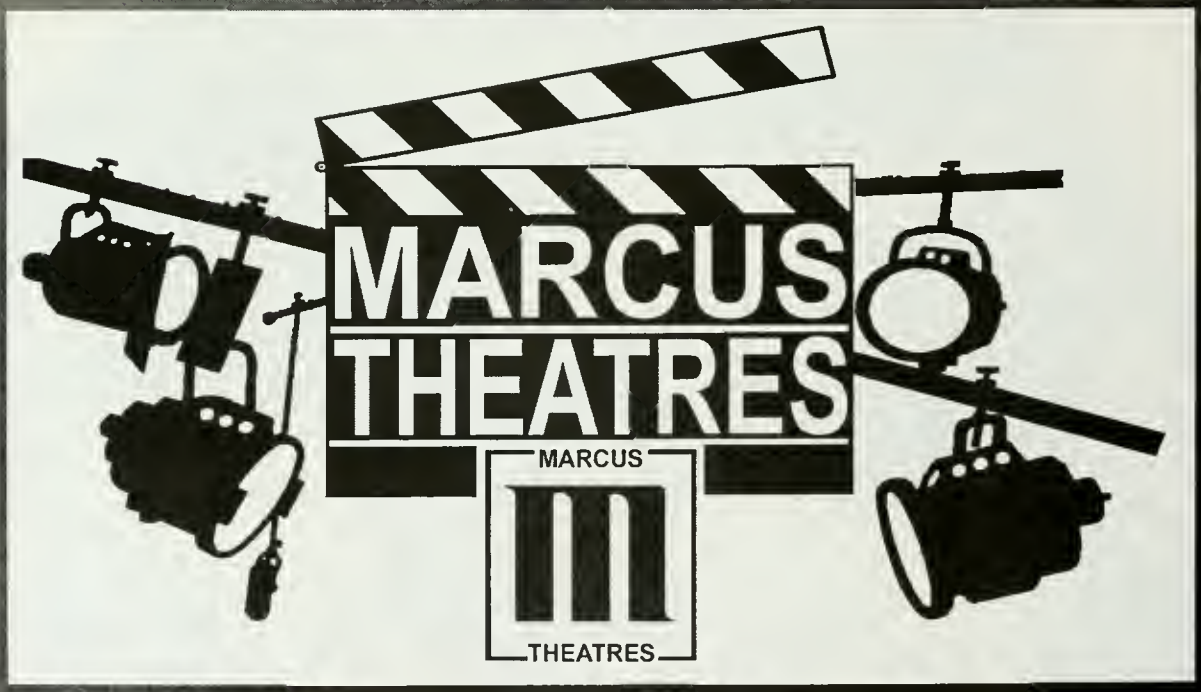
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ANN CRAFT

Ida Schreiber Award

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1997 ShoWest Intro: A Special Supplement

BOXOFFICE MAGAZINE, April 1997, Part II:
The 1997 ShoWest Intro

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An Open Letter to All ShoWest Delegates

by Daniel Wheatcroft
President
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ShoWest began 23 years ago as a forum for the motion picture industry to display its upcoming product. Now, as the only international gathering devoted exclusively to the movie business, it attracts the most powerful people in filmmaking: the exhibitors, directors, producers, studio executives and the stars responsible for creating and distributing the most successful motion pictures in the world.

ShoWest is the only place where studios, along with their featured talent, market their upcoming product in unique, customized, exclusive presentations. During the convention, the entertainment and business world focus their attention on ShoWest to decide which product and celebrities will emerge to win the year's boxoffice race.

The convention is a convention of "firsts." Not only do major studios use ShoWest to unveil previews of their films, ShoWest's panels and workshops deal with issues important to the *business* of showbusiness. The wraps on new theatre technologies and inventions are also removed for the first time at ShoWest's trade show.

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MARCH 3-6
1997

What's New at ShoWest '97...

• The keynote speech has been moved! The keynote speech for ShoWest in 1997 will be on Monday, March 3 at 6 p.m. The keynote address will be given by Frank Mancuso, chairman and CEO of MGM.

Also on Monday will be the presentation of the ShoWester of the Year Award, exhibition's biggest honor, to Sony Theatres' Barrie Lawson Loeks—don't miss it!

• The ShoWest Awards will be broadcast *live* this year. Coca-Cola will again host the awards to be telecast on TNT, this time from the MGM Grand Garden. It will be an exciting new format, and every delegate will have a great seat for the telecast.

• The Awards will feature a new award for Favorite Movie of the Year. Movie patrons from all over the U.S. will have had a chance to vote on their favorite movie of the year from February 7 through March 5. The winner will be announced on the telecast March 6.

• The trade show will be held in the Pavilion on Bally's backlot again. We have made a few improvements. We've added more space, added booths and changed the entry point. Instead of entering the pavilion by way of the parking lot, delegates will enter by the pool and tennis court area of Bally's. This shortens the walk significantly!

• One of the most exciting opportunities this year is the change in the seminars and workshops. While in the past seminars have been a question and answer session with a moderator, under the new format each panel will offer industry leaders a forum to deliver a 4-6 minute presentation. This will allow speakers to develop and deliver concise, meaningful information to delegates as part of an overall panel addressing a predefined topic. After the panel is completed, delegates will have an opportunity to attend workshop sessions in smaller groups of 75 to 100. These workshops, facilitated by industry leaders, will expand on the panel topics, offering an environment for open discussion and an exchange of information. The smaller size of the workshops allows for an interactive exchange of ideas.

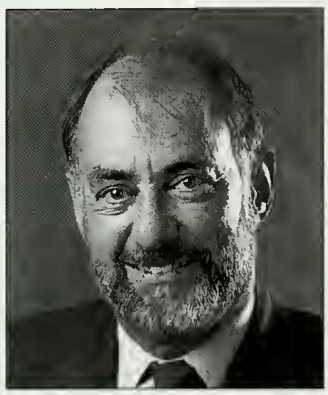
The challenge for the producers of ShoWest is how to address the many different interests represented and to keep ShoWest the place to do the *business* of our business. We hope the changes we've made for 1997—some big, some small and all designed with you in mind—will make your trip to ShoWest productive, efficient and (of course) fun!



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We Go Global

by William F. Kartozian
President
National Association of Theatre Owners (NATO)



NATO and NATO's official convention, ShoWest, share an odd circumstance: their names are simultaneously edging deeper and deeper into the realm of misnomer.

ShoWest has long ago outgrown its roots as a mere West Coast convention; executives from every state in the nation now consider it a must-attend event and roughly one third of our delegates now hail from Europe, Asia, Latin America and other points outside the United States. Were it not for the considerable forces of tradition, sentiment and brand-name identification, the convention would now probably be universally identified as "ShoWorld."

Similarly, the "National" Association of Theatre Owners—which already counts numerous exhibitors abroad among its members—is itself taking on increasingly international dimensions.

Non-U.S. theatre owners who have long considered joining NATO will be interested to learn that the association has just expanded its services in the worldwide arena.

In addition to receiving complimentary copies of NATO's publications—among them the monthly NATO News, the annual Encyclopedia of Exhibition and the "America Goes to the Movies" hardback—NATO's international members will now receive "NATO International Passports," which provide introduction and entree into selected U.S. cinemas. U.S. theatre companies participating in the passport program will offer complete tours of their facilities while answering questions about American operations, customer service, concessions and equipment. As a bonus, international membership provides $50 discounts on registrations to both of exhibition's hottest events: ShoWest and ShowEast.

In the next few weeks, we plan to launch an open membership campaign asking exhibitors from around the world to join NATO. Once aboard, international members will discover the extraordinary benefits of being linked to fellow exhibitors and sharing both our collective know-how and the data from our investigations into moviegoer habits, new technology, disability accommodation, video release windows, and so on.

I have every confidence that theatre owners abroad will appreciate the same sense of value that our association's American members have long enjoyed. NATO, like ShoWest, is attaining its worldwide standing for a reason: long before it went global, it was the world's biggest and best.

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Response No. 155

To Join or Not to Join.... That Is the Question

by Mary Ann Grasso
Vice President and Executive Director
National Association of Theatre Owners (NATO)



Why on earth should I join NATO?" "What do I need them for? They can't help me buy film. What good are they to me?" If you've ever asked these questions, you're right about one thing. NATO can't help you buy film. However, NATO is involved in issues that directly affect the entire industry. A good example is the work we are doing to preserve the "window" between theatrical and video release dates. There are a world of services we offer that are essential to the health and success of your theatre operation.

NATO is the only national trade association in the world for movie theatre owners. We exist to serve the business, legislative and technical interests of theatre owners in the United States and around the world. NATO facilitates Exhibition's ability to interact with our friends in Distribution on all matters of mutual interest and concern. In just the past few years alone, NATO, in concert with Distribution and the technical community, has assisted in the research, design and development of the 6000-foot reel, which is set to debut in April. We work closely with the MPAA and our state and regional units on legislative issues, including film rental and amusement taxes and First Amendment matters. We continue to work with the Department of Justice regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act. And though we couldn't prevent the recent minimum wage increase, we *were* able to impact it to our best advantage.

Many theatre owners believe that NATO exists just for the "big guy." It just isn't so. Yes, most of the large circuits are part of the NATO family. But of the more than 16,000 screens we represent in the U.S., 93 percent belong to members with between one and 50 screens; two percent belong to members with between 50 and 100 screens; and 5 percent belong to NATO members with more than 100 screens.

Many of our services are specifically designed to serve the needs of the small independent operator. Some benefits of NATO membership: A $50 discount on each ShoWest and ShowEast registration; discounts on Health, Liability and Casualty Insurance; a complimentary subscription to NATO News, the official NATO newsletter; a complimentary copy of our annual Encyclopedia of Exhibition; a free handbook detailing your responsibilities in complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act; and public domain music for quality lobby and auditorium use, provided at cost in either CD or cassette formats—allowing theatre owners to avoid ASCAP or BMI fees.

We are also developing an eight-volume set of affordably priced employee training tapes on the following topics: Concessions; Ushering; Running the Boxoffice; Safety; ADA Compliance; and Preventing Sexual Harrassment.

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To join NATO you must be a theatre owner. Your theatre must be open to the public on a "for profit" basis. We like our members to become involved, so don't be surprised if we ask you to consider volunteering for some of our NATO Committees, such as the Marketing Committee; the Committee on Theatre Operations; or the Independent Theatre Owners Committee. We want you to be a part of the organization.

We think we have the best members on earth, and we credit our success to all of them. We think you'll enjoy being part of such a vibrant, active group. In the coming months, NATO will launch a worldwide membership campaign inviting theatre owners around the world to join with us.

We hope when the invitation to join NATO comes across your desk that the answer will be "Yes!" Once you see what NATO membership can do for you, we're confident "to join or not to join?" won't be the question. The real question will be, "Why didn't I join sooner?"

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Now, More Than Ever!

by David Scoco
President
National Association of Concessionaires (NAC)



In this ever-changing, ever-fascinating world we live in, the need to examine and evaluate the relevance of our business judgements is ever-increasing. As managers, executives or investors, we need to know the potential return on each expenditure. The technology available today affords the opportunity to develop tracking and statistical tools limited only by the imagination of the person seeking information.

The environment in which we operate, with its inherent financial and competitive challenges, demands vigilance. Whether the item at issue is a 30 screen megaplex or a high-tech, star-laden blockbuster hopeful, success is never certain, and often unrealized. Now, more than ever, the hue and cry of management is "What have you done for me lately?" Contrasting results with forecasts—of construction costs, boxoffice receipts, concession per capita spending or revenue per screen—remains a primary focus of our industry.

The indispensable concept is still to develop systems that can be sustained over the long run. Posting consistently improved results is an essential (and difficult) goal to achieve. An integrated strategy, featuring a palpable corporate culture, adequate and well-directed resources, and enthusiastic, truly empowered employees, is necessary to even consider an elevated level of organizational quest.

This contemporary managerial landscape sounds rather bleak. Whether one's view is short or long term, day-to-day obligations require significant commitment and stamina. A comprehensive, strategic approach to business can be crowded out by events of the moment.

How then does the rich message of professional development presented by a non-profit industry association affect the sometimes cynical and cluttered consciousness of today's manager? Does membership in or service to such an organization fit the complex constructs of an active career? I respectfully submit that it does—*Now, more than ever!*

Pundits, professors and philosophers agree that the probability for success increases in proportion to the amount of knowledge possessed by the seeker. Although not their sole mission, many trade organizations would be pleased with a description that proclaims them clearinghouses of knowledge. Let's define "knowledge" as follows:

- Access to current industry data.
- Awareness of essential product and service providers.
- Professional development opportunities.
- Forums for peer interaction and affirmation.
- Timely receipt of industry news.
- Basic skill training materials.

These are the fundamental attributes offered by most industry organizations. Armed with this knowledge, the manager or senior executive has many of the requisite tools for accomplishing objectives. Add to this mix a potential competitive advantage over non-participants and the sense of community an association confers, and one's odds for success become dramatically more favorable.

The vicissitudes of professional life in the '90s must be considered when weighing the need for affiliation with such a group. In the face of a fiscally-oriented review, how would the membership and other event-based fees play out in an ROI or discounted cash flow IRR computation?

The results would yield a resounding, "Now, more than ever!" Collected funds are returned manyfold to all members via the services, publications and events presented by the association. Additional positive returns come from the expanded business opportunities and promotional activities resulting from member-designed programs.

On all counts, active participation in serious and earnest industry associations brings positive returns. The motion picture industry and its related trades are blessed with excellent organizations that target specific segments and users. The only way to reap the rewards is to join the action—Now, more than ever!

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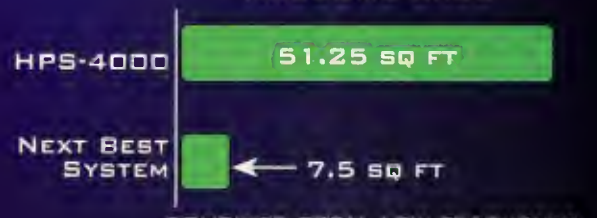
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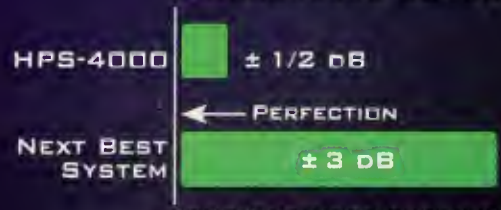
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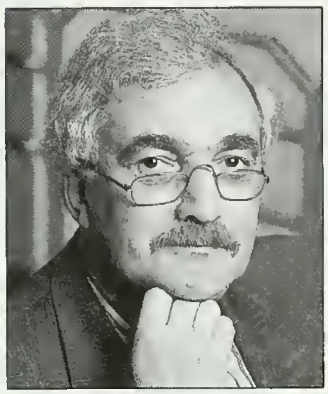
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Response No. 181

Two Decades of Sound Progress

by Ioan Allen
President
International Theatre Equipment Association (ITEA)



In January, nearly 20 years after its premiere in May of 1977, "Star Wars" was rereleased. Along with "Close Encounters of the Third Kind"—another 1977 release—"Star Wars" focused attention on presentation quality in general, and on a new film sound format—35mm stereo optical—in particular.

This was not the first time, nor the last, that films of a certain genre set the pace technologically. In the 1950s, religious epics ("The Robe"), musicals ("Oklahoma!") and spectaculars ("Around the World in 80 Days") showcased the new widescreen formats with multichannel magnetic sound. More recently, films in the "Batman" and "Star Trek" series, "Jurassic Park," "Speed" and the like have been early adopters of multichannel digital sound.

Twenty Years Ago

To understand the impact that films like "Star Wars" had on presentation quality, consider what sound was like in the early 1970s. Stereo was available only by means of mag stripe, a costly process that had fallen into disuse at a time when attendance was in decline and theatres were closing at a rapid rate. Tripling the cost of a 35mm release print to accommodate four-track mag was such a luxury that no more than five percent of all releases were mixed in stereo, with only a handful of stereo prints struck. Moreover, due to high costs as well as the lack of prints, few theatres were maintaining their mag equipment.

Regardless of format, moreover, theatre playback quality left a lot to be desired. Speaker systems with passive crossovers frequently had a response hole in the critical 500 Hz region, and used high-frequency horns with a "honky" quality. Insufficient sound absorbent material behind the screen resulted in muddy dialogue. The wings offered with some loudspeakers to improve low-frequency response were often not installed or were removed (for firewood?), resulting in little response below 80 Hz. Power amps, too, were often inadequate, with many units still using tubes.

The Presentation Revolution

Then came the revolutionary Dolby Stereo optical soundtrack. While the first stereo optical title to make an impact was "A Star is Born" in December 1976, it was 1977's spectacular "big impact" films like "Star Wars" and "Close Encounters" that led both to many theatres equipping for the new format and to a skyrocketing audience awareness of its arrival. Just as important, the new format, being optical, incurred no cost premium to exhibitors.

As more "big" films like "Superman" and "Apocalypse Now" followed suit, more and more theatres became equipped for stereo optical sound, and audiences began to hear more and more theatrical features presented in stereo. True, the quality at first was often crude by today's standards. But a process of evolutionary improvement that continues to this day had been jump-started. Cinema processors with third-octave equalization helped standardize acoustic response and improve fidelity. SR, with its wider dynamic range, came along. Much better loudspeakers and power amplifiers, behind-screen damping, loudspeaker baffle walls, active crossovers, and increased attention to theatre acoustics have all helped to make today's audio experience far different from that of 20 years ago.

And then, of course, there's digital sound...

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The More Things Change

In the early days of stereo optical, given the literal and figurative "noise" made by films like "Star Wars," the new format was said to be appropriate only for "big" films and sci-fi epics. Of what use was spectacular stereo sound with an intimate drama or love story?

This misperception of the new technology's full potential didn't last forever, however. Quieter films such as "Days of Heaven" began to show that stereo sound didn't have to be spectacular, it could be more *involving* and *life-like*. And what film couldn't benefit from that? So the time came when the majority of films of all kinds were being released in stereo.

We pay tribute to those filmmakers who are the first to pick up and use the new tools that we on the technical side of the business create. Whether you use them sensationally or subtly to increase the reality of your vision, you're doing what it takes to keep audiences coming back for more.

Today with digital sound we're in a similar situation. Some say that digital sound is all well and good for thunderous dinosaur footfalls and big explosions. But why bother for more intimate, smaller scaled films?

The answer, of course, is the same as it was nearly 20 years ago. What film couldn't benefit from more *realistic* sound? What director wouldn't like to involve the audience even more in what's happening on the screen? And so today, some four years after its introduction in the theatre, films such as "Shine" and "The English Patient" are showing how digital sound is *better*, not just more spectacular, and a valuable new artistic tool for any director.

So on the 20th anniversary of "Star Wars," we'd like to pay tribute to those filmmakers who are the first to pick up and use the new tools that we on the technical side of the business create. Whether you use them sensationally or subtly to increase the reality of your vision, you're doing what it takes to keep audiences coming back for more.

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Response No. 86



SONY SUPERSTAR

Sony Theatres Co-Chair Barrie Lawson Loeks Honored As ShoWester of the Year *by Christine James*



SINGIN' IN THE RAIN: *Barrie Lawson Loeks, ShoWest '97's Robert W. Selig ShoWester awardee, 'pops' into Sony Theatres' flagship, the Lincoln Square.*

Barrie Lawson Loeks may come from a background in law, but a twist of fate saw her join the ranks of exhibition, and now showmanship is in her blood. Recognized as 1997's Robert W. Selig ShoWester of the Year, an award that honors an individual who has demonstrated a career-long dedication to the exhibition industry and its causes, Loeks has earned her place in exhibition history in partnership with husband Jim by building the Michigan-based Loeks-Star theatre chain, then going on to co-chair Sony Theatres, the ninth largest circuit in North America, with her spouse. Loeks, who has been involved with the National Association of Theatre Owners for many years and is currently running its governmental affairs committee, feels "very honored" to be named ShoWester of the Year. "I'm very pleased to have been chosen by my peers and colleagues in exhibition and distribution. It's a real pleasure."

Loeks began a career in law after graduating Phi Beta Kappa and earning her doctorate of jurisprudence degree from the University of Michigan. She started out as an associate in the Grand Rapids, Mich. law firm of Warner, Norcross & Judd before joining Jack Loeks Theatres Inc. as a vice president and general counsel.

"I was practicing law, and my husband was in his family theatre business," Loeks recounts. "And he wanted to branch out and build new theatres and expand and build in new areas, but didn't have any support staff to do that. He talked me into taking a leave of absence from my law firm and work with him to handle all the legal and real estate and development work. I took a leave of absence in 1982—and I guess I'm still on it," she laughs. "We've had a lot of fun."

BOXOFFICE
SPECIAL REPORT:
SHOWEST
1997

While working every day with your mate sounds like it could be a strain on most marriages, "for us, it's great," says Loeks. "Most people think we're out of our minds. Because most people don't feel they would want to spend that much time with their spouses, I guess. I think if we were both very similar in our abilities and what we like to do, it could be a problem. It works well for us because we have very different talents, and we respect each other's talents. We each realize that the other is a lot better at certain things. I think that's what makes it work. And because of that, we're not competitive. You each want the other one to do well and no one is trying to steal anyone's thunder. So it really is wonderful."

Being the chairman of a major circuit while also running the smaller, 82-screen Loeks Star subsidiary has given Loeks a unique perspective on the exhibition industry. "I think I've seen it from all sides," she says. "We started up our company from nothing. We had the classic story where we sold stock to all of our friends and took a third mortgage on the house and literally had not enough money to complete our first theatre. And I had to quickly sell tickets. So we saw it from that perspective, and built that circuit, and then we did a joint venture with Columbia Pictures Entertainment, and built more theatres, and then ended up running a regional circuit, and then came here. So I really think I've seen pretty much the full gamut of exhibition."



Jim Loeks, Barrie Lawson Loeks and Big Bird team up in a Sony Theatres promotion for Sesame Street policy trailers.

The joint venture with Columbia Pictures was the beginning of the Loeks' partnership with Sony Theatres, then known as Loews Theatres. At that time, Columbia owned Loews, and Coca-Cola in turn owned Columbia.

What ended up as an alliance started out as a competition. "What happened is [Loews] was looking to enter the Detroit market [where we were already established]," recalls Loeks. "We had built a couple of theatres in Detroit and were negotiating deals for more. They came in and outbid us on those deals. And we were very unhappy! So we went to Coca-Cola, who owned the company, and complained bitterly that they were using all their soft drink profits that we were helping generate to compete against us. And they weren't quite sure what to do about it. Not that they were so worried about losing our Coke sales, because we would not exactly have made a dent in their earnings," she notes wryly. "But they wanted to work out some sort of accommodation." Standing up to the mega-corporation turned out to be a fortuitous move: negotiations led to the Loeks striking a partnership with the company's exhibition subsidiary. "What we worked out was a joint venture. We put our theatres and our sites in, and they put their sites and money in. And we kept all the operational rights to run it out of our company in Michigan. And it worked out great! We built a lot of theatres, and we had a lot of success.

"And while we were in the midst of doing all that, of doing all the building, Coca-Cola sold the company to Sony. So then we became partners with Sony. But we kept dealing with many of the same people in the organization, so it wasn't any kind of a major change for us. And we continued building theatres and we continued to have a lot of success until one day our friends at Sony said, 'You know, you really should come to New York and run Loews.' And I said 'Why would we want to do that? We're very happy!' Ultimately, it was just too intriguing a challenge, and we did decide to come to New York and run Loews and we've been here ever since."

> ***"I love the promotions, I love doing stunts. Your product changes not only every week but in several ways every week, and the only limit to what you can do with those products are limits of time and creativity."***

As was reported in the December '96 issue of **Boxoffice**, Sony is incrementally restoring the Loews name to its theatre circuit arm. "Ultimately it will be all of the theatres," says Loeks. "Sony's new brand philosophy is that the Sony name really means consumer electronics, and that the other businesses they go in should develop or nurture their own brand names that will create their own value. And Loews was a very valuable brand and a great brand name, and we didn't particularly want to change it to begin with. So rather than try and create a new brand for theatres, we've elected to go back and use Loews, because we think there's still a tremendous amount of goodwill with that name. Although we're giving some signage companies an awful lot of work," she adds with a laugh. "Keeping the economy moving."

For Loeks, the key behind Sony's success is top-notch service in incomparable theatres, qualities she feels are the backbone of the circuit's prosperity. "We've always felt very passionate about service and facility, and that was really what distinguished us and was a large part of our success. We always believed in providing great service, paying our people more, the customer's always right, no lines, different products, and providing a very upscale facility.

"And that was very strange when we started doing this in 1982. People thought we were nuts. In the theatre business, the mantra was 'If you have it, they will come.' All that mattered was getting the film, and almost everyone who ran the major circuits at that time came out of film buying. Because then the issue was getting the film. And you had large clearances. So if you had a film and somebody wanted to see it, they had to come to your theatre, whether you were nice to them, whether the floors were sticky, whether it was gorgeous or not. And that created a mentality where people kept cutting costs and building cheaper theatres. We went through the '70s, where everyone was building what I call these chicken-coop theatres. They were awful. And no one seemed to care. And I thought that was terrible. So we felt very strongly about doing things differently, and that was rather revolutionary then."

It's thanks in part to pioneers like Loeks that the trend has swung in the opposite direction, with circuits making lavish theatres with top-of-the-line amenities a priority. The biggest change in the industry during Loeks' career in exhibition has been the theatre buildings themselves, she says. "Jim and I designed and built the world's first 12-screen theatre

and the world's first 20-screen theatre; now, we're building 20- and 30-screen theatres as a matter of course." But industry-wide, there's still lots of room for improvement, Loeks believes. "Today, I still think our industry has a ways to go in terms of service and facility. The tide has certainly changed, and all of the major circuits are building some wonderful theatres. And everyone is at least talking about service. So the moviehouse that we're providing today—[Sony] and everyone else—is just a far, far, far better place to experience a movie than what was being provided in 1970. I mean, is it as good as what was being provided in 1940? Well yeah, in terms of comfort and sound it's a lot better, although there are some of the old palaces that I don't think we'll ever beat in terms of decor. But we're getting there. In our Lincoln Square Theatre here in Manhattan, we have a balcony and we have gilded elephants and chandeliers—the whole deal."

Loeks beams when discussing Sony Theatres' Lincoln Square [*see story on page SW-22*]. The cinema embodies the exhibition ideals she feels are integral to true showmanship. "[Sony Lincoln Square] is the most successful theatre in the world, bar none," she asserts. "It is obviously our pride and joy. And there are several secrets behind its success. One of course is it is one heck of a good location. We're on Broadway in Manhattan. There are an awful lot of people there! But there are a lot of theatres in great locations in Manhattan that don't do a third or a tenth of what we do at Lincoln Square. And the reason that Lincoln Square does so well is that it is, without any question by anyone, the nicest facility by far in the city. It's gorgeous. We've got the large rocking chair seats, which no one puts in Manhattan because everyone is so tight on space. We've got beautiful lobbies, we've got fabulous spaces, we've got great decor, we've got the ultimate projection and sound technology, and we provide service. We're crazy about service, about treating people right. We have a lot of staff, they're in tuxedos, the place is clean, it's well-run, well-maintained, the projection is perfect. And it's a better theatre. It's a better experience. I hate to lead with my chin, but it really is. We've built a palace. We've built a modern-day movie palace."



Sony Theatres is expanding their construction of 3-D IMAX theatres, like this one at Barrie Loeks' "pride and joy," the Lincoln Square in Manhattan.

"We're crazy about service, about treating people right. The staff are in tuxedos, the place is clean, it's well-run, the projection is perfect. It's a better experience. I hate to lead with my chin, but it really is."

Loeks says Sony's strategy is to build high-end theatres in major urban markets that can support ambitious projects in the vein of the Lincoln Square. "We want to build the most deluxe theatres with the most lavish lobbies and the best seats and the best sound. And we want to provide great service and amenities. And in order to do that the way we want to do it, you need a major market. We need a lot of people to support our theatres, at pretty good ticket prices. And so our focus is in New York, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco. Because that's where we can really justify and get a return on the kind of theatre we think we're really good at building. We're building large, all-stadium seating, very fancy high-end theatres."

The latest innovation Sony's experimenting with is putting kitchens in their theatres. "I just came from a tasting," says Loeks with an it's-a-dirty-job-but-someone's-got-to-do-it inflection. "We're putting out a lot of different food products, and we're always continuing to push the envelope in terms of other experiences."

Among those other experiences, Loeks cites expansion in the construction of 3-D IMAX theatres at Sony's cinemas. "We're always looking for what more we can add to the entertainment experience."

Loeks is also proud that Sony Theatres is on the leading edge of another emerging, increasingly popular component of exhibition: the entertainment center. "We're on the forefront of that too. In San Francisco, Sony Development, which is another group within Sony, is building a large urban entertainment center, about 400,000 square feet, which will include a Sony Theatre, 15 screens, all stadium, and a 3-D IMAX theatre that we'll run. But in addition to that, there's all kinds of other Sony technology, interactive activities, children's areas—it's an urban theme park, basically, of which the theatre will be a part. We're also in Detroit building a complex which involves a 20-screen theatre with 6,000 seats, and is heavily themed. We have an All-Star Sports cafe and a California Pizza Kitchen, and some other retailers and restaurants all attached to the theatre, all in a themed kind of Disneyworld-Hollywood environment."

Loeks' passion for her work is irrepressible. Her favorite aspect of the exhibition industry is "that we show people a good time. It's wonderful to be in a business of entertaining people and making people happy—not always happy," she corrects herself, "but they're having fun. They may be laughing or they may be crying, but they're enjoying themselves. And I feel really privileged to be in that situation. In so many businesses, the ultimate product is not that gratifying. And for us, the product is selling people entertainment and giving them a good time, providing them a good show and a great experience and a great place to have that experience. I love the promotions, I love doing stunts. It's just tremendous fun, and it gives you such a broad range of things you can do with the public, because your product changes not only every week but in several ways every week. So you have this entire range of products, and the only limit to what you can do with those products are limits of time and creativity. It's not like you're selling the same widget every day. There are very few businesses that offer as many opportunities for fun as this one."

The major challenge in modern exhibition, says Loeks, is "to provide a great product and a great service, 365 days a year. And having every employee—and we have over 5,000 of them—understand our philosophy, know their job, do it well, with a smile, with courtesy. We have to maintain the magic of the theatregoing experience."

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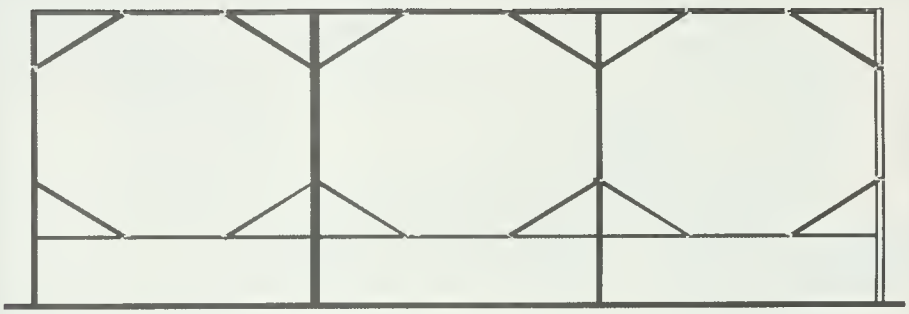
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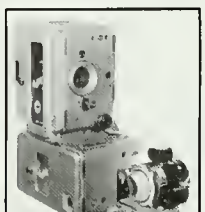
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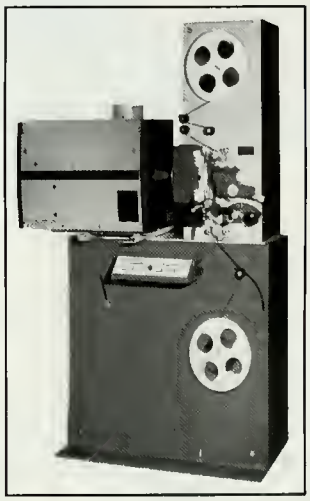


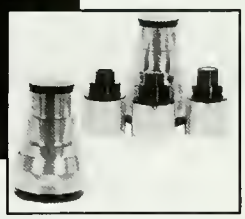
Westar ATAP/k 14 Automatic Projectors



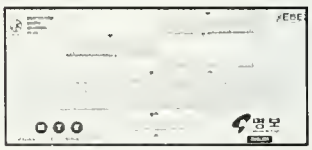
Westar 35 & 35/70 mm Projectors

M.T.E. Studio Equipment

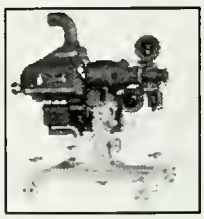




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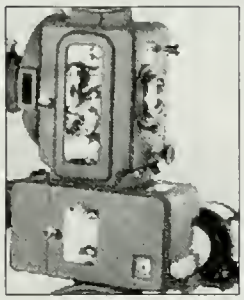
International Cinema Equipment Company Inc.

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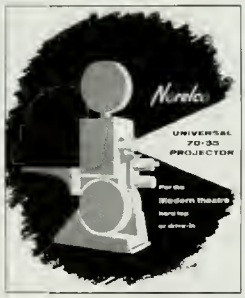
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Phillips DP-70 Todd-AO 35/70mm system single lens mount	7,500.00
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Meopta System as above	6,500.00
Zeiss/Prevost P-70/ Favorit 35/70mm Manual Turret, pedestal more (used)	4,500.00
EIKI EX 9100 16mm professional 2000W Xenon system low hours	10,000.00
ELMO- LX-2200 16mm profesisonal system 2000W lamphouse more	10,000.00
DOLBY CP-45 Stereo Processor	2,900.00
DOLBY CP-50 Stereo Processor	1,900.00
DOLBY CP-55 Stereo Processor	3,000.00
DOLBY CP-100 Stereo Processor	1,500.00
DOLBY CP-200 Stereo Processor	5,000.00
DOLBY CAT 280 SR Card	450.00
DOLBY CAT 364 Noise Reduction Module	699.00
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Response No. 15







HIP TO BE *SQUARE*

How Sony's Lincoln Square Conquered Manhattan *by Pat Kramer*

BOXOFFICE

SPECIAL REPORT:

SHOWEST 1997

Synergy is a popular buzzword in the cross-platformed, cross-marketed and laterally integrated industry that filmed entertainment in the 1990s has become. For that reason, we at BOXOFFICE *were particularly gratified when ShoWest 1997 announced its intention to name Sony Theatres co-chairman Barrie Lawson Loeks as its 1997 Robert W. Selig ShoWester of the Year—perhaps the highest official honor that exhibition has to bestow.*

As with each of the major exhibitor-related ShoWest awards, when the annual ShoWester of the Year is announced, the result in our offices is usually a mad if enthusiastic scramble to ensure we do editorial justice to the year's honoree. Such rapid response time proved unnecessary this time, because a beautiful form of synergy was at work: BOXOFFICE *had already scheduled a major interview with Ms. Loeks to celebrate the fact that the 1996 data totals compiled for the recently-introduced* ***BOXOFFICE/MOVIEFONE MOVIEGOER ACTIVITY CHART*** *had indicated that the Sony Theatres Lincoln Square complex was the number one choice of over 57 million surveyed North American audience members as the place to see a first run feature film [see chart opposite].*

As one of the most popular theatres ever constructed, the Lincoln Square is of course no stranger to the pages of BOXOFFICE. *A 1995* BOXOFFICE *cover was dedicated to one of the first major in-depth profiles ever published about its ambitious design. But a success story like Sony's at the Lincoln Square deserves follow-up, which is why this go-round, we decided to focus on the strategies and personalities Sony has so successfully deployed to capture the heart of Manhattan.*

We can think of no finer tribute to Ms. Loeks and to everyone else in the Sony Theatres family than to celebrate the stratospheric real-world success of a flagship theatre located in one of the most competetive movie marketplaces in the world. So to Barrie Loeks, to Lincoln Square manager Arthur Murtha and to all the other men and women responsible for this great exhibition success story, the most heartfelt congratulations from all of us at BOXOFFICE. *Your efforts embody the very finest that modern exhibition has to offer.*

—Ray Greene, Editor-in-Chief, BOXOFFICE

If you want to know the secret for success in the exhibition industry, a good place to start would be Sony Theatres' Lincoln Square complex, recently named 1996's "Most Requested Theatre" in North America by the BOXOFFICE/MovieFone Moviegoer Activity Survey. Despite ticket prices of $8.50 (average for a first-run moviehouse in Manhattan), people flock to this plush, luxuriant megaplex, where they know they will have a great experience.

Boxoffice Magazine presents



MovieFone's Moviegoer Activity Report

Year End Edition - 1996

MovieFone® (777-FILM®) and its sister service, MovieLink® Online, are now the single largest source of movie showtime information in the country, providing information to over 57 million moviegoers each year. The following information represents the most requested theatres and exhibitors on MovieFone.

Top 10 Exhibitors & Theatres

Most Requested Exhibitors

Rank	Exhibitor	Total Requests
1	United Artists	8,835,307
2	Cineplex Odeon	7,643,032
3	Sony	7,170,371
4	AMC	7,111,317
5	General Cinema	4,526,495
6	Century	2,693,111
7	Cinemark	1,844,577
8	Mann	1,793,895
9	National Amusements	1,689,998
10	Edwards	1,343,263

Most Requested Theatres

Rank	Market	Theatre	Total Requests
1	NY	Sony Lincoln Square	788,871
2	LA	AMC Century 14	490,906
3	NY	CO Chelsea	450,571
4	BO	Sony Cheri	382,702
5	NY	Sony Orpheum	356,613
6	NY	CO Worldwide	333,890
7	NY	Sony Village 7	332,963
8	DA	AMC The Grand	313,084
9	BO	Sony Assembly Square	310,402
10	PH	UA Riverview	309,589

Most Requested Theatres Per Screen

Total Requests	Rank	Theatre (# screens)	Total Requests
New York	1	CO Beekman (1)	139,959
14,996,000	2	CO Ziegfeld (1)	119,363
	3	CO 34th St. East (1)	72,945
Los Angeles	1	CinAm National (1)	67,429
7,728,706	2	CinAm Village (1)	62,628
	3	GCC Avco (3)	131,051
Dallas	1	AMC Highland Pk Village (4)	93,259
6,836,244	2	AMC Forum (6)	139,458
	3	UA United Artist 8 (8)	170,293
San Francisco	1	UA Coronet (1)	84,598
3,993,057	2	Blm Regency I (1)	49,212
	3	Blm Regency II (1)	48,567
Miami	1	Cobb Miami Lakes (10)	212,725
3,632,342	2	AMC Kendall (9)	185,879
	3	GCC Riviera (4)	78,673
Philadelphia	1	UA Sameric (4)	226,794
3,573,200	2	Cinemagic 3 at Penn (3)	119,147
	3	UA Cheltenham (8)	301,546
Boston	1	Sony Cheri (4)	382,702
3,006,728	2	Sony Nickelodeon (5)	171,033
	3	NA Circle Cinema (7)	229,562
Chicago	1	Village North (1)	28,448
2,831,664	2	CO Biograph (3)	65,609
	3	Sony Webster Place (8)	91,668
Houston	1	CO Spectrum (9)	146,449
2,029,358	2	CO River Oaks Plaza (12)	185,527
	3	CO Sharpstown Center (8)	91,668
Phoenix	1	Hark Cine Capri (1)	29,960
1,698,439	2	Hark Christown (5)	60,332
	3	UA Christown Mall (6)	69,537
Toronto	1	Famous Eglinton (1)	29,882
1,641,238	2	Famous Uptown (3)	88,646
	3	Famous Plaza (2)	36,292
San Diego	1	CinAm Cinema 21 (1)	19,102
1,578,779	2	Pacific Cinerama (6)	56,897
	3	Pacific Clairemont Twin (2)	18,474

Total Requests	Rank	Theatre (# screens)	Total Requests
Kansas City	1	Dksn Glenwood (4)	58,463
1,166,823	2	Dksn Antioch (2)	23,545
	3	Dksn Olathe Landing (8)	91,454
Atlanta	1	UA Tara Cinema (4)	22,096
1,121,292	2	AMC Galleria (8)	43,891
	3	Carmike Southlake (6)	31,794
Seattle	1	CO Cinerama (1)	16,757
979,538	2	Landmk Neptune (1)	14,681
	3	CO Northgate (1)	12,550
Cleveland	1	General Southgate (3)	33,916
847,928	2	GCC Ridge Park Square (8)	72,559
	3	GCC Parmatown (5)	41,034
Minneapolis	1	Landmk Uptown (1)	8,275
823,491	2	CO Edina (4)	23,779
	3	CO Knollwood (4)	22,149
Denver	1	UA Continental (1)	11,496
665,372	2	AMC Colorado Plaza (6)	33,270
	3	Landmk Esquire (2)	10,562
Sacramento	1	Century Century 21 (2)	25,746
589,487	2	Century Sacramento D-I (6)	62,439
	3	Century Cinedome Sacr. (9)	91,357
Las Vegas	1	Century Las Vegas 6 D-I (6)	39,783
546,184	2	Century Cinedome 12 LV (12)	77,368
	3	Century Rancho (16)	100,609
Detroit	1	Star Lincoln Park (8)	35,133
530,695	2	Star Taylor (10)	43,363
	3	AMC Southland (4)	14,705
Washington, DC	1	CO Uptown (1)	9,737
394,438	2	CO Cinema (1)	5,971
	3	CO Embassy (1)	5,505
Tampa	1	Cobb University (4)	14,153
321,525	2	Muvico Palm Harbor (10)	33,155
	3	Cobb Northdale Court (6)	18,930
Orlando	1	Carmike Hoffner Centre (6)	15,524
290,885	2	Regal UC Cinema (7)	17,476
	3	Carmike University (8)	18,431

Top 3 Actively* Requested Theatres:

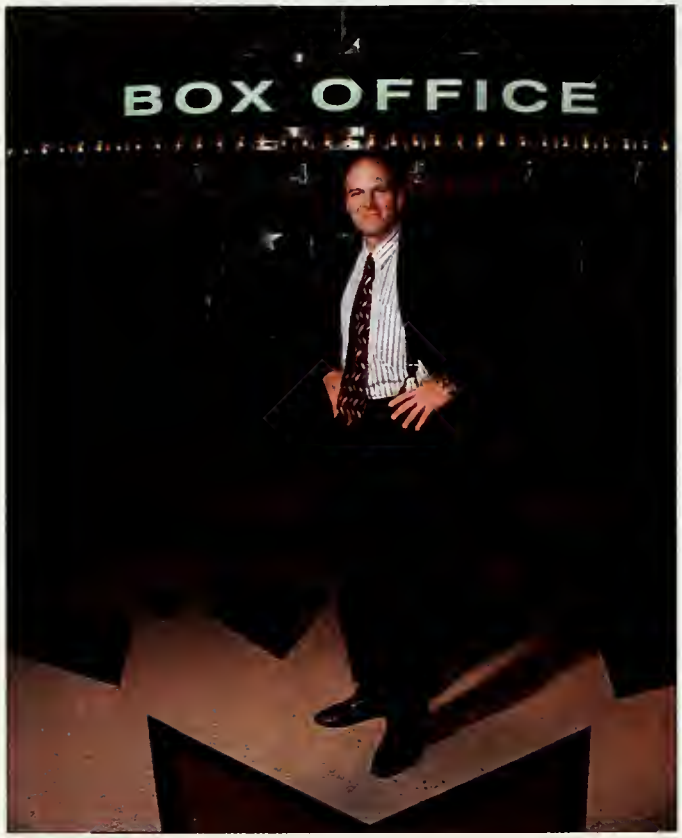
1. CO Worldwide New York, NY
2. AMC The Grand Dallas, TX
3. Sony Lincoln Sq. New York, NY

*Caller specifically requested theatre

Key to Exhibitors

AMC	AMC Theatres, Inc.	CityCin	City Cinemas	General	General Theatres	Muvico	Muvico Theatres
Act III	Act III Theatres	CO	Cineplex Odeon Corp	Hark	Harkins Theatres	Pacific	Pacific Theatres
Blm	Blumenfeld Theatres	Cobb	Cobb Theatres	Hollywood	Hollywood Theatres	Regal	Regal Cinemas
Carmike	Carmike Cinemas, Inc.	Dksn	Dickinson Theatres	Landmk	Landmark Theatre Corp.	Sony	Sony Theatres
Century	Century Theatres	Famous	Famous Players	Mann MN	Mann Minneapolis	Star	Loeks-Star Theatres
CinAm	CinAmerica Theatres, LP	GCC	General Cinema Theatres	Met	Metropolitan Theatres Corp	SupSav	Super Sever Cinemas
						UA	United Artists Theatre Circuit

Located on Manhattan's Upper West side on Broadway at 68th Street, this large-scale exhibition complex is an architectural and technological showpiece. Opened in November 1994, Lincoln Square features one of the world's largest 3-D IMAX Theatres, with an 80' x 100' screen and seating for 600. Lincoln's 12 conventional auditoriums provide plush, oversize rocking-chair seating for a total audience of 3,600, giving movie patrons the ultimate in comfort. From Lincoln Square's art deco interior to each themed theatre's state-of-the-art projection and SDDS sound equipment, Lincoln Square provides a moviegoing event like no other.



Theatre manager Arthur Murtha promoting his favorite magazine in the lobby of the Sony Theatres Lincoln Square in Manhattan.

Theatre manager Arthur Murtha refers to Lincoln Square as "awe-inspiring, luxurious and the ultimate show-palace. When Sony built Lincoln Square their intention was to create the most fantastic theatre, visually, in Manhattan—or for that matter, anywhere in the country—coupled with fantastic guest service. I think the people of New York have responded to this and have really become enamored with this theatre. This is their first choice for seeing a movie."

With Lincoln Square presently running at full capacity, Sony co-chairperson Barrie Loeks says they plan to add three more screens this year. "We're selling out all our seats by 7 or 8 p.m. on Saturday," Loeks says, "to the point where there's nothing left. On the one hand, we like that because it's great that we're doing that kind of business, but people ought to be able to walk in and get a seat to *something*. So we're doing everything in our power to get more auditoriums and more seats there."

To Murtha, part of Lincoln Square's achievement results from the way it embodies the attitudes of the city it calls home. "In this city," he says, "people have a fondness for things that just reach out and grab you. It's a city that just likes to have the very best."

Murtha came to Lincoln Square last September after opening and running Cineplex Odeon's megaplex in Universal City, Calif.—like Lincoln Square, one of the country's busiest venues. When offered the position of manager at Sony's flagship theatre, Murtha says several things impressed him, including Sony's emphasis on guest service and the way Sony treats its staff. "Everybody has the opportunity to contribute something to the company," says Murtha.

Lincoln Square's success began almost from day one. Sony vice president of advertising and publicity Marc Pascucci remembers opening day's star-studded party for 2,300 and the media attention that followed: "We did a lot of publicity tours, a lot of pre-screenings. The theatre got so much attention that everyone in Manhattan and the Tri-state area [New York, New Jersey and Connecticut] knew about it. Word of mouth has carried us through and it's built from there. Word of mouth among New Yorkers is that it's the best place to see a movie in the city, not just as a neighborhood theatre but as a destination theatre for all of Manhattan."

To keep the momentum up, Lincoln Square continues to offer spectacular promotional events at the theatre complex. Among last year's highlights, Pascucci lists last April's Kids' Film Festival, which premiered "James and the Giant Peach" and featured other family titles. The festival was held in conjunction with the non-profit organization Hollywood for Children. Another promotion featured a tie-in with Revlon for Hollywood makeup—with free makeovers for moviegoers. At Halloween-time, a kids' costume contest was held for the opening of "L5: First City in Space" at the IMAX. Ending the year with some sizzle, moviegoers were treated to a display of tango dancing for the grand opening of "Evita." Says Pascucci, "The theatre is always the focal point of attention. We're truly charmed in that way."

Central to the theatre's popularity is its booking policy, which pays careful attention to audience preferences and viewing habits. While the theatre's demographics draw heavily on an upscale clientele, Murtha says Lincoln Square attracts people from all over the metro area. As a result, films shown in Lincoln Square's theatres are diverse in nature, and booking policies are demonstrably adaptable.

When the complex first opened, Sony officials had designated three smaller theatres for art-house films. However, discovering that their clientele was as likely to buy tickets for specialized films as for standard, commercial fare, the booking policy was adjusted accordingly. Presently, all 12 theatres are used equally for both commercial and specialized films.

Overall, Lincoln Square tends to do extremely well with whatever they book. For the opening weekend of "Mars Attacks!," Murtha says they had the highest gross in the nation. Two new boxoffice records were set in late December: On December 28, Lincoln Square set a new high for "Single Day Revenues and Attendance" with $200,000 in sales and 17,000 tickets sold. That week (Dec.27—Jan. 2, 1997) also set a new record for "Single Week's Boxoffice Sales and Attendance" with over $1 million in revenue and 120,000 tickets sold. Contributing to Christmas week's success were the premieres of "The People vs. Larry Flynt" and "Evita," the latter of which was exclusive to the Lincoln Square for the entire east coast on Christmas Day.

As an incentive for repeat business, a "combo discount program" is offered at the boxoffice with significant discounts on the purchase of two IMAX features or an IMAX feature with a standard 35mm presentation. Lincoln Square also offers a "Passport Program" to groups and employee organizations, with discounts provided on movie tickets to all participants.

> ***"In this city, people have a fondness for things that just reach out and grab you. It's a city that just likes to have the very best."***
> ***—Arthur Murtha***

While special promotions help bring in new customers, Lincoln Square keeps a close eye on customer satisfaction by participating in a "Mystery Shopper" evaluation. "Mystery Shoppers," Pascucci explains, "are theatre-goers who visit the theatres on a regular basis and grade us on a variety of subjects." This analysis includes length of concession and boxoffice lines, whether ushers are friendly when greeting people, and how clean the bathrooms are kept.

Interestingly, Pascucci says Sony's "Mystery Shoppers" actually pay to participate: "It's a package deal, where they get four tickets plus concession coupons. It's our primary source for information on how we're doing, and the theatre ranks very high."

Another indication of Lincoln Square's popularity is its celebrity clientele. Actors Al Pacino, Tom Cruise, Nicole Kidman and Barbra Streisand have all made recent appearances at Lincoln Square. To accommodate their requests for privacy, Murtha says special efforts are made by guest services to see that their famous clients are well-taken care of and not bothered.

Murtha recalls Streisand's visit for the premiere of "The Mirror Has Two Faces." "Ms. Streisand didn't want to come through the lobby area so we brought her up through our employee entrance to the Loews Theatre, where we had roped off seats for her in the back of the auditorium. Toward the end of the presentation, we went back to the projection room and spent about 25 minutes talking about the presentation. At the end of the film, we watched as the audience stayed until the end of the credits and clapped. She was just so tickled when she left here!"

Whether patrons are celebrities or not, Murtha says guest service ranks high on Lincoln Square's agenda. "We try to hire some of the most friendly people out there that really have a desire to meet the needs and expectations of our guests and really work together to make Lincoln the unique place it is to see a movie." Within that framework is Sony's "three-minute" promise, designed to ensure that lines are fast-moving at all times. If a patron waits at the boxoffice or concession stand longer than three minutes, they receive a free Coke. Murtha notes, "I think what we're trying to do here is to help people become fully immersed in the cinema-going experience by offering a great atmosphere and dependable employees and then programming real good movies."

On Dec. 28, Lincoln Square set a record for single day revenues and attendance with $200,000 in sales and 17,000 tickets sold. That week also set a record for single week's sales and attendance with grosses over $1,000,000 on 120,000 tickets sold.

Overall, when asked what sets Lincoln Square apart from the rest, Murtha offers his own formula for success: "Every day I work, I try to imagine what's going on in my building from my guests' perspective. How are they seeing it? How do they feel when they walk into our building? We have to tailor our operation to make sure that everybody who walks into this building enjoys themselves. To complement that you need to have a really well-organized staff and a great team of managers who are committed to reaching those guest service levels, maintaining the building at its absolute best condition, and who really care about the presentation of what we're putting on the screen."

In summing up his experience at Lincoln Square Murtha says that "running a megaplex is something new to our industry. It's a completely different animal from running the six [screen complexes] or the eights or tens. When you're talking about a building that serves well over two million people a year, you're talking a tremendous amount of volume and your operation has to adjust to that. Running a megaplex is all about teamwork and a philosophy of taking 150 staff members, plus a team of approximately 15 managers, and keeping everybody going in the same direction, while running the very best theatre possible."

For a full-length profile of Sony co-chair and 1997 Robert W. Selig ShoWester of the Year award winner Barrie Loeks, please consult page SW-16 elsewhere in **Boxoffice**'s *ShoWest Intro. Photos for this story by Marco Lorenzetti and Bob Zucker.*



Response No. 9

SUMMER HEAT

It's a jungle out there. Here's a 68-title guide to Hollywood's leviathans and littler beasts doing battle this summer.

Steven Spielberg's "Jurassic Park" sequel, "The Lost World," is sure to jumpstart moviedom's summer—one week before the season has officially begun. Along with that Universal 5/23 opener, the month of May has Columbia's "The Fifth Element" and Warner's "Father's Day" (both 5/9) and Paramount's "The Flood" (5/16)—a sign of things to come.

And come they will this summer, with 68 studio and independent releases ready to advance through the movie theatre thicketry. Unlike last summer, 1997's hothouse boasts a number of high-profile sequels, five from just two studios. Fox has "Speed 2: Cruise Control," "Home Alone 3" and "Alien Resurrection"; Warner has



"Batman & Robin" and "Free Willy 3." With that kind of tentpoling, the June-July-August slate can be expected to resist sags.

And, reversing their late winter absence, under the summer skies the stars are coming out in full force, sometimes in twos: Mel Gibson and Julia Roberts pair in Warner's "Conspiracy Theory"; Sigourney Weaver and Winona Ryder partner in Fox's "Alien Resurrection"; Walter Matthau and Jack Lemmon reteam in Fox's "Out to Sea"; John Travolta and Nicolas Cage change identities in Paramount's "Face/Off"; Al Pacino and Keanu Reeves star in Warner's "The Devil's Advocate"; and Tommy Lee Jones and Will Smith are Columbia's "Men in Black." Looks like Hollywood will be shining on right to the harvest moon.

JUNE

Batman & Robin

The Gotham City streets are in danger once again, so long as the sinister Mr. Freeze (Arnold Schwarzenegger) and menacing seductress Poison Ivy ("Beautiful Girls'" Uma Thurman) run free. It's up to Batman ("One Fine Day's" George Clooney), Robin (Chris O'Donnell) and Batgirl ("Clueless'" Alicia Silverstone) to destroy these villains. The fourth film in the "Batman" series co-stars John Glover and Elle Macpherson. Joel Schumacher, who did #3, again directs; Akiva Goldsman scripts; Peter Macgregor-Scott produces. (Warner, 6/20)

My Best Friend's Wedding

In this romantic comedy, best friends Julianne (Julia Roberts, also in this summer's "Conspiracy Theory") and Michael ("Bad Girls'" Dermot Mulroney) plan to get married by the age of 28 if they haven't found someone special. As the time draws near, Michael is about to marry someone else—until the unimaginable happens. Cameron Diaz ("She's the One"), Rupert Everett ("Cemetery Man") and Philip Bosco ("Milk Money") co-star. Aussie P.J. Hogan ("Muriel's Wedding") directs; Ronald Bass ("The Joy Luck Club") scripts, and he produces with Jerry Zucker ("A Walk in the Clouds"). (TriStar, 6/27)

Con Air

In this Touchstone actioner, Nicolas Cage ("The Rock") plays Cameron Poe, a paroled convict who becomes the middleman between life and death when a prison transport plane is hijacked. Poe hops aboard a flight carrying a group of deadly criminals being taken to a super-maximum security facility. Yet when Cyrus "The Virus" Grissom (John Malkovich) hatches a plan, only Poe and U.S. Marshal Vince Larkin ("Grosse Point Blank's" John Cusack) can possibly save the plane from crashing and the lifers from killing. Simon West directs; Scott Rosenberg ("Things to Do in Denver When You're Dead") scripts; action octaner Jerry Bruckheimer produces. Expect Disney to position this as this summer's "The Rock." (Buena Vista, 6/6)

Boogie Nights

In the sleazy underworld of adult entertainment, a group of filmmakers try to revamp the industry. Spanning the '70s and '80s, "Boogie Nights" follows the ups and downs of the players, including an optimistic producer who attempts to turn porn into art. Mark Wahlberg ("Fear"), Julianne Moore ("Safe"), Burt Reynolds ("Striptease"), Don Cheadle ("Devil in a Blue Dress"), William H. Macy ("Fargo"), Heather Graham ("Drugstore Cowboy") and John C. Reilly ("Hard 8") star in this dark comedy. Sophomore helmer Paul Thomas Anderson (also "Hard 8") directs, scripts and produces. (New Line, 6/13 wide after 5/23 ltd rollout)

In and Out

On the night before his wedding, a well-liked English teacher ("Fierce Creatures'"Kevin Kline) faces turmoil when his sexuality is questioned. Joan Cusack, Matt Dillon, Debbie Reynolds, the late Wilford Brimley, Bob Newhart and Tom Selleck co-star. Frank Oz ("The Indian in the Cupboard") directs; Paul Rudnick ("Jeffrey") scripts; Scott Rudin ("The First Wives Club") produces. (Paramount, 6/13)

Love Serenade

Residents of the tiny town of Sunray in rural Australia, unwedded twentysomething sisters Vicki-Ann and Dimitry Hurley feel that life is passing them by in this black comedy (which won Cannes' Camera d'Or for best first film). That's until Ken Sherry, ex-drivetime king of Brisbane radio, arrives to run the local station. Abandoning all sibling loyalty, the sisters launch a comically contentious battle to win his heart's affections. Mirando Otto, Rebecca Frith and George Shevtsov star. Shirley Barrett directs and scripts; Jan Chapman (Oscar winner "The Piano") produces. (Miramax, 6/20 NY/LA)

Different for Girls

When childhood best friends Paul and Karl meet 20 years later, there's only one problem: Karl is now Kim. Paul doesn't recognize his old pal, but he's certainly attracted to her. Kim eventually reveals her true identity, but Paul is unforgiving and decides to wreck her life. A romantic comedy, "Different for Girls" received the Montreal fest's Grand Prix of the Americas award for best film. Rupert Graves ("Intimate Relations"), Steven Mackintosh ("London Kills Me") and Saskia

Reeves ("Butterfly Kiss") star. Richard Spence directs; Tony Marchant scripts; John Chapman produces. (First Look, June)

Kicked in the Head

A down-and-out man falls for a stewardess. Kevin Corrigan ("Rhythm Thief"), Linda Fiorentino ("Unforgettable"), Michael Rapaport (also in "Cop-Land"), James Woods ("Ghosts of Mississippi") and Lili Taylor ("I Shot Andy Warhol") star with Olek Krupa, Burt Young and John Ventimiglia. Matthew Harrison (also "Rhythm Thief") directs, and he scripts along with Corrigan; Barbara DeFina produces and Martin Scorsese executive produces. (October Films, June)

Talk of Angels

A sort of gender-bender variant on Ken Loach's "Land and Freedom," this PG-13 drama tells the story of a young Irish woman who arrives in Spain on the eve of the country's civil war. Polly Walker ("Restoration"), Vincent Perez ("The Crow: City of Angels"), Frances McDormand ("Fargo") and Franco Nero star for director Nick Hamm; Ann Guedes and Frank McGuinness script; Patrick Cassavetti produces. (Miramax, June)

Gabbeh

This Iranian-language drama follows a small nomadic tribe that continues to handweave Gabbeh (Persian carpets with patterns inspired by tribal life), even though the demand for them is declining. As an old women washes one of the carpets, a young woman named Gabbeh tells a story of forbidden love. "Gabbeh" stars Abbas Sayah, Shaghayegh Djodat and Hossein Moharami. Mohsen Makhmalbaf directs and scripts; Khalil Daroudtchi and Khalil Mahmoudl produce. (New Yorker, June NY excl)

The Pillow Book

In this drama (which mixes Japanese, Mandarin, Cantonese and English languages), a young girl named Nagiko Kiohara loved the traditional birthday messages her father (Hideko Yoshido) wrote on her face. Grown into adulthood but abused by her arranged husband (Ken Mitsuishi), Nagiko (Vivian Wu) leaves him to search for a man ("Trainspotting's" Ewan McGregor) that she can trust to continue the birthday greetings. In the process, Nagiko discovers her own love of writing. Yoshi Oida co-stars. Peter Greenaway ("The Cook, the Thief, the Wife and Her Lover") directs and scripts; Kees Kasander produces. (CFP, 6/6)



HERCULES

Writer/directors John Musker and Ron Clements, the makers of "Aladdin" and "The Little Mermaid," return with this animated comedy/adventure about the son of Zeus. Half-man, half-god, and raised on Earth, Herc learns that Hades, the god of the Underworld, wants to destroy him in order to rule Mt. Olympus after Zeus. To prove his mettle and return to his father, Herc must prove himself to be a hero, defeating the challenges thrown at him by Hades. Danny DeVito, Tate Donovan, Susan Egan, Matt Frewer, Bobcat Goldthwait, Paul Shaffer, Rip Torn, Lillias White, James Woods and Charlton Heston provide the voices. Musker and Clements produce with Alice Dewey. (Disney, 6/27)

M

In this reissue of Fritz Lang's 1931 German drama, Peter Lorre stars as a psychopath who murders a child and is brought to justice by Berlin's organized criminal element. "M" co-stars Otto Wernicke, Ellen Widmann, Inge Landgut and Gustav Grundgens. Thea Von Harbou, Paul Falkenberg, Adolf Jansen and Karl Vash script the Nero Film production. (Kino, 6/27)

The Tit and the Moon

Tete (Biel Duran) is a small Catalonian boy who has a sibling problem surfacing: He feels neglected when his newborn brother is breastfed by his mother. After seeing the naked breast of a French ballerina ("Becoming Collette's" Mathilda May), he becomes fixated on that female body part. Gerard Damon co-stars. Bigas Luna ("Jamon Jamon") directs, and he scripts with Cuca Canals; A.V. Gomez produces the Spanish-language comedy. (Strand, June)

JULY

Men in Black

This science-fiction adventure comedy is based on Lowell Cunningham's Marvel comics of the same title. The Men in Black—K ("The Client's" Tommy Lee Jones) and J ("Independence Day's" Will Smith)—are top-secret government agents who handle immigration for alien beings on Earth. When they stumble on an alien terrorist plan that could destroy the planet, the Men in Black must catch the evildoers. Linda Fiorentino (also in "Kicked in the Head") co-stars. Barry Sonnenfeld ("Get Shorty") directs; Ed Solomon (who helped write both of the "Bill and Ted's..." adventures) scripts; and the "Twister" team, Walter Parkes and Laurie MacDonald, produce for Steven Spielberg's Amblin. *See our April cover story.* (Columbia, 7/2)

Speed 2: Cruise Control

Director/producer Jan De Bont returns for this sequel to "Speed," which trades in a runaway bus for an oceangoing vessel. Annie (Sandra Bullock, reprising her role) and her new boyfriend Alex ("Sleepers'" Jason Patric, taking over for Keanu Reeves) decide to take a leisurely luxury cruise in the Caribbean. But, to their peril, they discover there's nothing leisurely about this trip once a criminal mastermind takes over and heads them full speed toward doom. Randall McCormick, Jeff Nathanson, Kevin Peterka and Greg Chabot script. (Fox, 7/2)

Face/Off

In this action thriller directed by John Woo ("Broken Arrow"), an FBI agent and a terrorist trade identities. John Travolta (in a second Woo teaming), Nicolas Cage (also in "Con Air"), Joan Allen ("The Crucible") and Alessandro Nivola star. Michael Werb and Michael Colleary script; David Permut ("Surviving the Game"), longtime Woo associate Terence Chang, Christopher Godsick and Barrie Osborne ("China Moon") produce. (Paramount, 7/2)

Home Alone 3

Alex D. Linz ("One Fine Day") replaces Macaulay Culkin in this Fox Family Films effort as the stranded lad who must rely on his wits to protect himself while the grownups are away. This time, the eight-year-old has a nasty case of the chicken pox and must defend the neighborhood from a prowling band of international criminals. Kevin Kilner co-stars. Longtime film editor Raja Gosnell ("Mrs. Doubtfire") turns director; series originator John Hughes scripts; Hughes produces with former Hollywood Pictures head Ricardo Mestres ("101 Dalmatians"). (Fox, 7/11)

Money Talks

In the chaos of a prison break, a small-time con artist ("Friday's" Chris Tucker) is wrongly blamed for the killing of police officers. Suddenly notorious, he must escape the clutches of the vengeful masses, relying only on the help of an annoying reporter ("The Shadow Conspiracy's" Charlie Sheen). Brett Ratner directs; "Toy Story" co-writers Joel Cohen and Alec Sokolow script this action comedy with Vince McKewin; Walter Coblenz ("The Babe") produces. (New Line, 7/18)

Titanic

In this joint-studio production (Paramount has domestic distribution rights, Fox has foreign), writer/director James Cameron ("True Lies") recreates the fatal 1912 voyage of the maiden liner Titanic. Using historical and fictional characters, the film follows the onboard romance between an aristocrat ("Sense & Sensibility's" Kate Winslet) and a steerage passenger (Leonardo DiCaprio of "Baz Luhrmann's Romeo & Juliet"). Billy Zane ("The Phantom"), Kathy Bates ("Dolores Claiborne"), Frances Fisher ("Female Perversions"), Bernard Hill, Jonathan Hyde, Danny Nucci, David Warner and Bill Paxton ("Twister") co-star. Cameron and Jon Landau produce. (Paramount, 7/2)

George of the Jungle

Based on the '60s cartoon hero, this Disney film follows the adventures of George ("Mrs. Winterbourne's" Brendan Fraser) as he gives up the comfort of modern civilization and the love of a beautiful woman (Leslie Mann) in order to save his animal friends from evil poachers in the jungle. Thomas Hayden Church co-stars in this adventure comedy. Sam Weisman ("The Mighty Ducks II") directs; Dana Olsen (who wrote Fraser's "Encino Man") scripts; David Hoberman, Jordan Kerner, and Jon Avnet ("Fried Green Tomatoes") produce. (Buena Vista, 7/18)

Edwards & Hunt: The First American Road Trip

Set in the 1800s, this comedy follows a band of misfits as they compete with Lewis and Clark to explore the West. When the team sets out, they face all the potential disasters the American wilderness offers. Chris Farley ("Tommy Boy"), Matthew Perry ("Fools Rush In"), Eugene Levy ("Waiting for Guffman"), Bokeem Woodbine ("Jason's Lyric"), Lisa B. and recent Sundance honoree Parker Posey ("The House of Yes") co-star. Christopher Guest ("Waiting for Guffman") directs; Boyd Hale, Mark Nutter and Thomas R. Wolfe script; Denise Di Novi ("James and the Giant Peach") produces. (Warner, July)

The Borrowers

A clan of very little people—four inches tall—named the Clocks live in happy coexistence with a normal human household—until, that is, an evil lawyer threatens the happiness of all. John Goodman stars in this adaptation of the children's books by Mary Norton. "The Borrowers" would mark the first stateside theatrical release by Polygram, which has long planned to launch an American distribution operation. (Polygram, July)

Conspiracy Theory

When a paranoid taxi driver finds out his conspiracy fantasy is true, the real problems begin. But the genre mix is non-"Ransom"-like: action/adventure/romantic comedy. Mel Gibson, Julia Roberts (also in "My Best Friend's Wedding") and Patrick Stewart ("Star Trek: First Contact") star. Richard Donner (who helmed Gibson's "Lethal Weapon" series) directs; Brian Helgeland ("L.A. Confidential," also from Warner later this year) scripts; in a change of pace from his usual action fare, Joel Silver (also the "Lethal Weapon" series) produces. (Warner, 7/25)

Wings of the Dove

When Kate (Helena Bonham Carter of "Margaret's Museum") falls in love with a common journalist (Linus Roache), she must decide whether to take her expected place in society or marry the man she loves. Their affair remains discreet until the arrival of a young American heiress ("Spitfire Grill's" Alison Elliot), who bears a tragic secret of her own. Iain Softley ("Hackers") directs; Hossein Amini, who adapted Thomas Hardy's "Jude the Obscure" for Gramercy's "Jude," here adapts Henry James' turn-of-the-century romance; David Parfitt ("Mary Shelley's Frankenstein") and Stephen Evans ("Much Ado About Nothing") produce. (Miramax, July)

Wild America

Set in 1967 and based on the true adventures of the wildlife documentarians Mark, Marty and Marshall Stouffer, "Wild America" follows the brothers as they travel across country with their



CONTACT

Based on the late Carl Sagan's novel, "Contact" stars Jodie Foster as an astronomer who discovers radio signals transmitted from outer space. As countries around the world try to decode the message, she hopes to be the single spokesperson for Earth, a position many desire. Matthew McConaughey ("A Time to Kill"), James Woods ("Ghosts of Mississippi"), Tom Skerritt, Angela Bassett ("Strange Days"), John Hurt ("Michael"), David Morse ("The Crossing Guard"), Rob Lowe and William Fichtner ("Albino Alligator") co-star. Robert Zemeckis ("Forrest Gump") directs; Michael Goldenberg ("Bed of Roses") scripts; Steve Starkey (also "Forrest Gump") produces. (Warner, 7/11)

camera, meeting ferocious animals and interesting characters along the way. Jonathan Taylor Thomas ("Tom and Huck"), Devon Sawa, Scott Bairstow, Jamey Sheridan ("A Stranger Among Us") and Frances Fisher (also in July's "Titanic") star. William Dear ("Angels in the Outfield") directs; David Michael Wieger scripts; Morgan Creek head James G. Robinson produces with Irby Smith and Mark Stouffer. (Warner, July)

Twin Town

In Swansea, South Wales, roofing contractor Bryn Cartwright (William Thomas) tries to avoid paying compensation to his worker Fatty Lewis (Huw Ceredig), a handyman who fell off a ladder on the job. But Fatty is an unlikely victim—he has wicked twin sons (Rhys Ifans and LLyr Evans), who are ready to exact revenge in this black comedy. Debut director Kevin Allen also co-scripts with Paul Durden; Peter McAleese produces; Andrew MacDonald and Danny Boyle, the makers of "Shallow Grave" and "Trainspotting," executive produce. (Gramercy, July)

B. Monkey

B (Italian starlet Asia Argento, of "Queen Margot"), a wild young beauty, becomes the object of passion of a romantic schoolteacher ("I Shot Andy Warhol's" Jared Harris). With him, B hopes, she can escape the decadent world of drugs in which she's caught with the violent Bruno ("Michael Collins'" Jonathan Rhys Meyers). Rupert Everett (also in "My Best Friend's Wedding") co-stars. Michael Radford ("The Postman") directs; Andrew Davies adapts his novel with Michael Thomas; Stephen Woolley (also "Michael Collins") and Colin Vaines produce. (Miramax, 7/18)



Air Force One

In this action/thriller aka "AFO," the President of the United States (Harrison Ford) has a policy of refusing to negotiate with terrorists. When the First Lady and his child are on a plane that is hijacked by Russian neo-nationalists, the President must decide whether to stand his ground. Glenn Close ("101 Dalmatians") and Gary Oldman ("Murder in the First") also star. Wolfgang Petersen ("In the Line of Fire") directs; Andrew Marlowe scripts; Petersen produces with Armyan Bernstein ("Princess Caraboo"), Gail Katz and Jon Shestack for Beacon. (Columbia, 7/25)

AUGUST

The Devil's Advocate

Offered a job at an influential New York law office by the lead partner (Al Pacino), a young district attorney (Keanu Reeves) finds himself being enticed by power and money. As he fights for his integrity, his associates reveal themselves to be supernaturally (or infernally) enhanced if humanely challenged. Charlize Theron ("2 Days in the Valley"), Judith Ivey ("There Goes the Neighborhood"), Craig T. Nelson ("I'm Not Rappaport"), Ruben Santiago-Hudson and Jeffrey Jones co-star. Taylor Hackford ("Dolores Claiborne") directs; Jonathan Lemkin ("Demolition Man") and Tony Gilroy ("The Cutting Edge") script; New Regency head Arnon Milchan produces with Arnold Kopelson and Anne Kopelson. (Warner, August)

Alien Resurrection

Sigourney Weaver returns to battle the alien creatures as a changed woman after a bizarre experiment resurrects her. Ripley (Weaver) teams with a band of smugglers to once again destroy the beasts. This fourth installment in the series also stars Winona Ryder; Ron Perlman ("Romeo Is Bleeding"), Dominique Pinon, Gary Doudan and Dan Hedaya ("Joe Versus the Volcano") head the supporting cast. Jean-Pierre Jeunet ("The City of Lost Children") directs; Joss Whedon ("Toy Story") scripts; David Giler ("The Fugitive"), Walter Hill ("Last Man Standing"), Gordon Carroll ("Alien^3") and Bill Badalato ("Tall Tale") produce. (Fox, August)

Kull the Conqueror

Based on Robert E. Howard's '30s pulp fiction hero, "Kull the Conqueror" follows the adventures of a slave soldier (Kevin Sorbo of TV's "Hercules: The Legendary Journeys") who becomes king. When he loses his throne, he must find a magical weapon to help him regain his title, his people's freedom, and his lover. Tia Carrere ("True Lies"), Thomas Ian Griffith ("Excessive Force"), Karina Lombard ("Legends of the Fall"), Litefoot ("The Indian in the Cupboard") and Harvey Fierstein ("Independence Day") co-star in this fantasy adventure. John Nicollela ("The Fan", 1981) directs; Charles Edward Pogue ("Dragonheart") and Don Mancini (the "Child's Play" series) script; Raffaella De Laurentiis (also "Dragonheart") produces. (Universal, 8/29)

Excess Baggage

In this action/adventure, Alicia Silverstone (also in "Batman & Robin") is a lonely rich girl who plans her own kidnapping. She involves an unwitting car thief ("The Usual Suspects'" Benicio del Toro), but her scheme gets out of control and she finds herself on the run from an ex-CIA assassin (Christopher Walken). Harry Connick Jr. ("Copycat"), Jack Thompson ("The Sum of Us") and Nicholas Turturro ("Mac") co-star. Marco Brambilla ("Demolition Man") directs; Max Adams, Dick Clement ("The Commitments") and Ian LaFrenais script; Silverstone produces with former A&M Films exec Bill Borden and Carolyn Kessler. (Columbia, 8/15; could move into July)

Leave It to Beaver

The Cleaver family is back and living in the '90s. Based on the classic TV show, this comedy features the same wholesome characters: Ward ("Happy Gilmore's" Christopher McDonald), June ("Cliffhanger's" Janine Turner), Wally (Erik Von Detten) and the Beaver (newcomer Cameron Finley). Andy Cadiff (TV's "Home Improvement") directs; Brian Levant ("Jingle All the Way") and Lon Diamond script; Levant produces with Robert Simonds (also "Happy Gilmore"). (Universal, 8/1)

Gone Fishin'

After winning a trip to the Florida Everglades, fishing friends Gus (Danny Glover) and Joe (Joe

Pesci) anticipate reeling in the catch of their dreams. All that changes when a con artist (Nick Brimble) steals their car to pursue a treasure buried in the swamp and when Rita (Rosanna Arquette) and Angie ("A Thin Line Between Love and Hate's" Lynn Whitfield) come onto the scene. Christopher Cain ("The Next Karate Kid") directs this Hollywood Pictures effort, which was held from summer 1996; Jill Mazursky Cody and Jeffrey Abrams (the duo who wrote "Taking Care of Business") script; Caravan's Roger Birnbaum and Julie Bergman Sender produce. (Buena Vista, 8/8)

Trial and Error

Charlie Tuttle ("Fly Away Home's" Jeff Daniels) has an important court date, one that could destroy or promote his career. Too bad he's a mess from the bachelor party he attended the night before. Luckily, his best friend ("Unstrung Heroes'" Michael Richards), an actor by profession, decides to take on his role of attorney. Rip Torn ("Defending Your Life") and Charlize Theron (also in "The Devil's Advocate") co-star. Jonathan Lynn ("My Cousin Vinny") directs; Sara Bernstein and Gregory Bernstein script; Gary Ross (writer of "Big") produces. (New Line, 8/29)

Great Expectations

In this contemporary updating of the Charles Dickens classic, a young fisherman becomes an artist and moves from Florida to New York for his first gallery opening. He must face troubles of the heart and soul when he discovers that the young woman he's long loved from afar will never love him, and that his career success has been funded by an escaped convict he aided in years past. Ethan Hawke ("Before Sunrise"), Gwyneth Paltrow ("Emma"), Robert De Niro, Anne Bancroft and Chris Cooper ("Lone Star") star. Alfonso Cuaron ("The Little Princess") directs; Mitch Glazer ("Three of Hearts") scripts; Art Linson ("Heat") produces. (Fox, August)

Steel

When a top-secret weapon he designed for the military falls into the hands of a street gang, metal specialist John Henry Irons forges a mission to stop the hoods—especially given that a worldwide crime organization has been eyeing the goods. Irons creates an armor suit and an alter ego perhaps even the brigands can't break. L.A. Lakers center Shaquille O'Neal ("Kazaam"), Judd Nelson ("New Jack City"), Annabeth Gish ("The Last Supper"), Richard Roundtree, Irma P. Hall and Ray J. Norwood star. Kenneth Johnson ("Short Circuit II") directs and scripts; music maven Quincy Jones produces with David Salzman and Joel Simon ("Hard to Kill"). (Warner, August)

Mortal Kombat II: Annihilation

This action/thriller sequel picks up where the original left off, as brave men and women attempt to overthrow a maniacal warlord planning to rule the Earth. Original stars Christopher Lambert, Robin Shou and Talisa Soto return with Deron McBee, Irina Pantaeva and Lynn Red Williams. John Leonetti ("Child's Play 3") directs; Brent V. Friedman ("Hellbound") and Bryce Zable script; Larry Kasanoff produces. (New Line, 8/1)

Desperate Measures

After finding a bone marrow donor for his sick son, police officer Frank Connor ("Hero's" Andy Garcia) gets more than he bargained for in this suspense thriller: The donor turns out to be a dangerously vicious murderer ("Multiplicity's" Michael Keaton, in a change-of-pace role) who plans to use the hospital setting to escape. Connor must both protect and contain the killer. Barbet Schroeder ("Single White Female") directs; David Klass, Henry Bean ("Internal Affairs") and Neal Jimenez ("Anaconda") script; Schroeder produces with Susan Hoffman (also "Single White Female"), Lee Rich and Gary Foster ("Tin Cup"). (TriStar, 8/8)

The Truman Show

Jim Carrey stars as Truman Burbank, a man whose every moment has been filmed by hidden cameras for a documentary soap opera. But, surrounded by actors who play his friends and family, Truman doesn't know of his superstardom—or even that he's on TV. When he learns the truth, he decides to escape the 24-hour surveillance. Dennis Hopper and Laura Linney ("Primal Fear") co-star. Peter Weir ("Fearless") directs; Andrew M. Niccol ("Gattaca") scripts, and he produces with Scott Rudin ("In and Out"). (Paramount, August/summer)

Spawn

Six years after his murder, government agent Al Simmons (Michael Jai White) returns to Earth as Spawn, a man with supernatural powers. Though he longs to avenge his own death, Spawn must choose between revenge or saving his loved ones from the menacing Violator ("The Pest's" John Leguizamo). Mark Dippe directs this adaptation of Todd McFarlane's comic book; Clint Goldman and Steve Williams produce. (New Line, 8/22)

The Full Monty

An unemployed steel worker, Gaz ("Trainspotting's" Robert Carlyle) has a crazy idea when the Chippendale dancers come to town: He decides to start his own dance team of steelworkers, including his best friend, a former foreman, an oldtimer, a handyman and a security guard with a death wish. Pretty soon, they're taking it all off. Mark Addy, William Snape, Steve Huison, Tom



Event Horizon

In 2046, a rescue team travels through the solar system, searching for a prototype of a spaceship that's been missing for seven years. What they find is a shocking secret. This science-fiction thriller stars Laurence Fishburne ("Othello"), Sam Neill ("Jurassic Park"), Kathleen Quinlan ("Apollo 13") and Joely Richardson ("101 Dalmatians"). Paul Anderson ("Mortal Kombat") directs; Philip Eisner scripts; Lawrence Gordon (who made the "Die Hard" series), Lloyd Levin ("The Rocketeer") and Jeremy Bolt produce. (Paramount, August/summer)

Wilkinson, Paul Barber and Hugo Speer co-star in this comedy. Peter Cattaneo directs; Simon Beaufoy scripts; Uberto Pasolini ("Palookaville") produces. (Fox Searchlight, August)

Mrs. Dalloway

In this adaptation of the Virginia Woolf novel, an older British woman in 1920s London recalls a summer day spent in the country in 1890, when she was beautiful and much courted. Three decades later, a key suitor from that day arrives, and subsequent events intertwine her fate with that of a tragic young man—a young man she will never meet. Vanessa Redgrave and Natascha McElhone ("Surviving Picasso") star with Rupert Graves ("Damage") and Michael Kitchen. Marleen Gorris, who directed the Oscar-winning "Antonia's Line" (also a First Look release), directs; actress-turned-writer Eileen Atkins ("The Dresser") scripts; Lisa Katselas Pare and Stephen Bayly ("The Diamond's Edge") produce. (First Look, August)

nowhere

Gregg Araki ("The Doom Generation") writes and directs this film about a day in the lives of a



COPLAND

A hearing-impaired sheriff (Sylvester Stallone) keeps the peace in a small New Jersey burg in which a number of New York police officers live. When a criminal investigation points toward his town, the sheriff must decide whether to protect the NYPD officers he idolizes or uphold the law. Harvey Keitel, Ray Liotta, Robert De Niro, Peter Berg ("The Last Seduction"), Janeane Garofalo ("The Truth About Cats and Dogs"), Michael Rapaport ("Metro") and Annabella Sciorra ("The Funeral") co-star. James Mangold ("Heavy") directs and scripts; Cary Woods ("Citizen Ruth") produces. (Miramax, 8/1)

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Response No. 14

group of wild L.A. teenagers: Handjob is doing drug deals, Montgomery fights a sexually harassing alien, and Dark dreams of an erotic fantasyland. James Duval (also "The Doom Generation"), Heather Graham ("Six Degrees of Separation"), Beverly D'Angelo ("Vegas Vacation"), former XXX actress Traci Lords ("Cry-Baby"), Shannen Doherty ("Mallrats"), John Ritter ("Slingblade"), Christopher Knight and Eve Plumb (TV's "Brady Bunch") star. Andrea Sperling and Nicole Arbib produce. (Fine Line, 8/22 ltd)

Full Speed

"Full Speed" explores the impetuousness and mortality of youth in a story about a young man named Samir who, after his best friend Rick dies, is overwhelmed by guilt and closes off from the world. Meanwhile, another group of friends—Quentin, Julie and Jimmy—is enjoying their youth. When Samir meets Quentin, all of their relationships change forever. Elodie Bouchez, Stephane Rideau, Pascal Servo, Meziane Bardadi, Romain Auger, Salim Kechiouche and Mohammed Dib star in this foreign-langauge film. Gael Morel directs and co-scripts; Laurent Benegui produces. (Strand, August)

How to Be a Player

A romeo (Bill Bellamy, best known from the cable show "MTV Jams") has his many-dalliances-at-once life disrupted by, of all things, the anthropology project of his sister ("B.A.P.s' "Natalie Desselle). Pierre Edwards co-stars. Lionel C. Martin directs; Troy Beyer scripts; Mark Burg, Todd Baker, Preston Holmes, Stan Lathan and Russell Simmons produce. (Gramercy, August)

An American Werewolf in Paris

In this sequel to the 1981 horror hit "An American Werewolf in London," the setting moves to the City of Light and the lead cast becomes Julie Delpy ("Before Sunrise"), Tom Everett Scott ("That Thing You Do!") and Julie Bowen. Anthony Waller (who helmed Sony Classics' "Mute Witness") directs and scripts; Richard Claus produces. (Miramax, 8/29 tent.)

SUMMER

Out to Sea

This romantic comedy follows the "Grumpy Old Men" duo of Walter Matthau and Jack Lemmon as they make mischief on the seas. A rogue (Matthau) persuades his brother-in-law (Lemmon) to be a dance instructor on a cruise liner so they can scheme to meet women and con money from them. Elaine Stritch, Dyan Cannon and Gloria DeHaven co-star. Martha Coolidge ("Three Wishes") directs; Robert Jacobs scripts; John Davis and David T. Friendly produce. (Fox, summer)

Free Willy 3

Willy the whale finds himself in high-seas trouble again. This time, an illegal whaling operation threatens the lives of the orca and his pod. Luckily, Willy's friend Jesse (Jason James Richter, reprising his role), now a 17-year-old whale tracker on a research vessel, teams with the 10-year-old son of the illegal whaler to attempt to save his friend. August Schellenberg and Annie Corley again co-star. Sam Pillsbury ("Starlight Hotel") directs; John Mattson ("Milk Money") scripts; Jennie Lew Tugend again produces. (Warner, summer)

A Simple Wish

Little Anabel Greening ("Matilda's" Mara Wilson) knows her father ("Michael's" Robert Pastorelli) longs to become a Broadway actor. Wanting to help him, Anabel wishes for a fairy godmother—but she gets Murray ("Mars Attacks!'s" Martin Short), the only male spellcaster and not a very good one at that. Then an evil fairy godmother (Kathleen Turner) arrives with a plan to rule the world's wishes. Michael Ritchie ("Cool Runnings") directs; Jeff Rothberg ("Hiding Out") scripts; Sid Sheinberg produces with sons Bill and Jon Sheinberg for their Bubble Factory. (Universal, summer/fall)

Ulee's Gold

Peter Fonda ("John Carpenter's Escape From L.A.") stars as Ulee Jackson, a bookkeeper who lives a quiet life with his two granddaughters in the Florida Panhandle. His wife deceased, his son Jimmy in jail, and his daughter-in-law Helen disappeared, Ulee wants only a peaceful existence. But soon Helen is in danger, and Ulee must rally to bring her home. Patricia Richardson (TV's "Home Improvement"), Christine Dunford, Jessica Biel, Vanessa Zima, Steven Flynn and J. Kenneth Campbell co-star. "Ulee's Gold" is directed, written and produced by Victor Nunez (the acclaimed "Ruby in Paradise"). (Orion, summer)

Napolean

This live-action film about a golden retriever puppy is set in the Australian wilderness, where Napolean (voiced by Adam Wylie) is carried when he proves too curious for his own good and he slips into a hot-air balloon. There, he befriends a parrot named Birdo (Bronson Pinchot), who helps guide him in the right direction. Debra Mooney, David Ogden Stiers, Wendy Makkena, Joan Rivers, Barry Humphries and Blythe Danner provide other voices. Mario Andreacchio directs, co-scripts and produces; Mark Saltzman and producer Michael Bourchier also help in scripting. (Goldwyn, summer)



This Is the Sea

In this Northern Ireland variation on the Romeo and Juliet theme, Hazel Stokes is a teenage daughter of a Protestant farmer and Malachy McAliskey is a Catholic young man in Belfast; when they meet, it's love among the ruins, as they are swept away by passions despite lingering animosity between their peoples. Richard Harris ("The Field"), Gabriel Bryne ("Into the West"), John Lynch ("Nothing Personal"), Samantha Morton and Marc O'Shea star. Mary McGuckian directs and scripts; Michael Garland produces. (First Look, summer)

Woman in the Dunes

Hiroshi Teshigahara's 1964 Oscar-nominated Japanese film is re-released with new prints. "Woman in the Dunes" follows an entomologist (Eiji Okada) who studies sand beetles. When he needs shelter, the villagers take him to the home of a widow (Kyoko Kishida). Her hut stands at the bottom of a pit, which continually fills with sand. In order to survive, the trapped man must constantly shovel while relying on the widow for food and drink. Before long, his hatred changes to passion. (Milestone, summer)

Antonio Gaudi

This 1985 Japanese film, like "Woman in the Dunes" directed by Hiroshi Teshigahara, explores the life of early 20th century architect Antonio Gaudi. Influenced by the architecture of the Spanish Middle Ages, Gaudi transforms the buildings of Barcelona, with the Temple of Sagrada Familia his crowning achievement. (Milestone, summer)

Slaves to the Underground

The story of three hipsters caught in a painful love triangle, "Slaves to the Underground" begins with musician Shelly, after being raped, dropping her writer boyfriend Jimmy and taking up with Suzy, the lead singer of an all-girl band named No Exits. Just as the girls are on the verge of success, Jimmy and Shelly rekindle their love affair, infuriating a possessive Suzy, who throws Shelly out of the band and her house. Marisa Ryan, Molly Gross and Jason Bortz star. Kristine Peterson (assistant director on "The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life") directs, and she produces with Raquel Caballes and scripter Bill Cody. (First Look, summer)

Deep Crimson

Directed by Mexican filmmaker Arturo Ripstein ("The Queen of the Night"), "Deep Crimson" follows the tragic life of Coral, a lonely mother well past her prime. When she meets handsome Nicolas, she knows he's a ruthless philanderer but leaves her children to be with him anyway and help him profit by seducing and robbing women. Regina Orozco, Daniel Gimenez Cacho, Marisa Paredes ("High Heels"), Julieta Egurrola, Patricia Reyes Espindola and Rosa Furman star. Paz Alicia Garciadiego scripts; Miguel Necoeches and Pablo Barbachano produce. (New Yorker, summer)



A Smile Like Yours

In this romantic comedy, a young married couple—he a construction contractor ("Dear God's" Greg Kinnear), she an aromatherapist ("Turbulence's" Lauren Holly)—are struggling to have a baby and juggle their careers. Meanwhile, a beautiful architect (Jill Hennessy) and a wealthy tycoon (Christopher McDonald, also in "Leave It to Beaver") bring outside pressures to the duo's happy marriage. Joan Cusack (also in "In and Out") and Jay Thomas co-star. Rysher CEO Keith Samples makes his directing debut, and he scripts with Kevin Meyer; David Kirkpatrick ("The Evening Star") and Tony Amatullo produce. (Paramount, summer)

Douglas Adams' Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

Based on the cult sci-fi novel by Douglas Adams, this film tells the story of Arthur Dent (Adams), who is abducted from Earth—before it is destroyed—by his friend Ford. They then embark on an intergalactic journey that takes them on a host of off-kilter adventures through outer space. Neil Davies directs; Robin Barty-King produces. (Dove, summer)

Nights of Cabiria

In this reissue of Federico Fellini's 1957 Italian-language drama, Giulietta Masina, Francois Perier, Amedeo Nazzari, Franca Marzi and Dorian Gray star in a bittersweet story (which on Broadway and in Hollywood became the Bob Fosse musical "Sweet Charity") about a Roman prostitute who dreams of attaining respectability and romance. Fellini co-scripts with Ennio Flaiano and Tullio Pinelli; Dino De Laurentiis produces for Les Films Marceau; Nino Rota provides the film's score. (Strand, summer)

This World, Then the Fireworks

In yet another filmic adaptation of pulp fictioneer Jim Thompson's work, Billy Zane ("The Phantom"), Gina Gershon ("Bound"), Sheryl Lee ("Mother Night") and Rue McClanahan star in a story of murder, blackmail, drugs, sexual abuse, whoring, duplicity, incest, patricide and deceit in a crime movie that its director, Michael Oblowitz, describes as "film tres noir." Larry Gross adapts; Chris Hanley, Brad Wyman and Larry Gross produce. The film screened at the recent Sundance festival. (Orion, summer)

Inside the Goldmine

When Jordan and his friend Clyde become suspects in a murder case, they are forced to reevaluate their friendship— especially when Jordan must decide whether to ask his Hollywood producer father to bail them out. Writer/director Josh Evans ("The Doors") stars with Alan Marshall, Gary Chazan, Alicia Tully Jensen and Charlie Spradling; actor Adam Stern ("The Competition") produces. (Dove, summer)

La Sentinelle

Emmanuel Salinger stars in this 2 1/2-hour French-langauge thriller for director Arnaud Desplechin. (Strand, summer)

Forever Mozart

Cinematic iconoclast Jean-Luc Godard in this French-language feature ruminates on the relationship between art and politics and the role of the cinema as he weaves together four storylines: In each, an elderly director is attempting to cast and film a movie about recent events in Bosnia. Ingrid Rubio, Carlos Fuentes and Agata Lys star; Godard also scripts; Alain Sarde and Ruth Waldenburger produce. (New Yorker, summer)

For May movie releases, see our April issue's Trailers section.

SHOWEST 1997
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TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

MONDAY, MARCH 3

7:00 a.m.	Al Lapidus Variety Club Golf Classic	Angel Park
9:00 a.m.	Lapidus Variety Club Tennis Classic	Bally's Courts
10:30 a.m.	*International Industry Address	Pacific Ballroom (second floor, south tower)
11:00 a.m.	*International Panel	Pacific Ballroom (second floor, south tower)
12:30 p.m.	*International Delegates Luncheon. Host: Buena Vista Intl.	Celebrity Room (casino level)
2:30 p.m.	*International Panel	Pacific Ballroom (second floor, south tower)
4:00 p.m.	*International Reception. Host: Columbia TriStar Intl.	TBA
6:00 p.m.	Keynote Address: MGM Inc. chairman & CEO Frank Mancuso. Presentation of the Robert W. Selig ShoWester of the Year Award to Sony/Loews Theatres chairman Barrie Lawson Loeks	Celebrity Room (casino level)
7:00 p.m.	Welcoming Reception. Hosts: Eastman Kodak and Imax Corp.	TBA

**By Invitation Only*

TUESDAY, MARCH 4

8:00 a.m.	Breakfast. Host: Nestle. Presentation of the B.V. Sturdivant Award to R/C Theatres president of operations J. Wayne Anderson; Customer Service Award to John Greiner, AMC; NAC Bert Nathan Memorial Award to Proctor Cos. president Bruce Proctor	Pacific Ballroom (second floor, south tower)
9:45 a.m.	Opening Ceremonies	Celebrity Room (casino level)
10:45 a.m.	Panel. Host: The Hollywood Reporter	Celebrity Room (casino level)
12:15 p.m.	Event. Host: Sony Pictures	Bally's Events Center
2:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.	**Trade Fair**	Pavilion
3:30 p.m.	Panel Workshops. Host: The Hollywood Reporter	Las Vegas Rooms (third floor, south tower)
4:30 p.m.	The Hollywood Reporter Movie T.E.A.M. Awards	Las Vegas Rooms (third floor, south tower)
6:30 p.m.	Reception. Host: Trimark Pictures	Pacific Ballroom (second floor, south tower)
8:00 p.m.	Event. Host: 20th Century Fox	Bally's Hotel

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5

8:00 a.m.	Breakfast. Host: Reynolds & Reynolds. Ida Schreiber Award to Ann Craft, secretary and general manager of the Theatre Owners of Indiana	Pacific Ballroom (second floor, south tower)
10:00 a.m.	Panel. Hosts: CFI and Variety	Celebrity Room (casino level)
12:15 p.m.	Event. Host: Warner Bros.	Bally's Events Center
2:00 p.m.-6:30 p.m.	**Trade Fair**	Pavilion
4:30 p.m.	Panel Workshops. Hosts: CFI and Variety	Las Vegas Rooms (third floor, south tower)
6:30 p.m.	Reception. Host: Pepsi-Cola Co.	Pacific Ballroom (second floor, south tower)
8:15 p.m.	Event. Host: Paramount Pictures	Bally's Events Center

THURSDAY, MARCH 6

8:00 a.m.-12 noon	**Trade Fair**	Pavilion
9:00 a.m.	Exhibitor Relations Open House	Pacific Ballroom (second floor, south tower)
12:15 p.m.	Event. Host: New Line Cinema	Bally's Events Center
3:00 p.m.	Specialized Market Reception	Skyview Rooms (26th floor, north tower)
6:00 p.m.	The ShoWest Awards (live telecast). Host: Sinbad	MGM Grand Garden
8:00 p.m.	Wrap Party. Host: The Coca-Cola Co.	MGM Grand Hotel

SHOWEST 1997
TRADE SHOW FLOOR PLAN

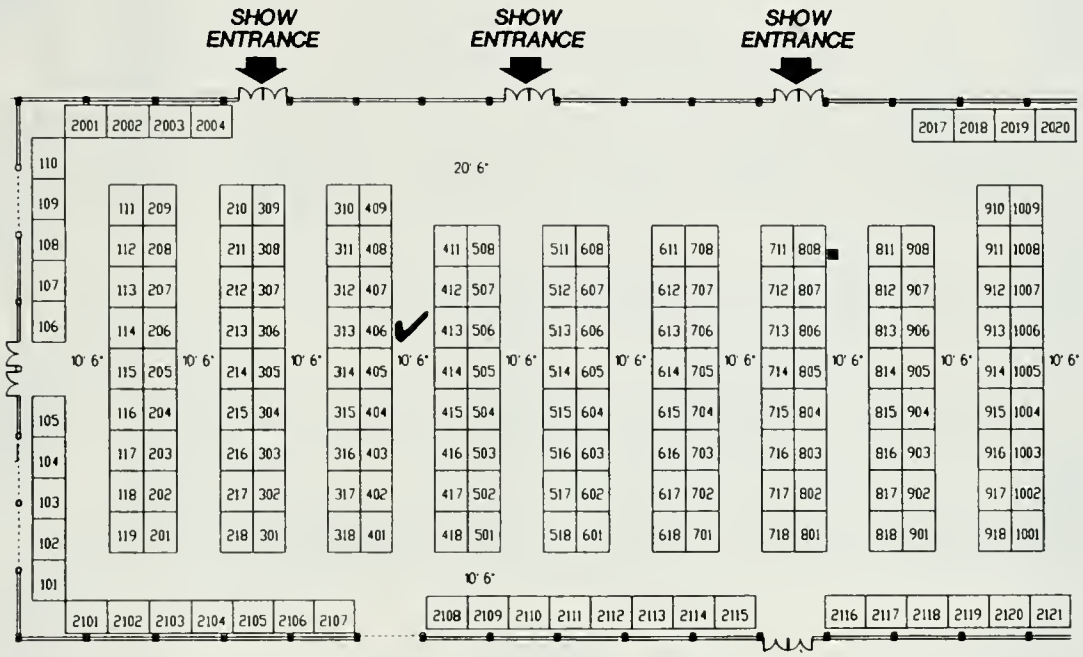
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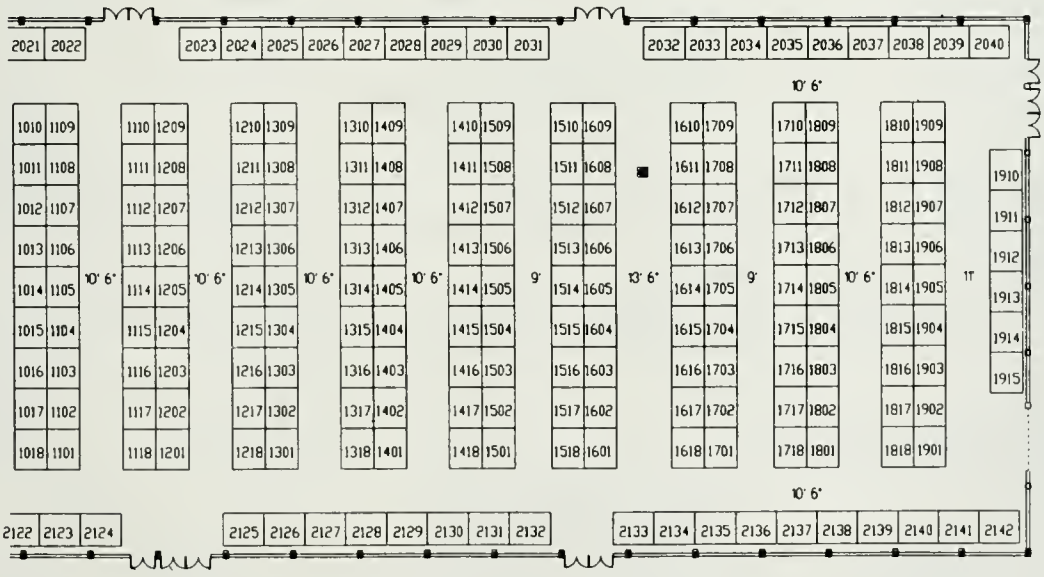
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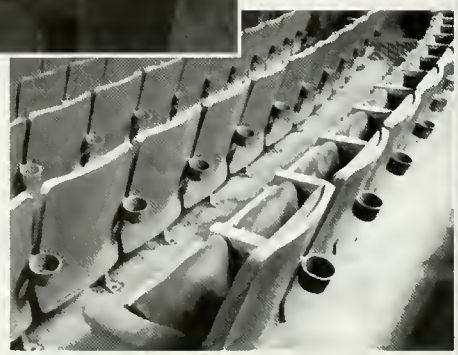
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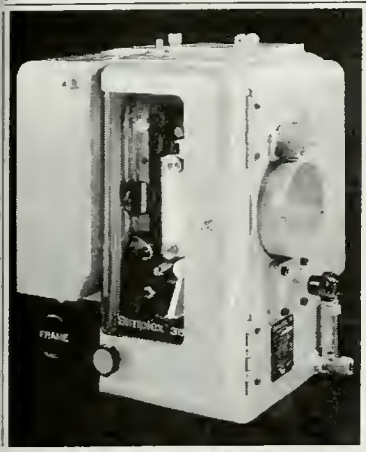
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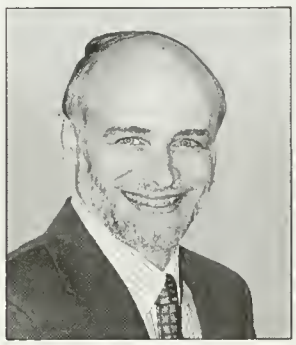


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Response No. 51



IF THEY KNEW WHAT YOU WERE MISSING: *Part One*

WHY TODAY'S MOTION PICTURE SOUND SYSTEMS FAIL TO MAKE THE GRADE AND WHY THEY CAN'T SOUND BETTER

By John F. Allen

Motion picture sound is critically important in setting the emotional atmosphere of a film. Sound alone is often the determining factor in an audience knowing if a scene is a comedy or tragedy. Obviously, the better a theatre's sound presentation, the better the film works. If sound is, as some insist, fully half the show, how can exhibitors best exploit its potential? Here, BOXOFFICE contributing writer John F. Allen begins a four-part series of articles exploring the current state of movie theatre sound and providing valuable guidance.

Motion picture soundtracks are recorded with painstaking detail. It's not unlike the composition and performance of a symphony, and some films have indeed sounded symphonic in their overall effect. For every film, hundreds, even thousands, of sounds are developed, performed, recorded, assembled and carefully mixed together over several labor-intensive weeks with one goal in mind: to create the believable illusion that everything the audience is listening to sounds natural and convincing.

Building sound effects is an art form all its own. We must believe that we are hearing the sound of "The Lost World's" dinosaurs even though no one ever has, and no recording of these extinct animals could possibly exist. The audience at "Titanic" must believe the sounds they're hearing are from a sinking ship, even though they've never heard such sounds.

Imagine what would happen if a motion picture was shown on a screen with certain areas blacked out—a dark square here, a dark oval there. Imagine the uproar that would ensue in the theatre if an audience was deprived of so much of a film. Yet this is precisely the current situation with the sound systems in the vast majority of today's theatres.

So much of the sound recorded on modern soundtracks never reaches the audience's ears that the situation can only be called a disgrace. What often is heard is either shrill, or so spoiled by colorations and distortion, that audiences could rightly say they had seen two different movies if they were able to see the same film in two theatres—one with a typical sound system and the other with a fully qualified sound system.

"Big" pictures can and do attract audiences to virtually any theatre, no matter the presentation quality or anything else. But such "blockbuster" opportunities to provide a first-class entertainment experience, and thus encourage irregular patrons to return to the theatre more often, are lost when they are treated to less than thrilling sound. Many customers will hear better sound in their cars going to and from poorly equipped theatres. This would be a serious problem even if millions of dollars in repeat business were not at stake—but of course they are.

In my travels, I have encountered too many theatres with poor and even deplorable sound.

Two-way, relatively inefficient loudspeakers are simply incapable of accurately reproducing contemporary sound.

This article marks the beginning of the most comprehensive series of pieces that I have written to date. These articles will attempt to describe in some detail the many complex elements that have contributed to the current "state of the art." Rather than biting the hand that feeds me, I am endeavoring to help it. Once the complete series has appeared, any reader with questions or comments is welcome to write to me care of BOXOFFICE.

WHAT IS BAD SOUND?

Perhaps at this point I should state what qualifies, or at least ought to qualify, as "bad sound." A sound system that allows audiences to understand a film's dialogue is certainly essential for them to understand the story, but it is hardly enough.

Any sound reproduction that is unnatural or colored in tone, or lacking in fullness or dynamic range, or unfaithful to the recording in any way, should not be regarded as acceptable. Those all-too-frequent presentations in which music or background sounds are too loud, too dull or altogether inaudible should not be regarded as acceptable. Phony, distorted and inadequate bass is prevalent in the industry. (Just think of all the subwoofers that have failed.) Finally, it must be understood that the typical "honky" dialogue sound so prominent in so many theatres for so many years is *bad sound*. Unless someone were to speak through a hose, a human voice simply doesn't sound that way.

When Dolby Stereo was introduced 20 years ago, theatre sound systems needed to be upgraded. Thousands of single-channel monophonic systems were indeed turned into four-channel stereo systems. But many exhibitors proceeded as though just adding speakers and amplifiers would be sufficient, and that's about all that was done.

Yet the dynamic range and inner detail afforded by Dolby Stereo was also greater than had been the case with mono optical soundtracks. This fact has been all but ignored by the exhibition industry. In my opinion, the result has been disastrous for the potential of

film sound. Considering this industry's unflattering record in implementing Dolby Stereo, how well can one expect the changes required for the digital sound revolution to be carried out? What are the real problems that must be addressed for the full potential of digital sound to be realized?

THEATRE LOUDSPEAKERS

Let's begin by examining the most important as well as the weakest link in the entire audio chain: the speakers. With the widespread use of two-way, relatively inefficient loudspeakers, today's theatres (and even some dubbing stages) are simply incapable of accurately reproducing contemporary film sound, whether it is analog or digital. As typically installed, these speakers are just too small to do the job in a room the size of a theatre. (See Figure 1, right.) One need only hear a film in a theatre with a large and powerful enough sound system to grasp this fact.

And the difference can be shocking. The sad truth is that some of the speaker manufacturers have simply marketed their public address products to movie theatres—almost as an afterthought. At least one manufacturer publicly justified its strategy by noting that its two-way system exhibited a frequency response similar to the "older" theatre speakers of the 1940s and '50s—frankly, an amazing admission. On their part, exhibitors have often been unwilling to make the investment necessary for sound systems powerful enough to correctly handle stereo, let alone digital.

With few exceptions, today's theatres have not been equipped with speakers designed to be placed behind movie screens. (Surround speakers are a separate subject; more on them later.) This isn't to say that motion picture sound systems can't be built with such components. They can. But, because of their limited size, it requires more of them than anyone installs in theatres, or to my knowledge ever has.

In 1980, when I began writing for BOXOFFICE, I said that separate super-tweeters were required to overcome the effects of movie screens and to deliver the highest quality sound evenly throughout a theatre. Frankly, the call for such three-speaker systems was met with plenty of argument; however, it's interesting to note that at least two manufacturers are finally beginning to introduce three-way screen speakers.

My work with three-way systems (and later with four-way systems) was not born of whim or a desire to be different. There are several genuine weaknesses in the two-way speaker approach, particularly in the way they have been used in theatres. In typical two-way systems, all the high frequencies from 500 Hertz (Hz) on up are delivered by a single diaphragm of a compression driver. The weight of this diaphragm limits its high-frequency capability. In order to reproduce the highest frequencies, the diaphragm must be very light. Light or heavy as the case may be, the high-frequency output of all high-frequency compression drivers begins to fall off above approximately 2,000 Hz. Without some form of equalization, moviegoers couldn't hear any treble frequencies at all in loudspeakers using compression drivers.

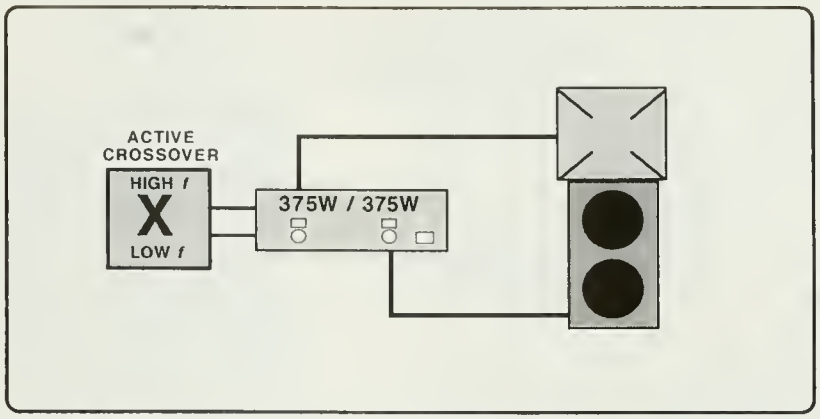


Figure 1: A typical two-way speaker scenario.

This natural high-frequency loss of the driver is made worse by the extra high-frequency losses caused by placement behind a screen. Measurements of the losses due to a movie screen vary with the speaker used, but it is never less than 2 decibels (dB) and has been reported by some to be significantly greater. Whatever the screen-loss factor, it must be added to the high-frequency equalization required to make the compression driver's diminishing output become the same at all frequencies, or "flat" as it arrives at the audience's ears. Done electrically, the amount of high-frequency boosting required to accomplish this can be as much as 15 to 16 dB at 16,000 Hz. Since each 3 dB is a full doubling of needed amplifier power, this becomes a very, very large amount of equalization—so large that it can stress the diaphragm, causing distortion, shrillness and sometimes outright failure of the compression driver.

If a system is designed to be acoustically self-equalized, the high-frequency boost is reduced to no more than 3 dB, eliminating driver stress. With the introduction of more three-way screen speakers, the sonic situation should improve somewhat, at least in new theatres. Unfortunately, the industry must now face the issue of the existing theatres.

WOOFERS

The bottom half of typical two-way theatre loudspeakers has evolved from rather large vented cabinet/limited bass horn combinations to much smaller and simpler vented direct radiator constructions. There is much debate about the use of these direct radiator woofers. Manufacturers love them because they are so simple to build: six pieces of plywood, two drivers, some fasteners and a connector. What could be easier? Nonetheless, I much prefer (with much support and precedence) fully horn-loaded woofer sections.

The differences between these speaker constructions, their sound quality, their power and the way they are usually employed are substantial. First, of course, is the matter of speaker efficiency and thus total output. A well-designed horn woofer is about 20 percent efficient; a direct radiator, 2 1/2 percent. This

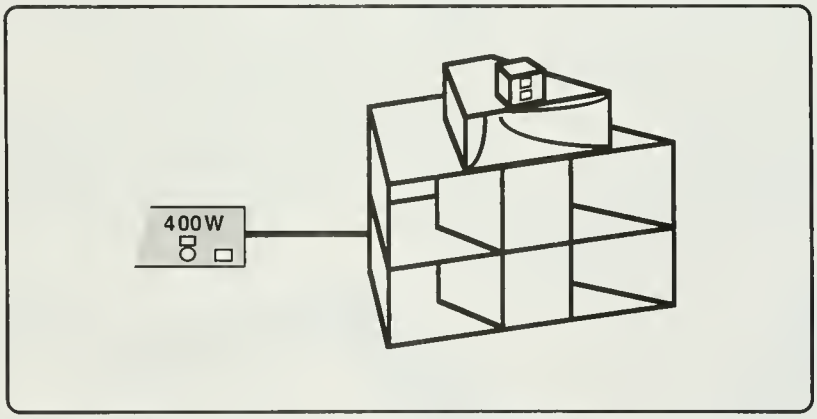


Figure 2: A typical horn-based speaker scenario.

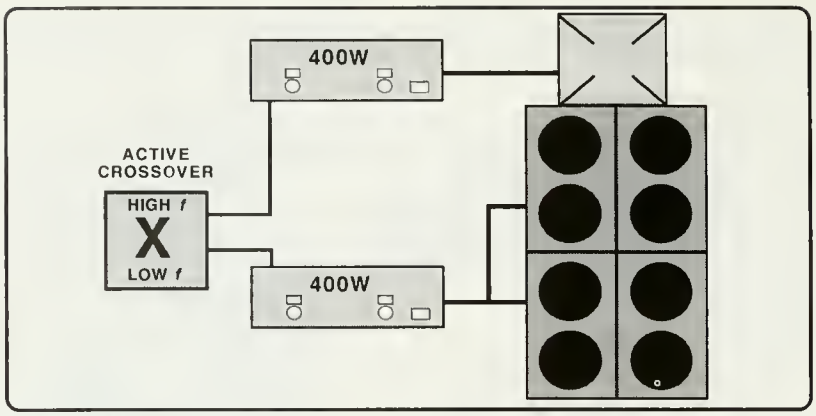


Figure 3: The effect of using four direct-radiator woofers for each current single unit.

means the direct radiator will require 800 percent more amplifier power than the horn to play at the same loudness. Because both devices are limited by the power handling capacity of the drivers, and because drivers with the same capacity can be built and installed in either cabinet, the horn woofer's power output will always be eight times greater than the direct radiator when both are at maximum power.

Second is the issue of radiating area, an issue that's often ignored or sometimes even scoffed at. This can also be described as coupling area—the area of the loudspeaker that is coupled to, or acts on, the air in the room. Intuitively, we know this is very important; otherwise, a transistor radio with a two-inch speaker could sound like a symphony orchestra.

Speakers are nothing more than air pumps. If one imagines a piston sloshing alone up and down in a pond, and then imagines adding a cylinder around the piston, one can immediately conceive how the cylinder would make the piston a more effective pump. This is because the cylinder allows the piston to control more water with each stroke. The same holds true for loudspeakers.

The total radiating area of a direct-radiator loudspeaker is confined to the piston area of the moving paper cone(s). In a direct radiator theatre woofer with the usual complement of two 15-inch drivers, this area is about 1.6 square feet. In other words, if only one such cabinet is used per screen channel, two pieces of paper, each .8 square feet in area, is all that each channel will have flailing away at all the tens of thousands of cubic feet of air in the theatre. (Again, see Figure 1.) The same is true if the cabinet is built as a subwoofer. In fact, this is true no matter how large the cabinet is.

A fully horn-loaded woofer is a completely different approach. The horn is an acoustical transformer. Using a sort of leverage, if you will, the cones of the drivers do not act directly on the air in the room. Rather, they act on the air in the throat of the horn. As the sound waves travel down the path of the horn, the horn's cross-sectional area expands at a determined rate. Recalling the cylinder/piston analogy, one can see how the drivers of a horn control a considerably larger mass of air than does a direct radiator. It's this large mass that then acts on the air in the room. The radiating area of a horn-type woofer is the area of the mouth of the horn. This can be over 10 square feet per cabinet, or six times greater per pair of 15-inch drivers. (See Figure 2, p. SW-47.) This is a huge acoustic difference, and it's why the Sensurround systems were built with horn-loaded woofers.

Another advantage with the well-designed horns is their reduction in non-harmonically related distortion products. This kind of distortion is generally referred to as modulation distortion or inter-modulation (IM) distortion.

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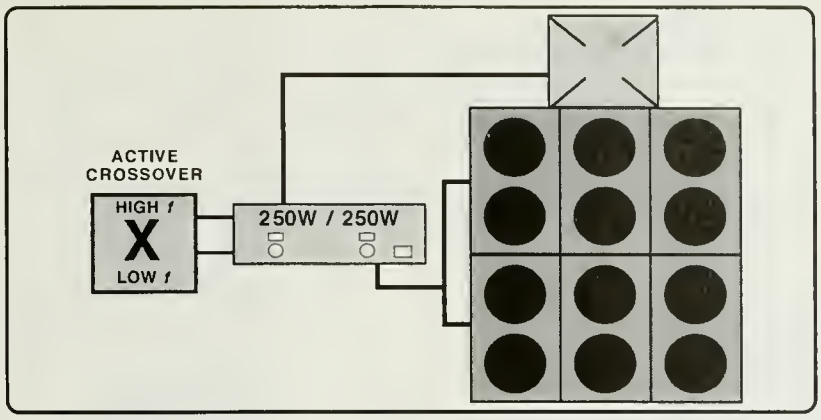
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Figure 4: The effect of using six direct-radiator woofers for each current single unit.

Although IM distortion is usually listed in the specifications and reviews for amplifiers as well as other electronic audio devices, it is virtually never mentioned by loudspeaker manufacturers. This is because loudspeakers produce such high amounts of this kind of distortion. A direct-radiator device will often exhibit 10 times the distortion that is produced by a horn playing at the same level. (This assertion is often and sometimes vehemently disputed; however, those who seem to dispute the loudest talk only about harmonically related distortion products—which, it turns out, are indeed roughly equivalent in both types of speaker systems. See "Total Distortion in Modern Theatre Woofer Systems" in the Oct. 1992 BOXOFFICE, p. 90.)

In my opinion, based on decades of experience, one of the most important reasons that motion picture sound systems cannot sound better than they do is a critical lack of low-frequency radiating area. Much of the inner detail and sense of spaciousness recorded in the soundtrack is effectively eliminated. Overtones and low-level bass sounds are stripped away; louder bass sounds lack punch, and they suffer from coloration, distortion and a phony quality. "Real bass" is replaced by the sound of two rather small and totally overwhelmed .8 square foot pieces of paper that are working much too hard.

This isn't meant to disparage such speaker systems, as these deficiencies aren't caused by the use of direct-radiator low-frequency cabinets. Rather, it is because there is not enough of them. When such cabinets are selected for use in theatres, there simply must be more of them, and at the current time there isn't.

A good rule of thumb for theatres more than 80 feet deep would be to use at least four double 15-inch direct-radiator woofers for every single unit now in use. Six woofer sections per channel would make a direct-radiator system equivalent to a horn-based system and result in a significant improvement in sound quality as well as reliability over what is possible with single cabinet installations. (See Figures 3 and 4.) Monophonic theatres could get by with a single direct radiator, but theatres equipped with digital or Dolby SR need much more. Another excellent rule about woofers: If you can lift them, they're too small.

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John F. Allen is the founder and president of High Performance Stereo in Newton, Mass. He is also the inventor of the HPS-4000 cinema sound system and in 1984 was the first to bring digital sound to the cinema.

Part two will appear in the July 1997 issue. Its topics: surround speakers, subwoofers and amplifiers.



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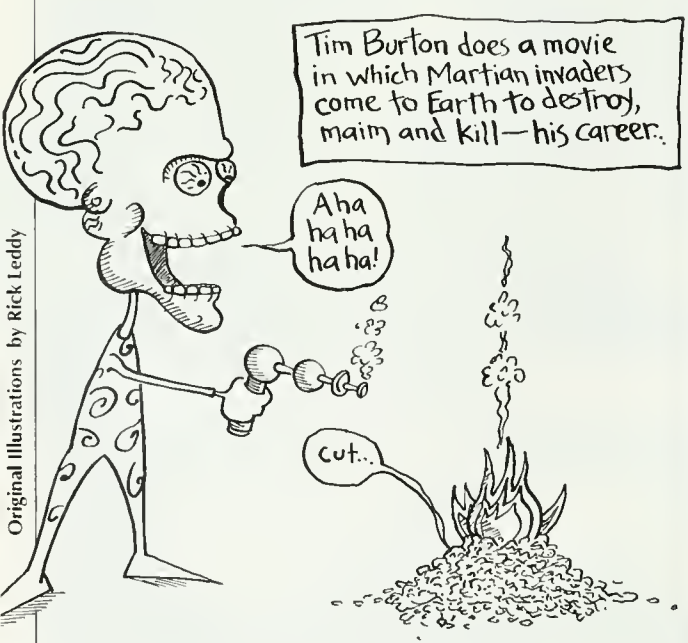


The Emission Impossible Award
To "The Nutty Professor," the highest 'grossing' film of all time to feature more than a dozen fart jokes. Honorable mention goes to "Beavis and Butt-head Do America," for reasons we refuse to describe in detail because we're just not that kind of magazine.

The Nice Job in "Primal Fear" But You Were Even Better on "The Honeymooners" Award
To Edward Norton.

The Extraterrestrials Don't Do Windows Award
To "Independence Day," a film in which vicious and supposedly technologically advanced space invaders were defeated because their computer system was both Macintosh compatible and a mainframe design. Apparently these particular aliens haven't upgraded since 1985. Still, given the fact that Microsoft's Bill Gates already rules planet earth, it's good to know Apple can still find a market *some*where...

The Never Can Say Goodbye Award
To "The Hunchback of Notre Dame," the Disney animation epic that stayed in release for over 200 days as part of Disney's arduous but eventually successful strategy to keep its string of cel animation musicals which broke the $100 million mark at the boxoffice alive. In an era in which other studios seem hellbent on slashing the video release window to the bone, Disney is to be congratulated on the seriousness with which it still takes every potential theatre admissions dollar.



Original Illustrations by Rick Leddy

The Lost in Space Award
To Tim Burton's "Mars Attacks!," a hundred million dollars worth of star salaries and state-of-the-art digital imaging in search of a plot. Apparently the first thing the martians did when they invaded was to eradicate earth's ability to tell a story clearly...

The Bite the Hand that Feeds You Award
To Steven Spielberg, from a boxoffice standpoint the most successful filmmaker who has ever lived, for producing "Twister" through his Amblin Entertainment and then allowing that blockbuster to come out on videotape while it was still in the top 20 at the national boxoffice. The National Association of Theatre Owners says exhibition needs a six month window of exclusivity on movies to stay healthy. With only four months, 21 days between its May 10 theatrical debut and its October 1 appearance as a sell-through item in supermarkets and video stores throughout the U.S., "Twister" set a land speed record in 1996. After the billions his movies have grossed in moviehouses, if Spielberg doesn't owe it to exhibition to hold the line on the video release window, nobody does.

The Your 15 Minutes of Fame Are Up Award
To Divine Brown, porno actress, Japanese TV pitchperson, and one-time paid paramour of actor Hugh Grant, who was again picked up for prostitution (this time in Vegas) in 1996. The world yawned; what a difference a year makes.

The Twisted Tongue Award for Worst Execution of a Movie Accent
To Dennis Quaid for his be'knight'ed attempt to do British in "Dragonheart." Honorable mention goes to Al Pacino for his Jesse Jackson-ish cadences in a speech to a group of angry black voters as the mayor of New York in "City Hall."

Our 1996 Booby Prize
Goes to Pamela Anderson Lee for her "performance" in "Barb Wire." Honorable mention goes to Lisa Marie as Martian Girl in "Mars Attacks!" and to Mary "Better Late Than Never" Tyler Moore in "Flirting With Disaster."

The Nothing at Stake Award
To vampire brothel flick "Bordello of Blood." Correct us if we're wrong, but wasn't "From Dusk Till Dawn" a bad idea the *first* time?

The Knock on Wood Award
To Jonathan Taylor Thomas, who followed last year's failure "Tom and Huck" with this year's failure "The Adventures of Pinocchio." Repeat after us Jonathan: Macaulay Culkin.

1996's Most Revealing Star Moment
Demi Moore in "Striptease." What if they paid someone $12 million to take off her clothes and nobody came?

The Cruise Control Award
To Tom Terrific, who, with "Jerry Maguire," became the first star in movie history to see five films in a row gross more than $100 million at the boxoffice. While the rumors of his heroic offscreen deeds may have been somewhat exaggerated (a cloud of skepticism seems to be hovering around that burning yacht he supposedly saved), it's probable Cruise may also have saved a couple of lives in 1996 as well. All in all, one heck of a year.

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The Not a Friend In the World Award
To Matt Leblanc, David Schwimmer and Jennifer Aniston, popular TV coffeehouse denizens by day, failed movie players by night; for the films "Ed," "The Pallbearer" and "She's the One," respectively. We can't help wondering if the Central Perk cafe serves a "flavor of the month..."

The 1996 Airball
Goes to two pro basketballers attempting the difficult transition from court to screen: Shaquille O'Neal, star of the beyond dreadful Disney kid flick "Kazaam," and Michael Jordan, who only *seems* to have done better in the unbelievably expensive "Space Jam" until you do the math. Don't quit your day jobs, fellas. Honorable mentions: "Celtic Pride" and "Eddie," which proved that the failure of audiences to embrace basketball comedy "The Air Up There" a few years back was no fluke.



The Maybe We're Just Getting Old Award
To BOXOFFICE MAGAZINE, for still not understanding how the "Beavis and Butt-head" movie could have made so much money.

The Eye of the Beholder Award
To Barbra Streisand, star, director, *auteur* behind "The Mirror Has Two Faces," a film about an ugly duckling becoming a swan which was universally derided for La Streisand's decision to play her "ugly" scenes in glamorous moviestar lighting and "drab" costuming worthy of Ingrid Bergman in her prime.

1996's Most Politically Correct Film Personality
Disney topper Michael Eisner, who cleaned up Disneyland's "Pirates of the Caribbean" ride so that the thieving, drunken murderous animatronic puppets who inhabit it no longer chase women. Presumably, this now makes them suitable role models for children.

1996's Most Politically Incorrect Film Personality
Kurt Russell who, as "Escape From L.A.'s" 21st-century Clint Eastwood sound-alike Snake Plissken, laid waste to the entire city of Los Angeles in part so he could locate a contranband pack of cigarettes.

The Not Entirely Up to Speed Award
To Keanu Reeves, for bowing out of the "Speed" franchise so he could pursue his *real* creative goals as frontman for his reputedly mediocre alternative rock band Dogstar. Kind of gives integrity a bad name, doesn't it?

The Apt Title Award, Pt. I
To "Mr. Wrong," the Ellen Degeneres star turn which in retrospect could have been named for the production executive who greenlit it.

The Three Strikes You're Out Award
To Tom Arnold for his three 1996 "comedies:" "Big Bully," "Carpool" and "The Stupids." There ought to be a law.

The Burst Bubble Award
To former MCA Inc. president and COO Sidney J. Sheinberg, a brilliant and visionary executive who, in the days when he was Lew Wasserman's right hand man at Universal, helped discover Steven Spielberg among many other accomplishments. Since departing MCA in the aftermath of the Bronfman family purchase, Sheinberg has produced two feature films: last summer's unsuccessful "Flipper" and this coming summer's, um, eagerly-awaited bigscreen version of "McHale's Navy" starring, aah, Tom Arnold. Maybe it's just a slump...

The Apt Title Award, Pt. II
To "Phenomenon," the film which, along with the similarly successful "Michael" at year's end, proved that John Travolta's appeal is a lot more broad-based than his work in "Pulp Fiction" and "Get Shorty" may have implied. Enough with the comeback stories; the man is unquestionably here to stay.

The Maybe Oedipus Had the Right Idea Award
To Ted Turner who, when cutbacks in his media empire were mandated by the Turner/Time Warner merger, allegedly fired his own son with the words, "You're toast."

The Black Flag Fumigation Award
To "Joe's Apartment." A movie about bugs. Disgusting bugs. Filmed in loving close-up. Gee, how did this one ever fail?

The Carrey-ed Away Award
To "Cable Guy" director Ben Stiller, who stated publicly that the last thing on earth he wanted to be was the first director of a Jim Carrey star vehicle that grossed less than $100 million.

The Didn't They Cover the First Amendment at Your Law School? Award
To John Grisham, for his very public pronouncements that the film "Natural Born Killers" should be subjected to legal action under existing consumer protection laws. Does that make Grisham's bestseller "The Firm" liable for all the bad courtroom melodrama moviegoers have been subjected to in the last few years?

Movies We'd Like to See, Pt. II
Dustin Hoffman and Jack Lemmon in "My Fellow American Buffaloes." Two buddy ex-presidents join forces against a nefarious sitting president. The twist is: they all swear a lot.

The Smorgas-Borg Award
To Alice Krige for her delicious performance as the Borg Queen, the android dominatrix at the hub of "Star Trek: First Contact." Quick. What's the Klingon phrase for "hubba hubba"?

The Least Apt Title Award
To "Unforgettable," the don't-blink-or-you'll-miss-it Ray Liotta suspense film directed by John ("The Last Seduction") Dahl, who should know better.

The Wigged Out Award
To Michelle Pfeiffer, for all those hairstyles in "Up Close and Personal."

The Apt Title Award, Pt. III
To "The Frighteners," for scaring away the audience. Good luck on "Spin City," Michael.

The "Comedy is Tragedy Plus Time" Award
To "Jingle All the Way," another underperforming comedy from Arnold Schwarzenegger. Turbo Man my eye; everybody knows the toy the kids wanted in '96 was "Tickle Me Elmo."

The Nuclear Family Award
To the Brady Bunch. Irradiate them before they sequelize again!



Movies We'd Like to See, Pt. III
"Rin Tin Tin Cup." Kevin Costner essays the role of a blind but raffish amateur golfer who, with the help of his seeing eye dog, makes it all the way to the U.S. Open golf tournament. In a unique twist, the woman he's crazy about is played by Kathy Najimy. Hey, the guy's blind, alright?

The I Fought the Law Award
To Robert Downey Jr. and Martin Lawrence, two performers who were in and out of trouble with the authorities for much of 1996.

The Too Close For Comfort Award
To Sony Pictures Entertainment, for its ill-advised decision to break with tradition by releasing its Jim Carrey comedy "The Cable Guy" to competing theatres in the same over-crowded markets. Yet another reason why this one failed to draw.

The Joke's On Them Award
To "Mystery Science Theatre 3000," a TV show making fun of horrible old movies, which made the leap to the big screen with a movie fully worthy of being screened on the original show. And PS: "This Island Earth" deserved better.

The Least Apt Title Award, Pt. II
To "Brain Candy." The comedy troupe that made it is called "The Kids in the Hall." They were probably trying to leave the theatre.

Worst Trend of the Year
Honest but speechifying attorneys *a la* "Ghost of Mississippi," "The Chamber" and "A Time to Kill." John Grisham, what hast thou wrought? And while we're on that subject...

The It's a Small World After All Award
To "Independence Day," a film which wiped out almost the entire planet earth only to discover that the seven people left all *know* each other!

The Number One With a Bullet Award
To Baz Luhrman, for his gun crazy rendering of Shakespeare's "Romeo + Juliet."

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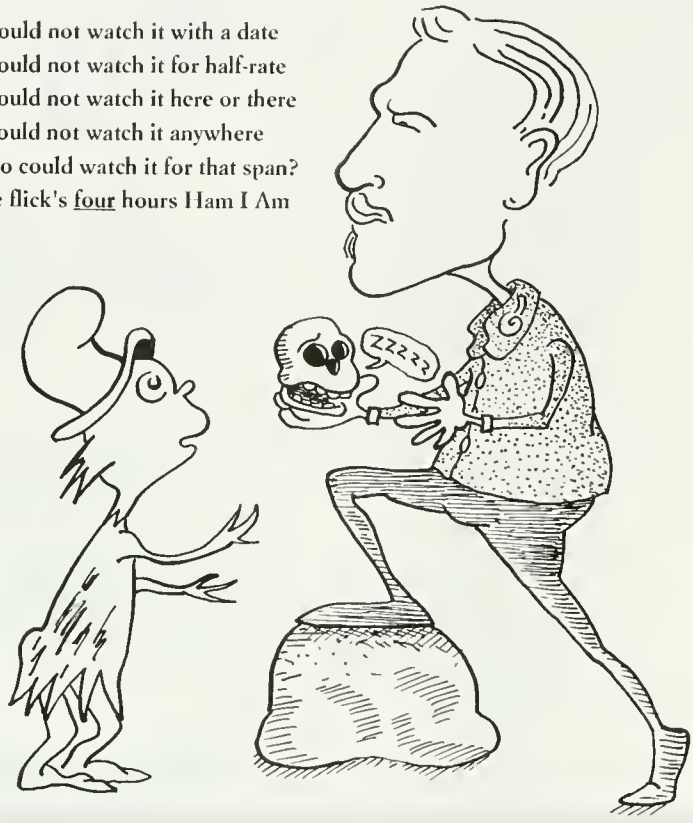
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The Great White Hype Award
To Matthew McConaughey and Gwyneth Paltrow, two fine, attractive and talented young actors who got way too much press for way too few movies in 1996.

The Living Dahl Award
To "Matilda" and "James and the Giant Peach," two surprisingly dark, surprisingly intelligent children's films based on books by Roald Dahl.

I would not watch it with a date
I would not watch it for half-rate
I would not watch it here or there
I would not watch it anywhere
Who could watch it for that span?
The flick's four hours Ham I Am



Movies We'd Like to See, Part IV
"Green Eggs and Hamlet." Kenneth Branagh is the Melancholy Dane. The "vocal talents" of Boris Karloff are featured as Sam I Ambic. Seuss and Shakespeare: Two great poets that go great together.

The Going, Going Gone? Award
To Marlon Brando, indulging his passions for eccentric line readings and bizarre costume effects in "The Island of Dr. Moreau." Val Kilmer didn't do himself any favors by sleepwalking through this one, either. Honorable mention: Jack Nicholson who, with two roles in "Mars Attacks!" is twice as culpable as everyone else.

The "Un"-Sound Award
To Drew Barrymore, the only member of Woody Allen's determinedly unmusical cast in "Everybody Says I Love You" who had her songs voiced by someone else.

The Uneasy Rider Award
To "Escape From L.A.'s" Peter Fonda, for travestying the hippie persona that made him a star a quarter of a century ago in the mother of all biker movies. If Fonda's Captain America had behaved like his latter-day surfer dude, his killing at the end of "Easy Rider" would have been a justifiable homicide.

Comeback of the Year
Lauren Bacall, as welcome as the flowers in May in "My Fellow Americans" and "The Mirror Has Two Faces."

Don't Come Back of the Year
"Heaven's Gate" director Michael Cimino. Did anyone even *notice* he had a film called "Sunchaser" out in 1996?

The Least Apt Title Award, Pt. III
To the Charlie Sheen vs. the space monsters flick "The Arrival." Based on how quickly this one came and went, they should have called it "The Departure."

The Strike While the Iron is Hot Award
To John Travolta, for his tendency to appear in a movie a month ever since his career revived thanks to "Pulp Fiction."

The Actually, You Can Go Home Again But Only If You Live in Toontown Award
To Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Porky Pig and Elmer Fudd, who, along with other Warner Bros. cartoon stars, saw some 600 of their pre-1948 adventures (sold to TV by Jack Warner for 10 cents on the dollar in 1948) re-united with the rest of the library of Warner theatrical cartoons as one little-noticed side-effect of the Time Warner/Turner merger.

The Luck of the Irish Award
To the Irish film industry, for continuing the string of interesting, politically charged historic dramas that have come off the island in recent years.

Movies We'd Like to See, Pt. V
"The Cutthroat Island of Dr. Moreau," in which evil scientist Marlon Brando combines genetic material gleaned from husband and wife team Renny Harlin and Geena Davis with a blank check and makes approximately $60 million and a company called Carolco Pictures disappear.

The That Thing You Overdo Award
To Tom Hanks, for playing the theme song from his directing debut about a sixties pop band again and again and again and again...

The Apt Title Award, Pt. IV
Jean-Claude Van Damme in "Sudden Death."

The 1996 Distinguished Service Award
To Quentin Tarantino, for not appearing as an actor in any commercially released movies for the last 10 months of 1996. There *was* that character turn on the Spielberg-directed CD-ROM "Steven Spielberg's Director's Chair," but we forgive Mr. Tarantino for it, since we still haven't figured out how to play the darn thing on our office computers.

Most Overused Plot Device
Stolen computer discs containing the only known copies of incredibly important computer programs and/or documentation *a la* "Mission: Impossible," "Eraser" and "Fled." To bad guys everywhere, we offer this simple advice: Back up your data!

The Unkindest Cut of All Award
To Castle Rock, producer-distributor of Kenneth Branagh's four hour-long adaptation of "Hamlet." First it was heralded as the only movie "Hamlet" from which not one syllable of dialogue would be cut. Then Castle Rock revealed that Branagh was working on a two-and-a-half hour version for release in all U.S. markets that weren't New York and L.A. Then that plan was retracted, although the two-and-a-half hour cut apparently exists. To quote "Macbeth:" "Confusion now has made its masterpiece." Way to court those Academy Awards, guys.

The Out of Action Award
To Steven Seagal, Jean-Claude Van Damme and Sylvester Stallone, once high-flying action stars whose films failed miserably at the boxoffice in 1996. The '80s really are over, aren't they?

The Turning a Blind Eye Award
To the makers of "Star Trek: First Contact," for not explaining what happened to the visor ocularly impaired engineer Geordi LaForge wore throughout the run of all previous "Next Generation" titles.

Least Apt Title, Pt. IV
"Sleepers." Star-packed, very expensive and a major disappointment at the boxoffice: A sleeper this wasn't.

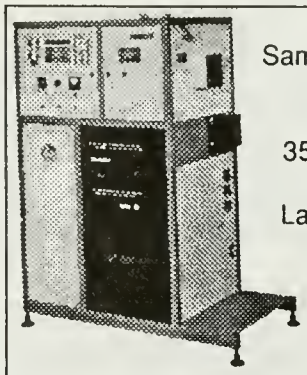
The My Life's in Turner-round Award
To Castle Rock and New Line, two companies that were doing just great until Ted Turner bought them a few years back. Both had their worst years ever in 1996, but things were looking up by year's end: with Turner doing everything but making the popcorn for the Time Warner family, it was obvious, even by year's end, that both companies were likely to find themselves in the hands of new ownership.

The Nasty As They Want to Be Award
To "The First Wives Club," which grossed $100 million plus by taking the male-bashing tendencies of flicks like "Waiting to Exhale" to their logical conclusion in a revenge-themed comedy of epic proportions. Honorable mention: the supernatural Generation X version of same known as "The Craft."

The Model Behavior Award
To Uma Thurman for "The Truth About Cats and Dogs" and "Beautiful Girls," two movies in which she played the epitome of idealized male desires. Lovely she is, but we prefer it when she acts.

The 1996 David Caruso Award for Worst Career Move
To Val Kilmer, for letting George Clooney take over as Batman in Warner's billion dollar film franchise in order to explore such sterling career opportunities as "The Ghost and the Darkness," "The Island of Dr. Moreau" and "The Saint."

The Same Old Grind Award
To "Fargo" and "Rumble in the Bronx," two wildly different movies in which human beings were fed into wood chippers. Yeouch!



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The Stop Monkeying Around Award
To "Ed" and "Dunston Checks In," the finest movies about cute, troublemaking simians since Ronald Reagan appeared opposite a chimpanzee in "Bedtime for Bonzo." Which is less impressive than it sounds.

The Sophomore Slump Award
To Ed Burns, hot young actor-writer-director for "The Brothers McMullen," dead on arrival with "She's the One." But Burns may have rebounded already; rumor has it he'll star opposite Tom Hanks in Steven Spielberg's "Saving Private Ryan" in the not too distant future.

The What Took You So Long? Award
To "Evening Star" and "Escape From L.A.," sequels to movies that were more than 15 years old. Proof positive that there really is a "development hell."

Best Movie That Nobody Saw
"The Crucible."

Worst Movies That Everybody Saw
"Twister" and "The Rock."

The Try, Try Again Award
To Madonna. All jokes aside, her perseverance in pursuing the role of Evita Peron made her the subject of a lot of jibes over the years, including some in these pages. She did it; she pulled it off; our hats are off to her. Congratulations, Dita—you are now officially forgiven for "Body of Evidence."

The Apt Title Award, Pt. V
To "Thinner," a movie which, appropriately enough, was about unprecedented losses.

The Hole Wide World Award
To "Tin Cup" and "Happy Gilmore," two respectably performing features about a sport nobody is all that interested in.

The Apt Title Award, Pt. VI
"The Fan." Singular. Because there must have been *one* person somewhere who liked this movie...

The Do You Want Salt With that Scenery? Award
To Kenneth Branagh. Maybe they should have just called it "Ham."

The Apt Title Award, Pt. VIII
To "Fled," which is what everyone who stumbled onto this one did.

Chief Reason for Optimism in 1996
There was still no major film released starring Howard Stern.

Chief Reason for Pessimism in 1996
Howard Stern did, however, film his first movie in '96, playing himself in the feature version of his autobiography "Private Parts," which is slated for release this month. That makes this the last BOXOFFICE MISCELLANEOUS AWARDS where we'll be able to sign off by dissing Howard Stern. Ah well. There's always Tom Arnold...

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Response No. 191

APPETITE FOR CONSTRUCTION

Increasingly, theatres are building facilities for branded food stations. But what does this mean for the future of classic concessions?

by R.B.Whitter

One stop shopping. It gave us K-Mart, Wal-Mart, triple-decker gallerias and the Valley Girl. But one stop shopping isn't stopping at the cineplex door.

Very soon, overworked moms and dads may be loading up the kids, going out for a Little Caesar's Pizza Supreme (hold the anchovies), followed by a chucklefest with Jim Carrey, then possibly Dreyer's ice cream for dessert or a stout Godiva cappuccino for the old folks—and they will spend all of this disposable income in one place: your local, self-contained movie emporium.

Industry soothsayers are divided as to what effect this will have on classic concessions like popcorn, Raisinettes and frosty sodas. The boundaries are changing as brand-name treats and fast food chains nudge in alongside the trusty corn-popper, thriving between the Schwarzenegger standees and the video arcade.

"Theatres are looking to expand their menus in order to capture more patrons and increase their income per head," says Margie Mercer, director of marketing for Proctor Companies, the Colorado-based concessions equipment supplier. "Branded foods are popping up everywhere. Patrons are more likely to give it a try if they've tried *that* pretzel before or they've tried *that* cookie."

These expanded menus go hand-in-hand with the expansion of megaplex theatres and entertainment centers, which are increasingly evident in major urban markets nationwide. As one wary popcorn concessionaire put it: "Saturday night out at the movies ain't what it used to be." The nine-screen United Artist's Circle Center Theatres and Starport entertainment center in Indianapolis, with its Showscan Theatre, Sega City video arcade and Virtual World virtual reality games, is made complete with a three-tiered food court flush with Pretzelmaker, Mrs. Field's Cookies, Edy's Ice Cream and Sbarro's Pizza.



ENDANGERED SPECIES? *Experts are divided on the impact branded foods will have on traditional concessions.*

More than ever before, in these futuristic multi-movie palaces, concessions are still king—there's just lots more to choose from. However, don't expect to find such name-brand specialties in small town venues anytime soon. "You have to have bodies," quips Cathy Warning, director of concessions for the United Artists Theatre Circuit. "Bodies walking through the door so your spoilage and your food costs won't eat you alive. And the facility has to have a certain size—storage space, selling space, you have to have a large enough lobby." She emphasizes the importance of regional identification with a given product: in different markets, UA offers Pizzeria Uno or Little Caesar's by the slice and selected flavors of Dreyer's ice cream instead of East-coast favorites like Edy's.

At the Circle Center food court and similar UA branded concession venues, hot pizza, brownies and pretzels are prepared and cooked onsite by UA employees trained by fast food experts. Companies like Mrs. Fields either license or franchise to the theatre chain and provide full training. "You see them cooking, there's a lot of activity. We felt it was important that people see that it's being cooked and it's real food," Warning adds.

The name brand food retailers' presence is felt immediately upon entering the lobby. Familiar trademarks are promoted with large signage while menu boards draw the eye to photographs depicting tantalizing treats.

Proctor Companies has designed several high-profile stands for General Cinemas and United Artists, among others, drafting blueprints during initial construction or new renovation. Each stand is a custom-tailored array of provocative logos and products carefully chosen for each market. Proctor's Margie Mercer points out: "Obviously in some markets espresso is not going to go over as well as in others. Nachos are



Regal Cinemas' Chesapeake, Va. cinema and FunScape is the site of the chain's first experiment with branded foods. Pictured here are some of Regal's franchise partners: Pizza Hut, Arby's and Taco Bell.

a natural in Southern California. It depends upon the nature of the audience." Cathy Warning concurs that demographics must be taken into account. "We used our in-house survey system to go to our customers and find out what types of food they wanted." She says UA first narrowed audience preferences, like soft yogurt, bottled waters, etc., then polled again for the most popular brand names.

Sometimes product and theatre placement require fine tuning. In the lobby of Manhattan's Sony Lincoln Square, Godiva coffees and chocolates were sold from a separate cart but were moved behind the concession counter after a trial run. The ebb and flow of patrons and waiting lines are of constant concern.

But what about soda pop, candies, and that sturdy classic, buttered popcorn? How are these golden oldies faring in the face of non-traditional competitors driven by instant name recognition?

"Long term, I think it's a threat to us," says Roy Johnston, marketing director for Cargill Vegetable Oils, manufacturer of PopWise Popcorn Oil. "We're competing for the same consumer dollar." Frank Haffer, concessions VP for Edwards Cinema, agrees. "Candy's going down," he asserts. "Any time you add more items, you have an incremental increase in sales, but also it takes away from others." (Some Edwards theatres sell regional edibles like Ray's Pizza and Seattle's Best Coffee, but Edwards Cinemas' current foray into the brand wars is purely on a trial basis, a financial experiment with only six months to a year of probation.)

"I think it's a little unfortunate that [theatre chains] have decided to expand their offering," says Michael Perrino, division business manager for Weaver Popcorn. "There's got to be a trade-off. I have to believe their profit margin is eroding a little bit."

"*Everybody* associates popcorn with movies. Popcorn sales are still very strong and it remains one of the highest profit items," assures Proctor's Margie Mercer. But according to UATC's Cathy Warning, "Some days there's a lot of [profit] cannibalization. If we do lose, it looks like it's in the popcorn."

> ***"Branded foods are popping up everywhere. Patrons are more likely to give it a try if they've tried* that *pretzel before or they've tried* that *cookie."***
>
> ***—Margie Mercer, Proctor***

Associates Warning and Mercer also split on the question of soft drink sales. Warning finds drink sales stable due to the pizza/pretzel thirst factor, yet Mercer sees a slight decline with the health-conscious rise of iced teas and bottled waters—a national sales downturn she observes in supermarkets and theatres alike. On the opposite end from the health nuts, for those who instead want more bang for their buck, gourmet coffees certainly offer a potent alternative to comparative caffeine lightweights like perennials Coke and Pepsi.

Over at the Seattle's Best offices, faithful retail-marketer Charlie Severn finds little evidence of conflict, calling gourmet coffee simply a new niche market. But the question remains, how many niches can one cine-port accommodate? Currently, each theatre operation is constantly tracking the fiscal interactions between the stalwart corn kernel and the designer yogurt or roasted bean.

Regal Cinemas is currently trying out branded foods in their three cinema/FunScape entertainment center complexes and has franchise agreements with Taco Bell, Pizza Hut, Arby's, Blimpies, and Dairy Queen/Orange Julius. They've found that traditional concession sales have stayed the same; at all three sites, says Rob Del Moro, Regal's VP of food service, "we saw no cannibalization of our normal concession operations." In fact, the Chesapeake, Va. location, the first in the Regal circuit to carry branded foods, had "the third highest concession per cap in our company" in 1996, and that's on top of branded food sales, according to Del Moro. "[And] our traditional concession stand is about 75 feet away from our food court.

"That's the major piece of information, because our fear, as well as probably our competitors', is that you begin to cannibalize

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Response No. 172

your highest-margin items, which are your popcorn and your soft-drinks and your candy, with additional food," Del Moro adds. "But by separating it like we did and having its own location and seating, we found that people are just adjusting their dining experience. Instead of eating somewhere else, people are actually eating dinner [in the food court], and then walking over to the theatre, and just spending their normal concession money as they would if they were eating dinner elsewhere."

Regal's decision to go with franchise name brand foods followed a telling experiment the circuit conducted between branded food service vs. non-branded. "We did a regular desert ice cream shop and compared that to one of our Dairy Queens, and we did a non-branded taco facility," says Del Moro. "And we discovered that the branded food substantially out-performed the non-branded food."

John Evans, sales VP for Gold Medal popcorn and concession equipment, is pragmatic about the future of the trendy brand-name bandwagon. "Wal-Mart is doing branding—they've got McDonald's running half their snack bars. Theatres are traditionally cautious. It may be [good for] some groups and your worst Freddy Krueger nightmare for other groups."

One wonders if Big Macs or Taco Bell Grandes will ever make it to the multiplex. Don't rip open your ketchup packets prematurely. Everyone agrees that theatre foods must meet a vital criterion—however savory the meal, each morsel must be convenient to eat in a darkened theatre seat. Multiply this dilemma by the thousands and you can imagine the clean-up involved after a capacity crowd heads for the exits. However, Regal's Del Moro says that when patrons do eat pizza and tacos in the



A Dreyer's ice cream and frozen yogurt dispenser at UATC's Greenwood Plaza in Englewood, Colo.

theatre, "it's no messier than nachos. But we just don't have a lot of [people eating these items in the auditoriums]. We were prepared to address that and monitor that as we went along, but what we're finding is because we have seating for 140 people in the food court, people don't even try to bring it in, they take it to the tables and sit down and eat."

But there is also the emotional impact of such a change. Many folks consider that familiar buttery smell to be a sacred part of the moviegoing experience. Are they ready for grilled onions and guacamole?

Like it or not, the mix is changing—though not for everybody, and not everywhere. "Preparing popcorn and selling it, we've been doing for 70 years," Cathy Warning notes. "Preparing pizza and pretzels takes a lot more planning and preparation. I think [UA is] going to stay limited. Too many items and you start to have problems with lines—and that's the number one deterrent to people."

The logistics of maneuvering eager throngs of hungry Mel Gibson fans is sometimes staggering. But Margie Mercer finds that "they're capturing more people at the stands," offering more options for increasingly discriminating palates. Some nibble sweets, some count their cholesterol and, as always, most throw caution to the winds and indulge their cravings when they go out to the movies, a time-tested social event. Yet the consensus remains that for the most part, only the larger cities and film markets can support these high-pitched expenditures or provide room enough for their adequate display. And PopWise Popcorn marketer Roy Johnston would like us to remember one thing: "I don't know if there's another product in the world that anybody makes more true profit on than theatre popcorn. It's wonderful."

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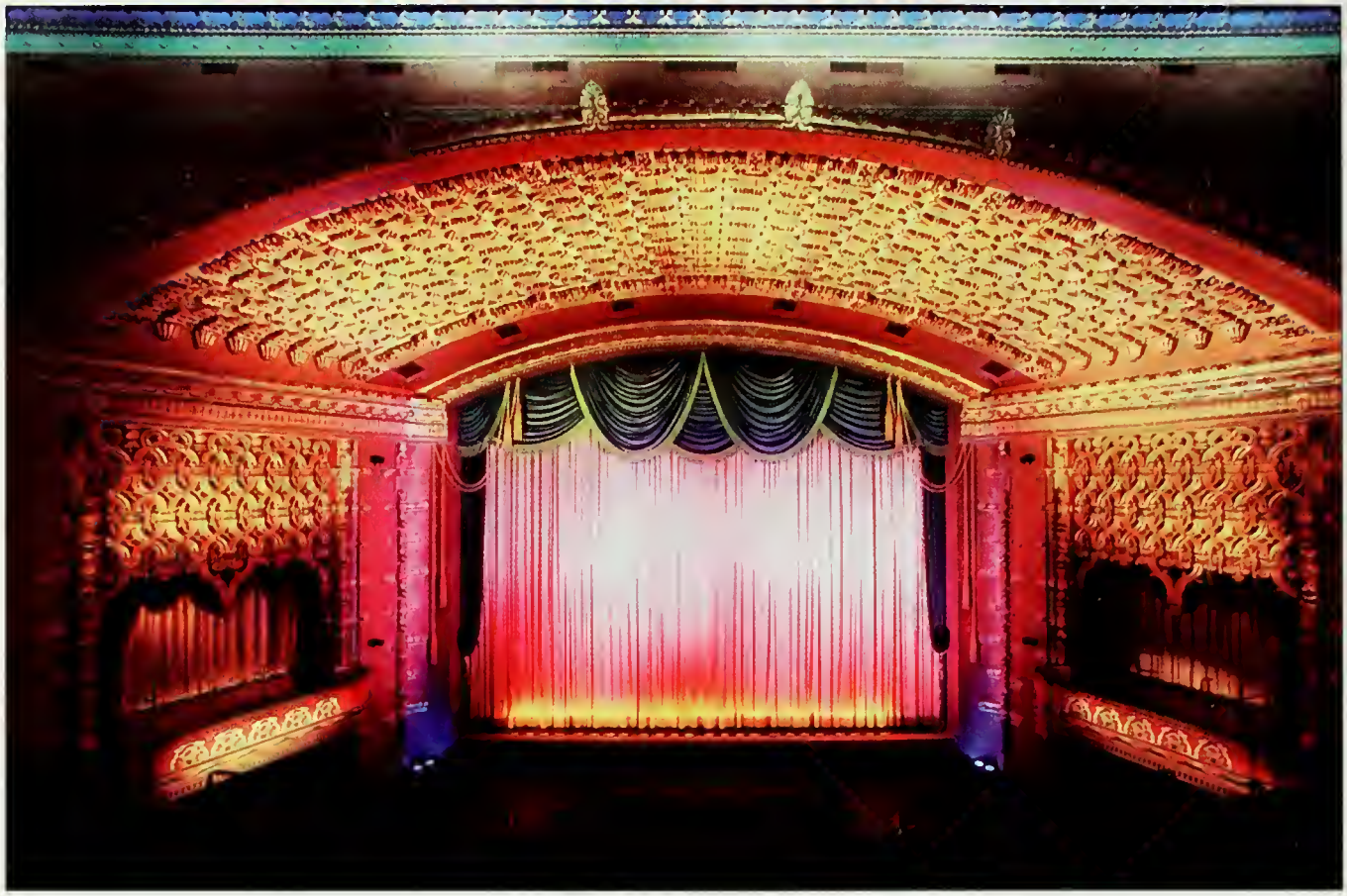
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PALACE GUARD

Tinseltown Exhibitors Ensure Resplendent Moviehouses of Old Still Live On *by Jon Alon Walz*

Across America and throughout the world, grander and ever more ambitious megaplexes continue to reshape the moviegoing experience. In many cases, their beautiful architecture recalls a vanished era, when ornate and luxuriant single-screen "movie palaces" set exhibition industry standards.

Most of the great palaces are gone now—victims of changing tastes and changing times. But through a combination of good luck, a temperate climate, and a fortuitous proximity to the major Hollywood production centers, Los Angeles is still home to numerous well-preserved classic "palaces"—many of which are still open to the architect, the theatre historian and the general public alike.

Downtown Los Angeles—to the locals, the phrase instantly conjures up visions of desolation, poverty, filth and barbarous crime—and not without cause. But this forgotten historic district in the nation's film capital also holds many extraordinary and unexpected treasures. Once a month, the Los Angeles Conservancy hosts a tour through the once-grand boulevards, alleyways and hidden doorways of downtown, transporting attendees into the magical world of L.A. entertainment circa 1920—a time when dying vaudeville houses were beginning to be retrofitted for film exhibition and ecstatic developers were dutifully constructing grand new buildings that celebrated through architecture the larger-than-life glamour and fantasy that movies embodied.

Lavish to exuberant extremes, but available to anyone with a quarter in his pocket and a couple hours to invest, an outing to the town movie palace became as regular in the America of the day as a trip to the market. In every community, these showpiece buildings became the virtual town center, drawing droves of entertainment-starved patrons who had, save for minimal radio programming, no other popular culture at their disposal.

The population of the U.S. was approximately 100 million throughout the '20s and into the early '30s. And weekly movie attendance stood at that same figure: 100 million. For the first time, "mass entertainment had burst upon the world," as Geoffrey Perrett puts it in his book *America in the Twenties*. During the palace building boom from 1921-1932, over 22,000 one-screen wonders were built across the country.

Inspirations for these buildings were two-fold. First and foremost, their mammoth size and sponsorship by rich developers allowed a group of fresh young architects and designers a chance to make grand, once-in-a-lifetime design statements on virtually unlimited budgets. Borrowing and stealing outright from French palaces, Egyptian burial tombs, Greek amphitheaters, Asian citadels, and European opera houses, such designers as S. Charles Lee, Thomas W. Lamb, John Eberson and the firm of Rapp & Rapp became industry legends as masters of their craft.

Secondly, the attitudes and wants of the marketplace demanded such large and important measures. Only one in 10 families owned a car, and

while radio was available to the general public, its powers to entertain could not compare to the all-encompassing splendor of an evening at the cinema. No one wanted to sit at home anymore.

"Everywhere there was a thirsty curiosity about the lives of the rich," notes Ben Hall in his loving book *The Best Remaining Seats.* "Hollywood had already discovered this secret, and rags-to-riches was filmdom's bread and butter. As movies created their own glamorous climate, smart exhibitors sought to capitalize on it. And theatres...were growing in sophistication along with their audiences... and strove to keep pace with each new celluloid extravaganza."

During the palace building boom from 1921-1932, over 22,000 one-screen wonders were built across the country.

A wide, bustling street named "Broadway" is renowned as Los Angeles' first great movie district. Exhibitor Sid Grauman's first Los Angeles theatre, the Million Dollar, built in 1918, not only served as the anchor for the dozen or so theatres to follow up and down Broadway, but introduced to L.A. a grand showman who would change, direct and revolutionize the movie going experience of an entire nation.

The 2,345-seat Million Dollar became the first of six major movie palaces to open along the boulevard. (Today, the theatre, after having programmed Spanish films for years, has been restored for live entertainment use.)

In 1919, Grauman bought the 900-seat Rialto five blocks south of the Million Dollar, and set about converting and redesigning it to better suit his taste. Built in 1910 by J.M. Quinn, the Rialto, along with the neighboring 775-seat Cameo (also built in 1910), were designed specifically for the continuous exhibition of movies (rather than being converted vaudeville houses), and are considered to be the first as such in the city.

By 1921, the building boom was in full swing, and the big boys were finding their way west to L.A. Marcus Loew, a well-heeled New Yorker, came to town that year after trailblazing across the U.S., building immense theatres in cities near and far. He bought the southwest corner of Los Angeles' busiest downtown intersection, 7th and Broadway, and erected the 2,450-seat Loews State—then the city's largest cinema (still in operation today).

Grauman built his next theatre, the Egyptian, in L.A.'s booming suburb, Hollywood. Seating 1,800, the Egyptian had the distinction of being the first major motion picture theatre built outside of downtown. More significantly, the theatre provided the critical mass that would galvanize Hollywood into becoming the movie capital of the world.

The Douglas Fairbanks vehicle "Robin Hood" was premiered on the Egyptian's opening night, complete with Sid Grauman's sensational all-singing, all-dancing Prologue that was thematically programmed to complement the feature. The next day, Grauman was back at work, planning his final downtown theatre, the (now razed) 3,485-seat Metropolitan. Opening in 1923 one block west of Broadway, the Metropolitan not only took the seating capacity crown away from the Loews State, but became the largest single auditorium *ever* constructed in Los Angeles for the movies.

The years from 1923 through 1931 saw four spectacular palaces built downtown, the likes and quality of which are still unmatched today: the New Orpheum, the United Artists, the Los Angeles, and the Tower.

The beautiful New Orpheum on 9th and Broadway was the last Los Angeles home for the Orpheum Vaudeville circuit. It is still in use today as a movie theatre and as a popular location for television and film shoots, and contains one of the last fully operational Mighty Wurlitzer organs in the country. Scenes for recent episodes of "Seinfeld," as well as portions of the Tom Hanks movie "That Thing You Do!" and the upcoming Mel Gibson vehicle "Conspiracy Theory," were filmed in the Orpheum.

Around the same time, Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks and D.W. Griffith, tired of their handling by the "big studios" of the day, partnered up to form a new studio they dubbed United Artists. Their flagship theatre, the United Artists, on 9th and Broadway, opened in December of 1927 with a screening of "My Best Girl," Mary Pickford's first film for the studio. This overwhelming gothic cathedral was patterned by architect C. Howard Crane after several European churches Pickford fell in love with during her travels. While it no longer shows films, the theatre has been meticulously restored top to bottom by the University Cathedral, which hosts regular religious services inside. Interestingly, the former movie palace contains and displays the most extensive collection of bibles outside of the Vatican.

The downtown openings of the Tower Theatre and the Los Angeles Theatre, in 1927 and 1931 respectively, introduced

WESTWOOD PER'PLEX'ED

Southern California's popular college-town hub and home to a concentration of single-screen palaces faces the megaplex

Westwood Village, one of Los Angeles' most prestigious theatre zones, may soon be flooded with upwards of 25 new screens, if two competing multiplex projects come to fruition in this community on the border of the UCLA campus.

Over the objections of some community groups, Mann Theatres, a major land owner and theatre operator in the Village, is proposing to demolish an archaic four-plex as well as a small single-screen venue, the Regent, to make way for a 3,000 seat 12-plex. And the Arba Group, an L.A.-based land developer, is proposing a 14- to 15-plex about two blocks away that would anchor a large retail complex. No theatre chain is currently attached to the Arba project.

Currently, Westwood Village boasts six Mann-owned single screen theatres and one four-plex. On the outskirts of the Village, General Cinemas runs a four-plex, Pacific a single screen, and United Artists a three-plex.

As development in Westwood has been generally regulated by a "Specific Plan" since the 1930s, an amendment must be made to accommodate more theatre seats. But this is seen as more a formality than a problem. Nevertheless, concerns by residents of the Village about parking and gridlock continue to hinder many development proposals.

Several highly publicized shootings in the Village in the late '80s are blamed for turning this entertainment hot-spot into the virtual ghost-town it is today. Recent openings of a few upscale clothing stores and restaurants, including a large 24-hour deli, show the area may be on the upswing, but not in ways matching its decade-old heyday.

The construction of either project would create the largest multiplex built in Los Angeles in the '90s, and could jump-start the commercial prospects of the area. A continuing dialogue between area residents, Mann, Arba, and city councilman Michael Feuer, will determine the fate of these proposals. An environmental report commissioned by Feuer was expected at the end of February.

—Jon Alon Walz

architect S. Charles Lee and the first dedicated sound theatre to the city. The Tower opened with the exclusive L.A. run of the world's first sound feature, "The Jazz Singer." The picture played for a completely sold-out year in a 900-seat auditorium that won young hot-shot Lee much acclaim in his field.

The Los Angeles Theatre was an outlandish, costly architectural success for Lee and developer H.L. Gumbiner (who was also the owner of the Tower). Many consider it one of the of the most outstanding movie theatres ever built. Both the Los Angeles and the Tower still exist today as popular film production sites and special event locations.

Theatre construction downtown ended in 1932 with the opening of the (now-closed) 1,600-seat Roxie Theatre on Broadway. Hollywood at this point had virtually usurped downtown's grasp on the entertainment patron and dollar. In the years leading up to 1932, Hollywood Boulevard had slowly become the place in Los Angeles to see first-run movies. Every studio was now having glamorous, celebrity-laden premieres of their new films in Hollywood, shunning downtown altogether. The Hollywood Theatre (several storefronts west of the Egyptian) is considered to be the first movie theatre built in Hollywood. Dating back to 1911, this former nickelodeon remained in operation through the late '80s.

Many new theatres opened in Hollywood in the years following the dedication of Grauman's Egyptian, and several of the legitimate theatre venues also began showing movies on a part-time basis to capitalize on the appetites of the needy, demanding movie audiences. This theatre boom brought some remarkable edifices to Hollywood.

The odd and wonderful Vista Theatre, built in 1923 at the intersection of Sunset and Hollywood Boulevards, was said to have begun as a Spanish-styled theatre, but upon the opening of King Tut's Tomb in 1922, the owner decided, in mid-construction, to switch to an Egyptian theme. This one-of-a-kind landmark has the distinction of having premiered several movies made by iconoclast director Ed Wood, and is still showing first-run fare today.

By 1927, movie studio profitability was at an all-time high as movie attendance began striding toward 100 million paid admissions per week. Developers were building with furious haste. No theatre could be big enough or built quickly enough to satisfy. The '20s were roaring, and roaring loudly.

Sid Grauman was putting finishing touches on his most impressive theatre yet, the Chinese, slated to open on May 18, 1927 on Hollywood Boulevard. As the story goes, Grauman was rushing one day through the Chinese's construction site and accidentally stepped in a block of wet cement in the courtyard, leaving a distinct footprint. Always thinking like a showman, he got an idea: footprints...handprints...cement. And the rest, as they say, is history. On the night of the theatre's premiere, Norma Talmadge, star of the opening night feature, Cecil DeMille's "King of Kings," became the first celebrity to be immortalized in cement in the theatre's courtyard.



Hollywood's top tourist attraction, Mann's Chinese Theatre (then Grauman's), circa 1960.

The Chinese, which celebrates its 70th anniversary next month, is without a doubt one of the most revered and recognized pieces of architecture on the planet. It remains a popular host for film premieres and is the top tourist stop in Hollywood. Mann Theatres bought control of the Chinese in 1972, and added two smaller auditoriums to the complex in 1979.

Following the Chinese, the 2,800-seat, art-deco Hollywood Pantages Theatre joined the boulevard as home for Twentieth Century Fox's first-run movies and premieres. (This masterpiece theatre survives today as home to touring Broadway shows and concerts.)

But then, in 1929, the roar of the '20s died. The stock market suddenly crashed, leaving the nation in a downward spiral of economic distress that led to a 10-year Depression. In 1931 and 1932 the studios saw their first major losses ever, but quickly returned to modest profitability by mid-1933. However, the Depression killed off the nation's impulse to see a movie a week, and exhibitors were challenged for the first time to reach out and draw patrons into their theatres.

Still, these magical palaces of the movies were an oasis of escapism in a nation on the brink financial ruin. "As the crisis deepened in 1932, Walter Gifford, the head of President Hoover's Organization on Unemployment Relief, advocated the distribution of free movie tickets to the poor," writes Andrew Bergman in his book *We're In The Money: Depression America and its Films*. "According to Gifford, the movies were a necessity to be ranked just behind food and clothing."

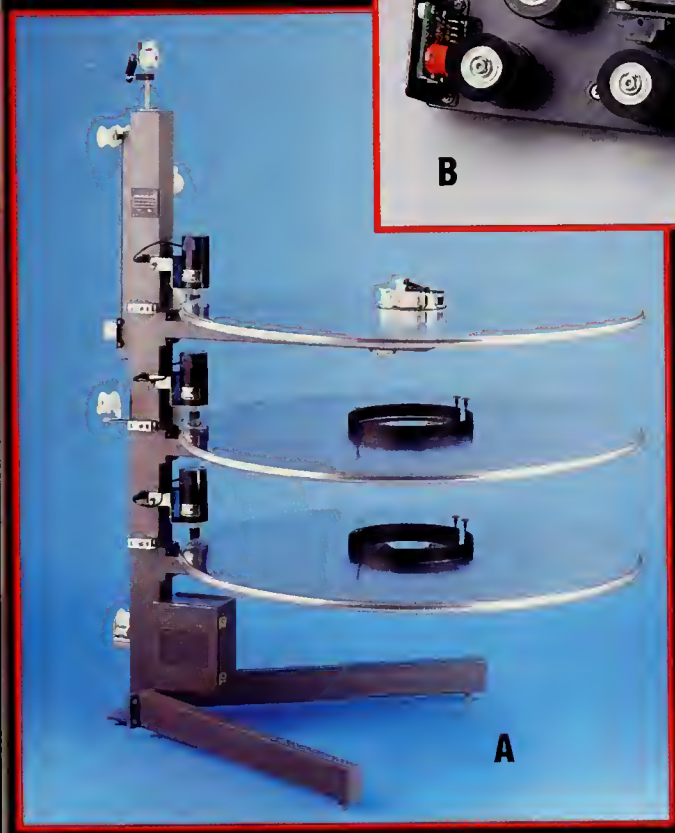
A top architect like S. Charles Lee, who had designed six or seven theatres a year in 1930 and 1931, had no commissions in 1932, two in 1933, and one in 1934. By contrast, in 1936, a year that finally saw movie attendance rise for the first time in four years, Lee had over 20 new design jobs to contend with.

The end of the Depression saw the rise of Los Angeles' final destination theatre area: Westwood Village. Just across the street from the UCLA campus, Westwood was a master-planned shopping and entertainment area that went so far as to incorporate a stringently enforced Spanish-revival architectural code. S. Charles Lee's Fox-Westwood Village theatre opened in 1931, becoming the aesthetic cornerstone of Westwood Village. It was an 1,800-seat quasi-art-deco behemoth that, because of the times, was one of the least adorned new theatres of the year.

The Bruin Theatre, across the street from the Fox-Village, was completed in 1937 with 900 seats. In 1940, the Crest (recently refurbished by Pacific Theatres) opened just a block south of the Village, and in 1970 the National became the last single screen theatre to be built in Los Angeles. Today, the Fox (now called the Village), the Bruin, and the National, along with three single-screen theatres and a four-plex in Westwood, are all owned by Mann Theatres.

"We own several big single screen auditoriums that have very prestigious and rich legacies," notes Rich Given, executive director of advertising and marketing for Mann Theatres. "These theatres are still in favor for lavish industry events and premieres and, more importantly, are still in favor with moviegoers for event movies like the recently re-released 'Star Wars.' They are a vanishing breed definitely worth keeping viable."

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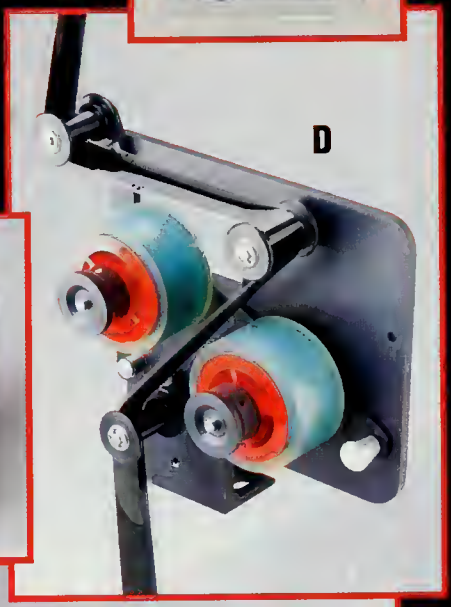
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Some of the major circuits have made an important commitment over the years to the preservation and restoration of many historically significant single-screen movie houses in the Los Angeles area. Working hand-in-hand with the Los Angeles Conservancy, a non-profit organization dedicated to the revitalization of the city's historic architecture, Disney and Pacific Theatres spent millions restoring the facade and the interior of Hollywood Boulevard's El Capitan Theatre (pictured on page 132). Built in 1926 as a legitimate theatre, it was remodeled into a movie theatre in 1942. Much of the extravagant East Indian detailing that had been plastered or painted over throughout the years has been meticulously restored to beyond-new condition.

"The El Capitan and the Crest are our flagship theatres, and we have put a tremendous amount of time into maintaining and restoring them," says Chan Wood, Pacific Theatres' executive vice president, head film buyer and director of marketing. "The El Capitan is the highest grossing single screen theatre in the country—one, because it is booked well, and a theatre is only as good as the product; and two, because the restoration has enhanced an already perfect moviegoing experience."

United Artists owned and operated the Egyptian for many years before its recent closure. It was purchased in 1993 as the permanent home for the American Cinematheque, an organization that currently programs specialty films in several venues around the city. The theatre was badly damaged by the 1994 Northridge earthquake, which, ironically, was a blessing in disguise. Three million dollars of the total $9 million restoration cost has come from an earthquake insurance bond the city of Los Angeles held on the property.



The Egyptian Theatre in 1925, during its heyday. The American Cinematheque is currently working with the Community Redevelopment Agency to restore the theatre, which was severely damaged in the 1994 Northridge earthquake.

According to Barbara Smith, director of the American Cinematheque, "We are doing our best to make the theatre look as it did in 1923. The forecourt will return to the opened-up way it looked before, which should be very spectacular, and the interior will be wonderful as well. We are ecstatic about reopening this theatre in the spring of 1998."

Landmark Theatres' dedication to keeping South Pasadena's historic Rialto a first-run art and foreign film venue has kept the wrecking ball away on more than one occasion. Twice in the '70s, master plans were drawn up by developers that, in one instance, would have converted the theatre into a shopping center, and in another, demolished it into parking lot. Built in 1925, the Rialto is possibly the oldest converted vaudeville house still in operation outside of downtown L.A.

In the '70s, Cineplex Odeon bought several neighborhood theatres in Hollywood. The

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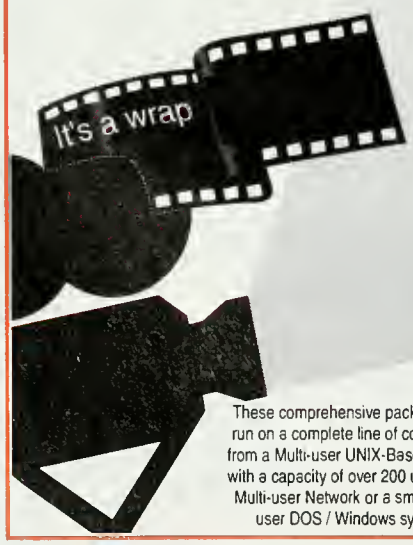
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Gordon on La Brea Avenue has been renamed the Showcase after a wonderful restoration, and the Fairfax, which has been tri-plexed, still packs 'em in as a second-run venue.

Surprisingly, only a few major theatres built in Los Angeles during the boom years have been lost to the wrecking crews. Some, like the S. Charles Lee-designed La Reina in Sherman Oaks or the Studio City in Studio City, have been converted into retail establishments. Others like 1926's Cathay Circle or 1932's Fox-Florence have, unfortunately, been razed. But the majority of L.A. palaces still stand, while by contrast, fewer than half of the palaces built around the country remain.

Taking a leadership position in preservation and publicity efforts on behalf of the local historical movie palaces, the Los Angeles Conservancy is active in protecting threatened properties and testifying in court to their historic significance.

"Each time there is a theatre in question, we get involved," says Linda Dishman, executive director of the Los Angeles Conservancy. "Right now, three Broadway theatres, the Cameo, Arcade, and Roxie, are targeted for conversion into retail space. We are working with the developer to ensure that the conversion is done as sensitively as possible." This means keeping as much of the architecture of the non-operational theatres intact as possible.

Another way in which the Conservancy helps the cause is through a downtown film program that runs every June and draws over 10,000 people to the area, according to Dishman. "[The film program] not only brings business to the theatres, but it helps create new constituents for preservation and helps expose them to the historic downtown architecture that few know about."

"[In the '20s,] there was a thirsty curiosity about the lives of the rich. As movies created their own glamorous climate, smart exhibitors sought to capitalize on it. And theatres were growing in sophistication along with their audiences."

The biggest threat to the survival of the theatres downtown is lease expiration, as the properties' owners might be inclined to sell out history for the more lucrative return a mini-mall might provide. According to the Conservancy's Gordon Johnson, most of the downtown theatres were built to anchor a developers shopping area. Due to the high patron draw of theatres and the potential for spill into their stores, space for theatres was leased to the theatre owner at below-market rates for anywhere from 60 to 80 years. Many leases are up this decade. The State has one year left on its original lease; the Orpheum's is up in five years; and the lease on downtown's Palace, a beautiful vaudeville house that still exhibits first-run movies, expires this summer.

Their collective fate is still up in the air as the proverbial clock ticks on these amazing pieces of Americana. As such theatres as the El Capitan and the Crest have proven, well maintained, technologically advanced single screen theatres can be incredibly profitable for owners willing to make a commitment to the property.

The magic of the movie experience has not been lost on audiences, despite their acclamation to the neighborhood multiplex. Bosley Crowther, former critic for the *New York Times* observes, "The total effect of a motion picture is conditioned to a greater or lesser extent by the environment is which it is shown." And grand east-coast showman Samuel "Roxy" Rothafel believed that the movies shown in these palaces were, in most cases, secondary to the overall effect of the place.

The import of these environments are attested to as the top circuits strive to recapture their essence in modern megaplexes, designing their auditoriums in homage to the palaces of old. But it's good to know that present-day Los Angeles exhibitors care enough about their industry's history to preserve the real things—taking a heartfelt role as L.A.'s Palace Guard.

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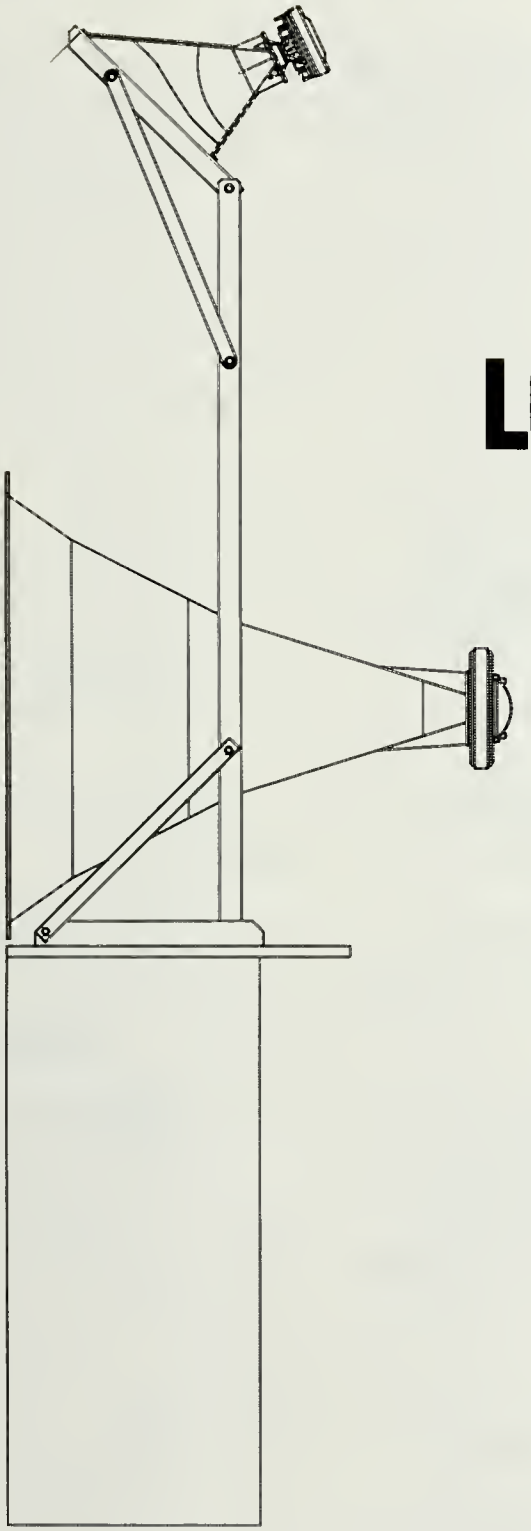
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BLUE RIBBON AWARDS

That's right, folks, it's time once again for **Boxoffice**'s semi-annual **Blue Ribbon Awards**. The accompanying ballot is for your vote on the good, the bad and the most popular of a half-a-year's worth of movies. These awards, established in 1932, are voted directly by you and seek to recognize the aesthetic and commercial value of the following films, released during the **fall and winter of 1996/1997**. Voting covers three categories: the most popular film, the best film in terms of artistic success, and, conversely, the worst film of the period. Remember, every vote counts, so please mail your completed ballot **NO LATER THAN APRIL 5!**

The results of this Blue Ribbon Awards poll will be published in our **June** issue. The next round of voting will be held in October and will cover 1997's spring and summer releases. We have attempted to present as complete a list as possible of films released between **SEPTEMBER 1, 1996 and MARCH 1, 1997.** We have not included reissues of previously released movies. Remember that **SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE FILMS MIGHT BE MISSING BECAUSE THEY WERE NOT RELEASED WITHIN THE TIME FRAME.** There is space at the bottom of your ballot to write in any film missing from the list. So **SEND YOUR BALLOT TODAY!**

1. ABSOLUTE POWER
Clint Eastwood, Gene Hackman (Columbia)

2. ADRENALINE: FEAR THE RUSH
Christopher Lambert, Natasha Henstridge (Legacy)

3. ALBINO ALLIGATOR
Matt Dillon, Gary Sinise (Miramax)

4. AMERICAN BUFFALO
Dustin Hoffman (Goldwyn)

5. THE ASSOCIATE
Whoopi Goldberg (Buena Vista)

6. THE BEAUTICIAN AND THE BEAST
Fran Drescher, Timothy Dalton (Paramount)

7. BEAUTIFUL THING
Scott Neal (Sony Classics)

8. BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD DO AMERICA
voices: Mike Judge (Paramount)

9. BEVERLY HILLS NINJA
Chris Farley (Sony)

10. BIG NIGHT
Stanley Tucci, Tony Shaloub (Goldwyn)

11. BITTER SUGAR
Miguel Gutierrez (First Look)

12. BLOOD AND WINE
Jack Nicholson (Fox Searchlight)

13. BOGUS
Whoopi Goldberg, Gerard Depardieu (Warner Bros.)

14. BOOTY CALL
Jamie Foxx, Vivica Fox (Columbia)

15. BOUND
Jennifer Tilly, Gina Gershon (Gramercy)

16. BREAKING THE WAVES
Emily Watson (October)

17. BULLETPROOF
Adam Sandler, Damon Wayans (Universal)

18. THE CHAMBER
Chris O'Donnell, Gene Hackman (Universal)

19. CITIZEN RUTH
Laura Dern (Miramax)

20. COSI
Toni Collette (Miramax)

21. THE CRUCIBLE
Winona Ryder, Daniel Day-Lewis (Fox)

22. D3: THE MIGHTY DUCKS
Emilio Estevez (Buena Vista)

23. DANGEROUS GROUND
Ice Cube, Elizabeth Hurley (New Line)

24. DANTE'S PEAK
Pierce Brosnan, Linda Hamilton (Universal)

25. DAYLIGHT
Sylvester Stallone (Universal)

26. THE DAYTRIPPERS
Parker Posey, Stanley Tucci (CFP)

27. DEAR GOD
Greg Kinnear, Laurie Metcalf (Paramount)

28. DONNIE BRASCO
Johnny Depp, Al Pacino (TriStar)

29. DRUNKS
Richard Lewis (Northern Arts)

30. THE EIGHTH DAY
Daniel Auteuil (Gramercy)

31. THE ENGLISH PATIENT
Ralph Fiennes (Miramax)

32. THE EVENING STAR
Shirley MacLaine (Paramount)

33. EVERYONE SAYS I LOVE YOU
Woody Allen, Goldie Hawn, Drew Barrymore (Miramax)

34. EVITA
Madonna, Antonio Banderas (Buena Vista)

35. EXTREME MEASURES
Hugh Grant, Gene Hackman (Columbia)

36. FARMER AND CHASE
Ben Gazzara, Lara Flynn Boyle (Arrow Releasing)

37. FEELING MINNESOTA
Keanu Reeves, Cameron Diaz (Fine Line)

38. FIERCE CREATURES
John Cleese, Kevin Kline (Universal)

39. THE FIRST WIVES CLUB
Goldie Hawn, Bette Midler, Diane Keaton (Paramount)

40. FIST OF LEGEND
Jet Li (Miramax)

41. FLIPPING
Gene Mitchell (Dove)

42. FOOLS RUSH IN
Matthew Perry, Salma Hayek (Columbia)

43. FLY AWAY HOME
Anna Paquin, Jeff Daniels (Columbia)

44. THE FUNERAL
Christopher Walken, Chris Penn (October)

45. GET ON THE BUS
Charles S. Dutton, Ossie Davis (Columbia)

46. THE GHOST AND THE DARKNESS
Michael Douglas, Val Kilmer (Paramount)

47. GHOSTS OF MISSISSIPPI
Alec Baldwin, Whoopi Goldberg (Columbia)

48. THE GLIMMER MAN
Steven Segal, Keenen Ivory Wayans (Warner Bros.)

49. GRACE OF MY HEART
Illeana Douglas (Gramercy)

50. THE GRASS HARP
Walter Matthau (New Line)

51. GRIDLOCK'D
Tupac Shakur, Tim Roth (Gramercy)

52. HAMLET
Kenneth Branagh (Columbia)

53. HARD EIGHT
Gwyneth Paltrow, Samuel L. Jackson (Goldwyn)

54. HIGH SCHOOL HIGH
Jon Lovitz, Nicolette Sheridan (TriStar)

55. HOTEL DE LOVE
Aden Young, Simon Bossell, Saffron Burrows (Live)

56. HYPE!
Soundgarden, Pearl Jam (CFP)

BLUE RIBBON AWARDS

57. INFINITY
Matthew Broderick, Patricia Arquette (First Look)
58. JACKIE CHAN'S FIRST STRIKE
Jackie Chan (New Line)
59. JERRY MAGUIRE
Tom Cruise, Cuba Gooding, Jr. (TriStar)
60. JERUSALEM
Maria Bonnevie (First Look)
61. JINGLE ALL THE WAY
Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sinbad (Fox)
62. JUDE
Kate Winslet (Gramercy)
63. KOLYA
Zdenek Szerak (Miramax)
64. LARGER THAN LIFE
Bill Murray, Janeane Garofalo (MGM/UA)
65. LAST MAN STANDING
Bruce Willis (New Line)
66. THE LEOPARD SON
(Discovery)
67. LES VOLEURS
Daniel Auteuil (Sony Classics)
68. THE LONG KISS GOODNIGHT
Geena Davis, Samuel L. Jackson (New Line)
69. LOOKING FOR RICHARD
Al Pacino (Fox)
70. LOSING CHASE
Helen Mirren, Kyra Sedgewick (CFP)
71. LOST HIGHWAY
Bill Pullman, Patricia Arquette (October)
72. MARGARET'S MUSEUM
Helena Bonham Carter (CFP)
73. MARS ATTACKS!
Pierce Brosnan, Jack Nicholson (Warner Bros.)
74. MARVIN'S ROOM
Meryl Streep, Diane Keaton (Miramax)
75. MAXIMUM RISK
Jean-Claude Van Damme (Columbia)
76. MEET WALLY SPARKS
Rodney Dangerfield (Trimark)
77. METRO
Eddie Murphy (Buena Vista)
78. MICHAEL
John Travolta (New Line)
79. MICHAEL COLLINS
Liam Neeson (Warner Bros.)
80. MICROCOSMOS
(Miramax)
81. THE MIRROR HAS TWO FACES
Barbra Streisand (TriStar)
82. MOTHER
Albert Brooks, Debbie Reynolds (Paramount)
83. MOTHER NIGHT
Nick Nolte (Fine Line)
84. MY FELLOW AMERICANS
Jack Lemmon, James Garner (Warner Bros.)
85. ONE FINE DAY
George Clooney, Michelle Pfeiffer (Fox)
86. 101 DALMATIANS
Glenn Close (Buena Vista)
87. PALOOKAVILLE
William Forsythe, Vincent Gallo (Goldwyn)
88. PARALLEL SONS
Gabriel Mick (Greycat)
89. THE PEOPLE VS. LARRY FLYNT
Woody Harrelson, Courtney Love (Columbia)
90. THE PEST
John Leguizamo (TriStar)
91. THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY
Nicole Kidman (Gramercy)
92. THE PREACHER'S WIFE
Denzel Washington, Whitney Houston (Buena Vista)
93. PREFONTAINE
Jared Leto (Buena Vista)
94. RANSOM
Mel Gibson, Rene Russo (Buena Vista)
95. THE RELIC
Penelope Ann Miller (Paramount)
96. THE RICH MAN'S WIFE
Halle Berry (Buena Vista)
97. RIDICULE
Fanny Ardant (Miramax)
98. ROMEO & JULIET
Leonardo DiCaprio, Claire Danes (Fox)
99. ROSEWOOD
Jon Voight, Ving Rhames (Warner Bros.)
100. SCREAM
Drew Barrymore, David Arquette (Miramax)
101. SECRETS AND LIES
Brenda Blethyn (October)
102. SET IT OFF
Jada Pinkett, Queen Latifah (New Line)
103. SHADOW CONSPIRACY
Charlie Sheen, Linda Hamilton (Buena Vista)
104. SHINE
Geoffrey Rush (Fine Line)
105. SLEEPERS
Brad Pitt, Kevin Bacon (Warner Bros.)
106. SMILLA'S SENSE OF SNOW
Julia Ormond, Gabriel Byrne (Fox Searchlight)
107. SOME MOTHER'S SON
Helen Mirren, Fionnula Flanagan (Columbia)
108. SPACE JAM
Michael Jordan (Warner Bros.)
109. STAR TREK: FIRST CONTACT
Patrick Stewart (Paramount)
110. STEPHEN KING'S THINNER
Robert John Burke, Joe Mantegna (Paramount)
111. SURBURBIA
Giovanni Ribisi (Sony Classics)
112. SURVIVING PICASSO
Anthony Hopkins (Warner Bros.)
113. SWINGERS
Jon Favreau (Miramax)
114. THAT DARN CAT
Christina Ricci (Buena Vista)
115. THAT THING YOU DO!
Tom Everett Scott (Fox)
116. TO GILLIAN ON HER 37TH BIRTHDAY
Peter Gallagher, Claire Danes (Triumph)
117. TOUCH
Bridget Fonda, Tom Arnold (MGM/UA)
118. TREES LOUNGE
Steve Buscemi, Daniel Baldwin (Orion Classics)
119. TROUBLESOME CREEK
(Artistic License)
120. TURBULENCE
Ray Liotta, Lauren Holly (MGM/UA)
121. TWELFTH NIGHT
Helena Bonham Carter (Fine Line)
122. 2 DAYS IN THE VALLEY
James Spader, Eric Stoltz (MGM/UA)
123. THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD
Renee Zellweger, Vincent D'Onofrio (Sony Classics)
124. VEGAS VACATION
Chevy Chase (Warner Bros.)
125. WHEN WE WERE KINGS
(Gramercy)
126. ZEUS AND ROXANNE
Steve Guttenberg (MGM/UA)

30-SOMETHING

The Leadership of Philip M. Singleton is Launched as AMC Opens the World's Largest Megaplex

by Christine James



As megaplexing has evolved from a trend to the industry baseline, American Multi-Cinema, Inc., the company that pioneered the multiplex, is continuing to push the envelope. In December of 1996, the circuit opened the world's largest theatre, a 30-screen behemoth in Ontario, Calif. And AMC's new president, Philip M. Singleton, plans to forge ahead with forays into national and worldwide megaplexing.

"We're trying to retool to have the most prominent circuit in the world," says Singleton—and that involves not only staggering size stats, but the top of the line in equipment, design and comfort.

Singleton's philosophy and strategy comes in part from the guidance of former AMC topper Stan Durwood. In January, Singleton took the reigns from Durwood, 76, who will remain at AMC as chairman and CEO while undergoing treatment for esophageal cancer. Singleton, who has been with AMC since 1974, says that "a great deal of the success that I enjoy I can really accredit to [Stan Durwood] and his tutelage. He has been my mentor and friend for the two decades that I've been in the business. He taught me to continue to keep my eye on the customer, because they're constantly telling you way in advance where they want to go, and you need to be there when they need you. That's probably the best advice he's ever given me."

Singleton is taking that advice, using the pinnacle of modern technology to satisfy the public's increasingly sophisticated tastes. All the quality, luxury and convenience that's part and parcel of the AMC megaplex is not only great for drumming up a loyal patronage, but also plays into another AMC strategy. "We want to be able to play all the product in the big megaplexes, [because] if the megaplexes are successful, they should warrant better film terms just by nature of the fact that they can deliver such high performance," Singleton explains. "We leverage that network to the advantage of negotiating with the different studios for a better film position."

> ***"A great deal of the success that I enjoy I can really accredit to Stan Durwood. He has been my mentor and friend for the two decades that I've been in the business."***

To date, megaplexing has been well worth the significant investment costs, according to Singleton. "Just about every one that we have opened has been a smashing success," he says. "In most cases, they will out-perform the industry average on a particular film by as much as four or five times. The flexibility of being able to devote a lot of seats on the opening week of a film is one part of it, but I also think that just the way the customers are embracing and flocking to the megaplexes versus traditional theatres is a [major factor].

"It's a trite phrase, but we've trademarked it: the megaplex has changed the way that people see movies," he continues. "The technology that's brought to bear in terms of the auditorium environment, along with the fact that the creative community is putting more audio-visual information and flexibility on 35mm, creates an unparalleled visual experience in terms of film viewing. You couple with that the one-stop shopping and the large theatre that's designed to absorb a lot of people and reduce congestion, and it's a win-win for the customer."

AMC's Ontario Mills 30, the largest complex on the planet in terms of screen count, adds another chapter to the success story. "The Ontario Mills was really developed by the Mills Corporation," says Singleton. "In all the developments that I've looked at around the world, those guys in my opinion have the best handle on the future concept with regard to how entertainment is going to affect traditional retail. The entertainment component of the Mills Project, the 'Entertainment Highway,' [is comprised of] Planet Hollywood, the Wild Horse saloon, our big theatre, Sega Gameworks, multi-faceted restaurants, watering holes, sports bars, plus a huge non-

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traditional food court. I think that's what the customer's looking for—a multi-faceted entertainment-themed retail experience. And that's the wave of the future. That's going to make obsolete the traditional mall."

As well as making headlines for its ambitious entertainment themed surroundings and record-breaking size, the Ontario Mills 30 has received quite a bit of ink for being in the middle of a Battle of the Gargantuplexes: less than 700 feet away from AMC's 30 screens is a 24-screen Edwards complex. The viability of the megaplex itself is only just now proving itself in the face of industry-wide scrutiny —and the initial general lack of confidence in AMC's bold move was not lost on Singleton. "I can remember people calling us the Village Idiot for building a 24-screen theatre in Dallas in 1995," he recalls. "But that virtually turned the industry on its ear. They said that it was way too much in terms of screens, it'll never work, the customer won't like it, you'll never get it booked—and I think it was [one of] the highest-attended theatre[s] in North America last year." But while the megaplex is now becoming a widely-followed industry trend, the AMC/Edwards development raised many eyebrows—and questions. Most notably: Can 54 screens be sustained in such close proximity?

Not unexpectedly, Singleton see things from AMC's side, but offers a qualified "yes."

"I think it's something that we would not have liked to have happen, [but] I think everybody will be okay out there, because the Mills have created such a regional destination location, a project that draws from far away. So both theatres may do okay out there. But one theatre would have done wonderfully well.

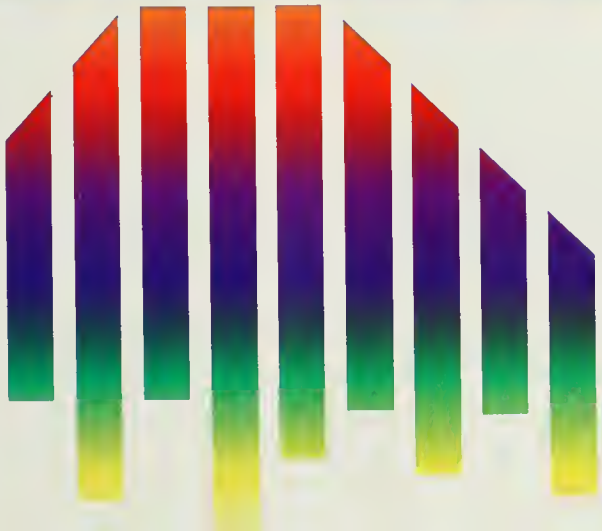
"I have difficulty understanding the decision model for a competitor to come in after the fact and intentionally overscreen a zone once the initial exhibitor has come into play and has already committed to building their building," Singleton adds. "If the situation was reversed, AMC and most circuits that I know of would not come in after the fact and try to overscreen a zone like that."

"I can remember people calling us the Village Idiot for building a 24-screen theatre in Dallas in 1995. But that virtually turned the industry on its ear."

AMC is making the best of things, looking for innovative ways to draw customers. For the recent "Star Wars" re-release, the circuit hired costumed characters to stroll through the Ontario 30's courtyard, and the plan for all AMC theatres is to have themed promotions for as many films as possible, in the true spirit of showmanship. "What we're trying to bring into play is the concept of a versatile programming guide for the managing director of these complexes, where he can [organize a variety of different promotions]. We might try to get the local high school basketball team out there to have a scrimmage game with a local charity or something like that. And we're just trying to do all kinds of different Main Street Disneyland, Disney-esque-type activities in those promenade areas to make them very customer-friendly."

The customer is a recurring subject for Singleton, who puts a lot of value in what his patrons have to say. "Every time I go to the theatres, I talk to my customers," he says. "Our competitive advantage over the last 30 years has been innovation, and the only way that we can derive new concepts that better serve the customers is by talking to them. We're sensitive to [the fact that] the customer is constantly, constantly changing, and for us to compete for his entertainment dollar, we've got to be constantly changing right along with him."





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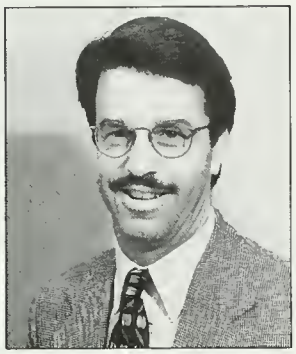
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Response No. 127

"FROM WHERE I SIT..."

Our Forum For Readers Just Like You



BOOTH 101: PROJECTION'S SEVEN DEADLY SINS

by Sean Lohan

Almost everyone can recall a moviegoing experience being ruined by a dirty or scratched film; an annoying, wavering hair in the projection lens; or a soundtrack with so many "pops" and skips in it that the dialogue is almost unintelligible.

These common problems can occur at top-notch, first-run theatres during a film's opening days. As the film goes through its life cycle, these problems worsen to the point where many films are unsalvageable for second-run or foreign release. Some films must even have reels replaced within days of their release.

The two key elements in running a great booth are knowing how to treat film with respect and using equipment properly.

Fortunately, all of these problems can be virtually eliminated by proper film handling.

The two key elements in running a great booth are knowing how to treat film with respect and using equipment properly. These requirements have remained a constant, even though the projectionist's job has changed dramatically over the years.

Today, more than ever, projection booths are operated by managers with many responsibilities. The great volume of films—almost 500—that screened in the nation's 26,000-plus screens last year have made for a high-pressure, fast-paced environment inside the booth. Add to this the increase in projection booth automation, and the need for ongoing training in film-handling techniques is obvious.

I've developed a list, the Seven Deadly Sins of Film Handling, to help keep booth operators on their toes.

SIN #1: FAILURE TO I.D. FILM'S POSITION

When a film arrives from lab or depot, the first thing a booth operator must do is don his editing gloves. The second most important thing is to verify if a film has arrived "heads up" or "tails up."

A heads-up film is facing the right way, with the characters moving forward, the credits reading left to right, and so on. A tails-up film can be deceiving because the soundtrack might look the same, but the characters are upside down, or walking backward.

Never trust the leader, even though it may say "start." Look past the leader at the film itself. That is the only way you'll know if a film is facing the right way.

SIN #2: SPEEDY BUILD-UP MEANS OVERSIGHTS

Moving the film from reels on the build-up table to the platters is where most errors occur. The chief culprit here is speed. Run your film at 50 percent speed, with the film itself being guided gently between your thumb and forefinger from the build-up table to the platter. This way, you can feel for lab splices (splices that may break under pressure) and broken sprockets. In both cases, stop the film, re-splice the film using splicing tape, or remove broken sprockets by removing the frame and splicing film.

Check to see if the height-adjustment bar's rollers are level with the platter. The film should not be "bumping" against the platter's edge; this creates the cross-hatch diagonal lines across a film.

SIN #3: SHOE POLISH IS FOR SHOES

Believe it or not, some projectionists still use white shoe polish to mark where a reel change has occurred. True, these are easily seen markings, visible on the top of the reel as the platter spins. But shoe polish will eventually leak down onto the film, ruining the picture. Instead, use splicing tape with I.D. markings. A sharp eye can detect these even when the platter is spinning at top speed.

SIN #4: IMPROPER STORAGE OF HEADS AND TAILS

After head leaders and tail leaders are removed from a reel, they need to be spooled up, labeled with masking tape. Most projectionists use the "T" and "H" plus a number to indicate what reel the leader is from.



Lohan trains a projectionist at L.A.'s Magic Johnson Theatres.

Never, ever leave rolled-up film on a table, expecting to store it later. When a theatre is operational, the booth is dimly lit. This is the main way reels get mixed up.

SIN #5: IMPROPER THREADING THROUGH ROLLERS

The key about rollers: They should roll. Film should move freely through a roller, with just the sprocketed edges in contact with roller surfaces.

Haste is the main reason projectionists don't take the time to ensure film is actually inside the rollers. Many times an improperly threaded



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film will wriggle free, ending up with the roller's edge running right down the middle of the film.

Although these seven checkpoints make it seem simple, running a projection booth properly is a complex job. A balance between speed and standards must be achieved.

This error won't be discovered until the film is run again, but the damage is permanent.

SIN #6: LACK OF PROJECTION UPKEEP

Ninety-nine percent of projectionists never take the time to browse the manuals that come with the projection systems. This is a big mistake. At the very least, the tension should be checked on the belts, and rollers should be dusted and wiped down, especially after polyester film has been run (because it "sheds"). Also, gate tension should be checked regularly.

SIN #7: FAILURE TO PRE-SCREEN A FILM

The final check of a film to ensure a stellar onscreen presentation is to run the film through on the screen. This way, soundtracks can be checked and any remaining problems, such as mixed reels, will come to light. Not everyone has the time to do this but, if it's possible, such pre-screening is the only way a projectionist can be absolutely certain his work is done.

CONCLUSION

Although these seven checkpoints make it seem simple, running a projection booth properly is a complex job. A balance between speed and standards must be achieved.

The novice film handler should allow himself at least an hour for film build-up. Longtime projection booth operators will be able to build up a film in about 20 minutes. It is important that theatre management allow newcomers the time they need to acquaint themselves with film handling.

After all, the film is the reason people have come to the theatre. Its care and handling are no place to skimp. Booth training can give both new employees and longtime managers the extra tools and confidence they need to get a film onscreen in perfect shape. The goal, after all, is to have the end result—the film's presentation—go off without a hitch or complaint, the first time and every time.

Sean Lohan is Director, Theatre Services Division, National Film Service. NFS' recently launched Theatre Operational Training and Logistics program—aka "booth school"—gives everyday managers the tools they need to run a high-caliber projection booth without years of training. The program is offered both in a one- and two-day seminar formats, and it is offered to theatre circuits both in North America and overseas.

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SILENCED

Death and Dreams at a Landmark Hollywood Moviehouse *by Jon Silberg and Ray Greene*



A PASSION FOR FILM: *A candid photo of Silent Movie exhibitor Laurence Austin in front of the theatre he loved.*

Just one day after the far more highly publicized slaying of Ennis Cosby, the Hollywood district of Los Angeles was rocked by the equally senseless murder of a moviehouse owner/operator who was something of a local institution.

For Laurence Austin, running Hollywood's "Silent Movie"—a theatre he claimed was the last commercially-operating silent moviehouse in the United States—was a true labor of love. Dedicated to the showing of films pre-dating the advent of synchronous sound, the Silent Movie was a kind of living, breathing movie museum—a refuge for the classic efforts of film pioneers, where audiences sat enthralled by the "electric shadows" of bygone performers whose names are still words to conjure with: Chaplin, Fairbanks, Keaton, Chaney, Pickford, Lloyd.

Out of a deep and abiding passion for silent film, Austin cobbled together weekly showings of silent shorts and features out of his own collection of film prints and those of other archivists who shared his dream. His films were presented the way they're supposed to be: in a 250 seat auditorium, projected on the big screen in front of paying customers, with live accompaniment from an organist to underscore each mood depicted, every nuance of the silent actor's art. A Silent Movie presentation was a film buff's dream; Mr. Austin often introduced the pictures he screened himself, and patrons received fact sheets on each title, which helped them to appreciate details of context, performance and production that might have eluded them otherwise.

Austin was no stranger to the staff of **BOXOFFICE**. His theatre was less than 10 minutes drive from our Hollywood office, and it was such an unavoidable city landmark that it was one of the first ideas that entered our heads when we were casting about for ways to celebrate the centennial of exhibition a few years back. As those of us who are still around remember it, our then-Associate Editor Jon Silberg pleaded to be the person to write that particular article out of a sense that Laurence Austin's story was something special. Jon even personally shot the photos that accompanied the piece, which we ran in November, 1994.

When news that Mr. Austin had been shot to death in a robbery arrived at our office, there was a deep and abiding sense of grief, even among those on our staff who had never seen a movie at his theatre. One of our writers told a **BOXOFFICE** editor that just knowing Austin was there, celebrating the continuum of the movie medium as an unselfish act of love, had always made her feel a little bit better about covering a business that at times seems to have cornered the market on cynicism and guile.

Remarkably, though not a Silent Movie habitue, Jon Silberg was present at Austin's theatre watching a screening of F.W. Mumau's "Sunrise" on the night Austin was killed. His eyewitness report:

Though I'd interviewed Laurence Austin some time ago for an article in **BOXOFFICE**, *I hadn't made it down to his Silent Movie in Hollywood nearly as often as I'd have liked. The few times I had, the experience had been exhilarating. As much as possible, Austin presented programs of short subjects and features from the silent era as they were meant to be seen, at the right speed with live organ accompaniment.*

'He showed everything, from Chaplin and Eisenstein classics to two-reelers with stars whose names would stump even the most devoted film buffs. Audiences at the Silent Movie were surprisingly young and seemed to be there for pure enjoyment, as opposed to seeing the films because they thought they "should."

'On the night of Friday, January 17, Austin came down front, introduced organist Dean

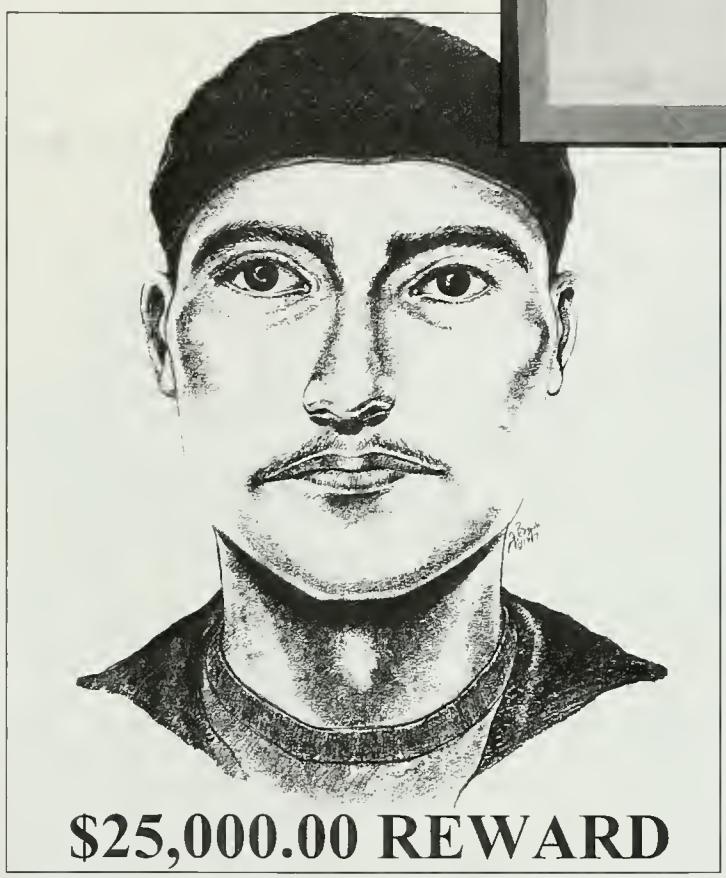
Mora and announced the program: a Felix the Cat cartoon, two short subjects and F.W. Murnau's "Sunrise." It was easy to detect a note of pride when he referred to his theater as "the only all-silent movie theatre in the world." He'd said this hundreds of times before to audiences. There was no way of knowing this time would be the last.

'The first shot sounded like a sound effect. Mora's organ is capable of a repertoire of effects—a whistle, a clock, a bell—and for a moment, the shot seemed like one of them. The second explosion was louder and clearly came from the back of the house. The blast that originated a few feet from my head sent me and everyone else to the floor, where we stayed for a few minutes, not knowing if a sick joke had been perpetrated or if a gang fight had strayed inside this unlikely venue.

'The projectionist screamed out from the lobby in distress and Mora made his way there to see what had happened. He returned, pale but composed, and announced that there had apparently been a robbery and Austin was dead. Good Samaritans who'd heard the shots from the street were now trying to help the teenage girl who had sold snacks and drinks in the lobby; she'd been shot in the chest close to her heart. Though in rough shape, ultimately, she would survive.

'Paramedics and police soon arrived and took statements from everyone in the audience. Afterward, the events slowly added up to this: A male Hispanic, age 18-24, lanky build, light, clear complexion, angular features, sat down in the rear of the auditorium, next to a woman who later recalled being made uncomfortable by his presence. After the shorts had been on for about 20 minutes, he rose and made his way to the lobby, where Austin always counted the night's receipts. He shot Austin in the head, took the money and shot the concession girl. He ran down the aisle, blasting away at the opposite wall and escaping via an emergency exit, outside of which a getaway car was waiting.

'The realization that someone would shoot an old man and a young girl for a few hundred dollars in receipts was palpably sickening more than frightening or sad. The fact that this act had almost inevitably ended forever the long run of "the only all-silent movie theatre in the world" was saddening and frustrating to say the least. Other art forms have their curators and librarians, but Austin had devoted years to preserving the heritage and history of movies in a way that very few others have. He'd presented his beloved silents in an alive atmosphere conducive to genuine entertainment rather than in the pedantic environment of a museum or classroom.





THE VILLAIN OF THE PIECE: *(Above) Police sketch of Laurence Austin's killer.*
ABOVE RIGHT: *Detail from the facade of Austin's Silent Movie theatre.*

"What still hurts is the realization that I was there when a person's passion for cinema and all he'd built as a result was instantly demolished in a blast of senseless gunfire."

'The bullet hole in the wall opposite my seat, about a foot over where my head had been, proved a frightening discovery. But it didn't hurt me. What still hurts is the realization that I was there when a person's passion for cinema and all he'd built as a result was instantly demolished in a blast of senseless gunfire. If there is any consolation at all, it's that at least some of us in the area are lucky enough to have benefitted from the results of Austin's devotion to "the only all-silent movie theatre in the world."'

At press time it was an open question whether or not Austin's killer would ever be found. The murder attracted a lot of attention locally, and the outpouring of affection, with scores of moviegoers leaving flowers on the sidewalk in front of Silent Movie for weeks after Austin's death, marked one of the few grace notes in an otherwise mournful dirge. A $25,000 reward has been put out, and representatives of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences among others have begun talking openly about keeping Laurence Austin's dream alive, either by reopening Silent Movie or finding another permanent home for the commercial display of the silent film's multi-leveled artistry.

The death of Laurence Austin marks the passing of an exhibition hero—the last commercial curator in Hollywood for an entire film epoch. We at **BOXOFFICE** decided immediately that we could not allow the event to go unnoticed in our pages. But we also felt that to speak of Laurence Austin only in terms of the sad and grotesque coda to his life would be to accept his killer's definition of its value—and we surely weren't about to do that.

On the pages that follow, we've reprinted for your reading pleasure our original tribute to Laurence Austin, Hollywood dreamer. Not a word has been cut. We encourage all Mr. Austin's fellow exhibitors to join us in celebrating the man for what he was and for what he achieved—a life in exhibition that was fulfilling, rewarding and, in its own way, dedicated to the greater good.—***Ray Greene, Editor-in-Chief,* BOXOFFICE**

Anyone with information about the death of Laurence Austin should contact Detective John Miller or Alan Hamilton at Hollywood Division Homicide, (213) 485-6410 or (213) 485-4302.

SILENCE IS GOLDEN

In the Heart of Hollywood, Laurence Austin's "Silent Movie" Keeps a Gilded Era Alive

by Jon Silberg



KEEPER OF THE FLAME: *Exhibitor Laurence Austin stands before the facade of his Silent Movie theatre in Hollywood, Calif. on a typical business day.*

In the heart of Hollywood, where "Dances With Wolves" plays at the revival houses and most residents have no time for any movie that has fallen off the trade charts, the Silent Movie theatre on Fairfax Avenue keeps alive the golden oldies of the pre-talkie era and has not run a talking picture since its inception in the 1940s. Proprietor Laurence Austin keeps this 250-seat theatre running because of his love for the "true originals"—the great performers from the silent period—and as a continuation of the legacy of the theatre's founder, John Hampton. Along with his wife Dorothy, Hampton had owned and operated the Silent Movie six days a week until his death in 1990. Shortly after, Austin set to refurbishing and re-opening it, and Silent Movie has been sustaining itself ever since.

Austin has a personal connection to the period himself. His father, William Austin, was a silent film actor, and his mother Ethel was a seamstress for Cecil B. DeMille's productions throughout most of the director's illustrious career.

Growing up, Austin would hear remembrances of a nearly-forgotten period in American cinema from his parents, who were there as eyewitnesses. The period and its films are alive to him. "I've seen some of these silent pictures so many times, but there's always something new," says Austin. "Besides being a wonderful window to the past, they are still really very enjoyable."

Austin boasts an increasing clientele of "twenty- and thirty-somethings" who are discovering the genuine entertainment value of the films of Chaplin, Keaton, Griffith *et al.* Austin attributes some recent interest to such modern stars as Robert Downey Jr. for his work in "Chaplin" and Johnny Depp for his Keaton-esque stylings in "Benny and Joon."

"It brings people out to see the originals," says Austin, "and the silent screen stars *were* originals. Most of these people were very uneducated by today's standards and they didn't have anybody else to imitate," he adds, pointing out the enormous global impact created by Chaplin, Garbo, Valentino and their like. "To quote Mary Pickford, 'It's too bad silents didn't come out after sound, because acting in silents is a much more difficult art form.'"

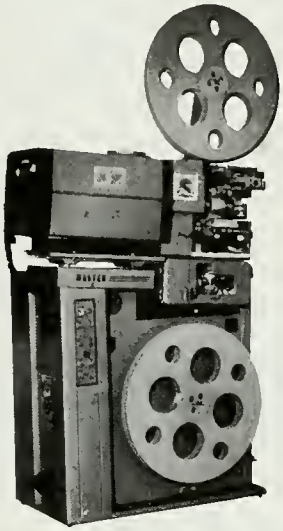
Some stars have continued to linger in our collective unconscious as personas even if their work has not. But aside from showing Keaton and Chaplin, Austin's Silent Movie theatre has created interest in performers whose careers had been forgotten. "Charlie Chase was a lesser-known comic in the silent era. I showed a few of his comedies and nobody knew who he was, but they liked him," recalls Austin. "Now I can run a night of just Charlie Chase."

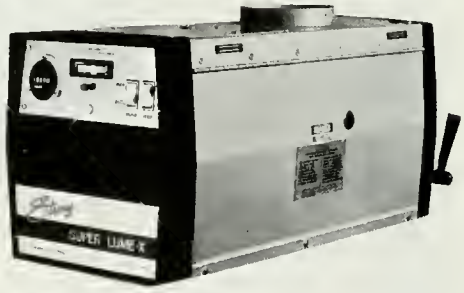
Perhaps the fact that these films are from such a far-off era is somewhat offset by the immediacy of a live organ accompanist. The addition of live performance was one of the few changes Austin made from the original program, which used phonograph records for music. Old-timers Bob Mitchell and Gaylord Carter, who played the organ way back when Lon Chaney's "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" and Harold Lloyd's "The Fresh-

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FADE TO BLACK: *The death of Laurence Austin may mark the end of commercially available silent film in the movie capital.*

man" first premiered, continue to play from time to time at the Silent Movie, as do younger performers such as Dean Mora, who learned the difficult craft from Carter. "It requires a very special skill," Austin points out. "You have to remember all kinds of music. It's only rarely that you have a prepared score that you can read from, and you've got to be quick enough to change the mood of what you're playing as the mood changes on the screen." Even with a couple of viewings to prepare, this is quite a feat. "You see why the audiences often stand up and cheer at the end. The emotional impact has been so great, and they're appreciative of the live accompaniment."

Austin claims many famous visitors to his theatre. Before starting "Chaplin," Robert Downey Jr. stopped in to catch some original Chaplin shorts with an audience and Johnny Depp visited to watch Keaton. Sadly, John Candy's reason for visiting, a Fatty Arbuckle biopic, likely died with the comic actor.

While many of the films originate from such libraries and collections as MGM, Turner Entertainment, the George Eastman House, Films Inc. and other archives, a large percentage of the films come from the library that was personally and painstakingly assembled by John and Dorothy Hampton.

Hampton originally moved to Hollywood from Oklahoma City, where he had worked in the MGM film exchange and at a company that manufactured movie posters. His intention was to build a theatre to preserve the silent films which had already disappeared from the public consciousness.

"He really deserves a vote of thanks for saving silent films," says Austin. "He was the first person I know of to ever really do it. By the 1940s nobody had any interest in silent films. Old hat. Swept under the carpet. So he really deserves credit for starting the revival."

Hampton personally duped a great many films from nitrate to safety film in the small projection booth/laboratory he'd created at the Silent Movie—an endeavor Austin feels may have cost Hampton his life. "The fumes from the nitrate film can kill you and there was a chemical he used to clean the prints which was finally outlawed because they realized how dangerous it was to breathe in those fumes."

Following Hampton's death, Austin set out to reopen the theatre. "I talked to Dorothy Hampton about it and her words were, 'Well, if you can do something with that old wreck over there, why, go to it!' It had run down over [the previous] 11 years, so we went to work with the help of friends and donations and so forth, and we re-opened on January 18, 1991 with DeMille's 'The King of Kings,' which was exactly what John Hampton had hoped during his illness to be able to do."

"It brings people out to see the originals, and the silent screen stars were originals. To quote Mary Pickford, 'It's too bad silents didn't come out after sound, because acting in silents is a much more difficult art form.'"

The projection equipment is all new. Some of the films do in fact have soundtracks. "'Sunrise,' for example [a classic by F.W. Murnau which received a special 1927 Oscar for 'artistic quality of production'], has a score and a soundtrack which people want rather than us running it silently with our own music," says Austin.

The Silent Movie theatre runs 16mm and 35mm (whichever type of print is accessible) and attempts to project the films as close to their intended speeds as possible. Until the advent of synchronous sound demanded the standardized speed of 24 frames per second, films ran at many different speeds, from 16 fps to 24 fps, which is why poorly transferred silent films often seem to run jerkily or at accelerated tempos. Austin's theatre does the best it can to preserve the real speed so that the images don't look sped up and the films actually last for their intended running times.

In addition to the new equipment, Austin added an outdoor patio for intermissions and put up 30-by-40 inch celebrity portraits. The theatre continues to support itself financially, though Austin is quick to point out its special circumstances. The Hamptons owned the land, the theatre and many of the prints outright, which certainly reduces overhead. "If someone wanted to start out right now showing silent films and they had to put up a building and so forth, they'd better be prepared not to make any money," Austin warns.

In addition to running the Silent Movie, Austin has also helped continue John Hampton's tradition of preserving the silents. While there is no more hazardous duping going on in the theatre's booth, Austin continues to build awareness for silent films worldwide. Recently, Austin and a Japanese-speaking UCLA professor flew 6,000 miles to show selected silents in Osaka. "We sold out six shows and helped develop an awareness of silent films in Japan."

The Silent Movie theatre continues to keep alive the films of Chaplin, Keaton, Valentino, Swanson, Pickford and their peers—works from a glorious and little-seen era—six nights a week. "Lord willing," says Austin, "I will continue for many years to come."

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Response No. 296

Clear Field Of "Vision"

Macrovision's Video Theatres Revivify Exhibition in Small Towns Worldwide

by Susan Lambert



Video projection has come of age. A video of "True Lies" plays in a Maxi Movies theatre. Maxi Movies uses a square screen, but all other Macrovision theatres project the standard widescreen aspect ratio of film.

There's been a lot of talk about the coming exhibition revolution and the future of electronic cinema. Experts are trying to predict exactly which digital medium will replace film or how movies will be "beamed" directly to theatres by satellite. But while everyone else has been talking, there is one company that's been quietly, but effectively, doing. Macrovision Corporation, a 15-year-old company that holds all the patents for copy protecting home video, decided a few years ago that there was a market to be developed and began licensing a video projection encryption system called CineGuard. In August of 1995 the CineGuard program opened its first video theatre in Poland. Less than two years later it's expanded to over 26 cinemas worldwide—including six in Poland, 15 in South Africa, two in Ireland and three in the Philippines. Currently, five of the eight major Hollywood studios participate in their program along with local and independent distributors.

"I think it was somewhat prophetic that at the 100th anniversary of film we opened the first legitimate video cinema in the world," says Brian Dunn, Vice President of Business Development at CineGuard. "Given that it's a Super-VHS format, that may sound overblown. But as modest as it is, you're seeing the beginning of the second 100 years of cinema."

With the Macrovision cinemas, small cities that wouldn't normally be able to support a town cinema can now get second-run—or in some cases day and date releases—on major and independent movies. Many of the towns used to have a working cinema, but due to the intervention of home video, the rise of piracy, changing economics and, most importantly, the availability of studio prints, the theatres closed. According to Dunn, because film prints cost $1,500 a piece, studios are very careful about how much investment they can make relative to the marketplace. "In the United States, they'll make a very large print investment—'101 Dalmatians' comes out with 3,000 prints—and then move those prints through theatres over the course of a few months," explains Dunn. "In Poland [which has 700 cinemas] the average release is 30 prints. Mexico [with almost 1,500 screens], the average is somewhere between 60-125 prints depending on the title." By the time a print would finally reach a small town (sometimes six months later), not only would the prints be in terrible condition and a video release imminent, but in many cases, video stores would already have pirated copies of the film. Since studios aren't about to invest in more prints—it simply isn't cost effective—that's where Macrovision sees room to step in. At $40 per videotape, a distributor can manufacture 30-40 videotapes for the price of one film print. Dunn notes that based on the successful results of their first three theatres in Poland, "if there was a population of say, 25 video cinemas in Poland, those cinemas could increase the total first week boxoffice by as much as 30 percent. For a relatively small investment, the studios can service a significant group of theatres."

Dunn says many of their video exhibitors were former film exhibitors. "They know American movies and everybody wants to get back in the movie business." Macrovision's job is to overcome exhibitors' concerns about the availability of titles by building on its existing relationships with the studios and coordinating the bookings to help the distributors. Dunn explains that multiplexing, through which one phone call can book hundreds of screens, has spoiled distributors so that the prospect of dealing with hundreds of little independent cinemas is not attractive anymore. "What they like about CineGuard," says Dunn, "is that we're kind of tying these people together, sewing them in a nice, neat little package that is more cost effective and efficient for them to deal with."

Dunn insists that Macrovision isn't interested in running or controlling theatres—"We're technologists. We are really looking for people to take that responsibility"—they have had to take a very hands-on approach to get the project off the ground, referee distribution issues and prove to people it can be done.

"Each country is a different story. The first thing we have to do is go in and say, 'Will it work?'" In Asian countries like the Philippines there is a 30 percent entertainment tax on ticket sales, making it was difficult to find a working business model. Macrovision licensed CineGuard to a Filipino company, Viva Productions Inc., who was able to make a deal with local politicians on the entertainment tax. "And thank god the Philippines love to go to the movies, so just the overall high traffic volume was going to make up for what was otherwise a weak ticket price," adds Dunn. In South Africa, Macrovision faced an opposite problem: since apartheid resulted in absolutely

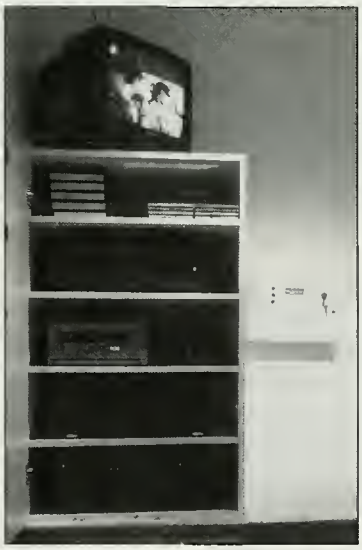
no theatres being built in black districts, there was no cultural orientation for black people in South Africa to go to the movies. "It's not a tradition," explains Dunn, "but they have a decent ticket price." Maxi Movies—the Macrovision licensee in South Africa—had already established a video theatre toehold in the country prior to partnering with Macrovision. But with Macrovision's help, Maxi Movies will be able to access Hollywood product, and plans are in place to open 100 new CineGuard cinemas in Southern Africa over the next five years.

Currently, Macrovision has identified 20 international markets where a video cinema is viable. "We're taking the Cinema Paradisos that have closed down and re-opening them using new technology." And not just for Hollywood product. Dunn adds, "Our most successful movies in Poland have been Polish films."



Above: Like MaxiMovies in South Africa, Macrovision's video theatres reach audiences who would otherwise have little access to film theatres. Below: The Macrovision projection room is simple, compact and easy to use.

The key to getting the distributors on board was the CineGuard encryption system. "Everyone has agreed," says Dunn, "our standards of security are so high, we won't be a source of piracy." In fact, many companies and countries are looking to CineGuard as a way to take the wind out of the video pirates' sails. "In India, the local producers are very frustrated," explains Dunn. "They're tired of seeing video projectors being used to show pirated materials. They see CineGuard as a way to legitimize the video cinema industry."



And how does the system work? Macrovision's CineGuard decoder is integrated into Barco video projectors along with a line doubler and a security chassis that prevents any tampering with the system. Macrovision gets film masters from the distributors and transfers them to video using an encoder that adds the encryption to the tape, rendering the tape useless without the decoder. The tapes are sent overnight to theatres. When the encrypted tape is put into the VCR deck and the output signal uplinks to the video projector, the decoder inside the system unscrambles the sync signal to allow proper projection of the video.

It costs anywhere from $50,000 to $100,000 per screen for a video cinema, including renovation, projection and audio equipment—a cost, Dunn says, that is significantly lower than the $500,000 to $1 million dollars per screen for a typical modern multiplex. And, he adds, operating a video cinema is simpler and more economical than the traditional film theatre.

The hard part has been negotiating a usable release window for video. "They [distributors] don't want us to locate the video cinemas anywhere near the successful 35mm cinemas." And often, local politics prevail, but Dunn says Macrovision or the licensee has been able to negotiate a workable window. Maxi Movies actually created a new window, now called the "public video window" that comes three months after first-run release and three months before home video release.

Macrovision expects to have 100 screens licensed by the end of this year with a five to 10 year forecast of over 3,000 screens worldwide. Currently, Warner Bros., Fox and MGM/UA are the only Hollywood studios that aren't invovled. Dunn hopes they'll come around and adds, "For the studios that aren't participating, their reason are more market oriented—whether or not philosophically they agree with the use of video for theatrical purposes, or the program just is not big enough for them to spend the time—yet."

Dunn claims that people are amazed at the quality of presentation video projection can get. "It's a small screen, but we're talking about relatively small cinemas and it's a good cinema-going experience. I think distributors have recognized that it's appropriate for the situation it's addressing. We're not in there saying we want to open these theatres in Manhattan and Los Angeles where people are getting good 35mm prints of major Hollywood releases. We're saying where there are obvious distribution problems and prints are reaching those people are in very bad conditions, then we have a better solution."

Macrovision is optimistic but cautious about the future. "We believe electronic cinema is out there, but it's five to 10 years away before projection quality can possibly achieve what film quality can."

Dunn continues, "The issue with video projectors is they're not nearly as bright as film projectors. So Macrovision is working with Barco NV (a video projector manufacturer) and other companies experiment with new technologies for improving light output."

Macrovision hopes to create a standard with CineGuard and is ready to evolve from S-VHS when the time is right. "We already have digital products, so that's not really an issue. And our exhibitors are capable of showing encoded material, but they can just as easily put a satellite on the roof and take a satellite feed." Dunn says Macrovision currently restricts the use of the projector with a mechanism that will not permit the system to take a satellite feed during certain points of the day, because "we want these cinemas to behave like commercial cinemas." Which means not showing the boxing match when they should be showing movies.

Dunn says the towns that Macrovision serves deserve to see affordable movies in a high-quality environment. Which means clean, comfortable theatres with a good Dolby surround system. "Our first picture when we opened in Poland was 'Bad Boys.' Seventy-eight percent of our customers are under the age of 25 and they're no different from the American kids. Early in the film there's a 747 that flies overhead and those jet engines started in the back speakers and then ripped up the side speakers and then came through the left/center/right speakers through the screen and it lifted the kids out of their seats. Their reaction was, 'Man, cinema's come back to town.'"

And that, ladies and gentlemen, is what it's all about—whether on film, on super-VHS, on satellite or some yet-to-be-determined futuristic format.

A DRIVING PASSION

A Filmmaker Goes On The Road In Search Of His Drive-In Dreams

By Jon Bokenkamp

It was America before America was generic. It was buck night, triple features and two-bit love. It was that particular smell of the summer air, the fresh-cut grass, the dust. And popcorn...."



That's how 24-year-old film school graduate Jon Bokenkamp, who worked as a carpenter on "Renaissance Man" and assistant editor on "omaha: the movie," describes the experience of attending drive-in theatres when he was a boy in Kearney, Nebr. "As a kid, I always loved going to the drive-in—so much so that I spent a year and a half of my life making a documentary about those dinosaurs of theatrical distribution."

The resulting 20-day journey in an old Cadillac took Bokenkamp and a film crew through California, Utah, Colorado, Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas and Nebraska. The snake-like route followed a path plotted to cross the sites of drive-ins either still or recently operational, like the Best Western Movie Manor in Monte Vista, Colo., and the Skyview in Lamesa, Texas.

The resulting 45-minute film, a "drive-in memorial" that combines 16mm, BetaCam SP and Super-8 footage and melds the documentary and road-movie genres, is called "After Sunset: The Life and Times of the Drive-In Theatre." In tune with the movie product most commonly associated with drive-ins, which once numbered more than 5,000 but now are barely a sixth that, interviewees include horror director John Carpenter, legendary B-movie producer Sam Arkoff and John Bloom, who goes by the gonzo film critic guise of Joe Bob Briggs.

Bokenkamp, who describes himself as a "simple kid from small-town Nebraska who likes Coca-Cola, the road, dust—things that are just considered American," here describes his adventure for the readers of BOXOFFICE.

One recent summer, I tasted freedom—I graduated from college. With the remaining student loan money I had left in my checking account, I decided to embrace the road. I wanted to travel the West and tell the story of America's romance with the drive-in theatre. I wanted to document the drive-in and its people before they disappeared.



The Movie Manor in Monte Vista, Colo., is home to a movie motel for patrons wishing to watch the night's attractions from their own rooms.

"We found good news: People. When I say people, I mean 'mom-and-pop theatre owners,' who run [America's remaining] quaint little drive-in theatres."

Those gigantic outdoor theatres had always represented a simpler time to me. An America that wasn't so fragmented, perhaps an America that was a little more innocent. After all, I'd grown up in a decade when half of all parents were divorced, when baseball went on strike and apple pie was called "too fattening." I wanted to know where America had gone, to meet the people who built and patronized these open-air palaces but eventually had to watch most die. So I rented a camera and put together a small crew of film-school buddies. With these three good pals, $240 and a 1976 Caddie (which I purchased from a junkman who asked me to call him "The Wolfman"), we set out across the great American desert, vowing to use only drive-in theatres as our map.

So we left L.A. and traveled the highways. Bumpy, out-of-the-way highways. And we found good news: People.

When I say people, I mean "mom-and-pop theatre owners," who run quaint little drive-in theatres that tend not to be listed in any industry directory. People like George Kelloff, a true drive-in theatre buff who lives in Monte Vista, Colo. George is a soft-spoken man who now owns the Best Western Movie Manor, who had saved for eight years until he and his wife could afford to build his dream: "a movie motel where you can watch the movie from the comfort of your own room." There in Monte Vista, a produce town of 3,900 in Rio Grande County, patrons can lie in bed and watch the night's movie on a drive-in screen as it plays under the stars. In fact, George loves the theatre business so much that he and his wife live at the drive-in. "The wife and I built a small apartment there next to the snack bar," he told me, "so we can watch the movie at night."

Our room at the Movie Manor was called The Audrey Hepburn Room—every room is named after a star. The crew and I watched "Casper" and shared a pizza. The sound was piped right into our room.

Over the next few days, we covered a lot of road. Eventually, we pulled into the sleepy oil and agricultural town of Lamesa, Texas (pop. 11,800), where Sam and Carol Kirkland run the Skyview Drive-In. Sam has worked at the theatre (which he now owns) since he was 10 years old. Their drive-in is "plum famous" around Lamesa—less for the size of its screen (the largest in Texas) than its food. The Skyview boasts its own patented food item, the Chihuahua Sandwich.

According to Sam, "The Chihuahua is a real unique food item that we own here at the Skyview. It consists of two corn tortillas fried flat, with chili in it, some cabbage, onions—if

Dear Dan,



Dan Livak carries the Olympic Torch, 1996

May your torch stay lit for another 40 years.

Happy Birthday!

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Doug Endicott
Tom Brand &
Janice Sinclaire
Alan Grossberg

Dan & Amy Tocchini
John Ellison Jr.
John Schweiger &
Candace Runnel
Kyle Conner

you want 'em—and our special pimento cheese. We top it off with jalapeno pepper and put it in a special Chihuahua sack." In 1995, the Chihuahua was named the best food item at the Texas State Fair. Ever watchful for ancillary revenue, the Kirklands have set things up so you don't even have to pay theatre admission if all you want is a Chihuahua. You can just pull up to the snack bar, get a Chihuahua and take it home with you.

The night we visited the Skyview was a warm June evening that saw the theatre's largest crowd in 15 years: 510 cars. The Skyview is far from dead. The community loves that theatre.

During our travels, we met drive-in owners and aficionados from all over the western U.S. Some fed us, some shared great stories of naked people and honking horns, and others were simply kind enough to let us camp there under the night sky.

Each day brought us to a new screen and a new story. In Springfield, a town of 1,700 located in a cattle-and-dairy corner of Colorado, Ruby Ross is a senior-citizen widow who still hauls the popcorn popper from her downtown hardtop to the Kar-Vu Drive-In as the outdoor season arrives. She owns both theatres but operates only one at a time—the hardtop in the winter and the no-top in the summer. When her drive-in is operating, it's the only movie theatre in all of Baca County. In the serene Sandhills of Nebraska, Gerald Bullard is a local businessman who opened a drive-in, aptly called the Sandhills Drive-In, on the prairie outside Alliance. He built the place himself.

Then there's the Brazos Drive-In Theatre in Granbury, Texas. The Brazos is unique in that its screen faces west, forcing the movies to start a little later than most because the sun hits the screen directly—but the display of golden hues reflected off the tower make the wait worthwhile. Knowing the importance of the snack bar to the outdoor screen-scene experience, Jennifer Miller serves perhaps the best hamburger in West Texas. (Her secret is the mayonnaise.)

"The night we visited the Skyview was a warm June evening that saw the theatre's largest crowd in 15 years: 510 cars. The Skyview is far from dead. The community loves that theatre."

After three weeks of good stories and fried foods, our drive-in quest came to a close. We had traveled more than 4,200 miles in search of a simpler time, and it's true, too true: The drive-in as we once knew it is gone. Never again will the outdoor theatre thrive as an economic institution in American culture. If people continue to go, it will probably be to rekindle those wistful memories of innocence and summertime. They'll call it nostalgia.

If the marketeers could find a way to bottle the drive-in experience, I'm sure they would. It would probably be some type of an indoor-drive-in-ride with cute fiberglass cars and plastic mugs of root beer, all rather lifeless. But for those who find the time, for those who go out and travel the back roads, talk to the people and hear their stories, the drive-in theatre is alive.

But to experience it you have to go. Cancel your reservation at the local inn and stay at George Kelloff's Movie Manor for a night. Take your kids and let them play on the swingset at Ruby Ross' Kar-Vu Drive-In. Go to the Skyview and try the Chihuahua and then knock on the projection booth door and tell Sam Kirkland you came there just to see his theatre. You'll make his day.

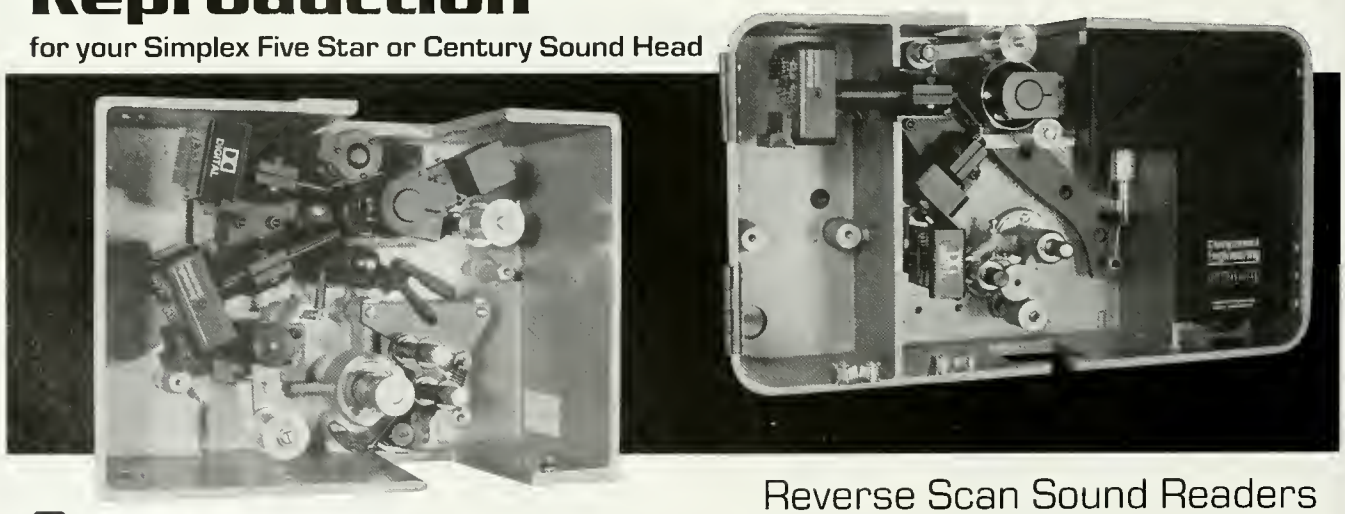
And then, right there, standing in the drive-in, you'll remember it. You'll remember the way America used to be, that first date, the smell of perfume and Brylcreem, and the glow of the drive-in movie, where the showtime is always the same: after sunset.

Cable network sales of Bokenkamp's film are being handled by Janson Associates; phone (800) 9-JANSON. Single copies or bulk orders of videocassettes of "After Sunset" are available for $25 each from Moonshadow Entertainment, 475 E. Orange Grove Ave., Suite L, Burbank CA 91501. Phone: (818) 563-3086.

Information about "After Sunset" is also available on the Internet. The website address is http://www.driveintheater.com/aftersunset.

BOXOFFICE *would also like to thank Mary Ann Grasso, the vice president of NATO, for bringing Mr. Bokenkamp's drive-in odyssey to our attention.*

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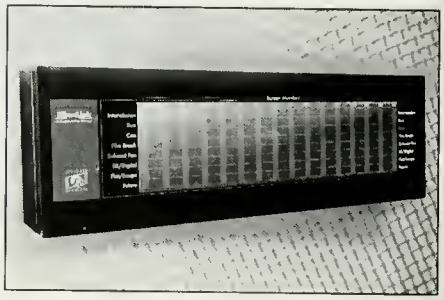
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NEW PRODUCTS BUYING GUIDE

New from **Odyssey Products** is the first **booth status panel** employing **fiberoptic technology.** The **Fiberlink Status System** is fully compatible with your existing automation, and eliminates electrical line noise and electromagnetic interference. The panel includes 16 screens, with eight bit status blocks per screen. Digital stereo intermission music, voice announcers and more can be added to



the panel stations. For more information, write to Odyssey at 5644 Baldwin Court, Norcross, GA 30071, or call (770) 448-4873.
Response Number 301.

Many of the designs that make theatre lobbies and other areas look attractive and exciting also make them difficult to light; curves, coves, sharp angles and other non-standard elements simply won't accommodate stock lighting. Now **Tivoli Industries** has a number of ingenious **flexible lighting systems** to solve this problem. Their compact fluorescent 500, 600 and T8 Series; Incandescent Series; and FlexSystem lighting solutions offer a variety of options for your unusual designs. For more information, call Tivoli Industries at (714) 957-6101.
Response Number 302.

ORC Lighting Products has added the **Integraded Seal Lamp** to its line of light sources. These lamps are especially designed for the customer who prefers graded seals. Call (818) 969-3344 for more information.
Response Number 303.

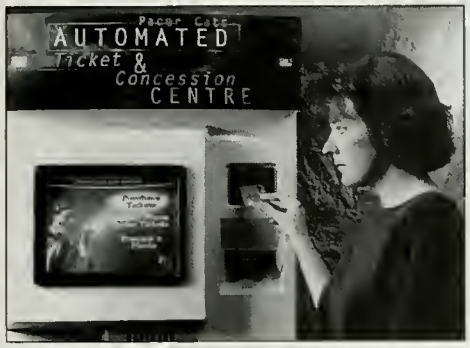
Pacer/CATS has developed a **state-of-the-art ticketing and concessions software suite.** Their **Total Information Management System**



should make training cashiers easier and mistakes less frequent; the system relies on an easily understood point-and-click interface. Help with training is also available. The systems are fully customizable and specifically designed for the theatre industry.

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Also from Pacer/CATS is a **new automated customer service kiosk** that **reduces lines and offers customers a fun way to purchase tickets and concessions.** An animated "usher" guides customers through the transaction with trailers of coming atttractions, show times and book-



ings, and customers can purchase advance tickets and concessions. This system is fully compatible with TeleTicket. Call Pacer/CATS at (303) 649-9818 or (800) 730-2287 for details.

Response Number 304.

If you've invested in THX sound technology for your theatre, there's now a humorous way to let the audience know what they're listening to. **Lucasfilm THX, Skywalker Sound and Pixar Animation Studios** have collaborated to pro-



duce an **animated trailer** to promote THX. Now, when the familiar logo appears on the screen, it suddenly breaks down and a whimsical animated character appears to fix it, demonstrating the theatre's sound capabilities in the process. If nothing else, a good laugh should put the audience in the mood to enjoy the movie that follows. Call (415) 662-1896 for information.

Response Number 305.

Looking for something to lend a little flair to your marquee? Notify passers-by of special events with **large, multicolored banners** from **ASF.** Printed with solvent-free, permanently bonded inks, the banners can be printed to your

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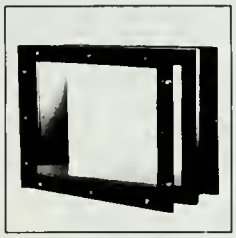
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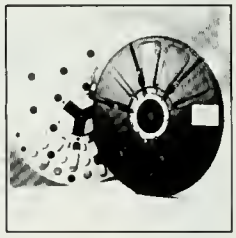
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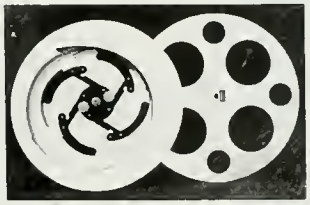
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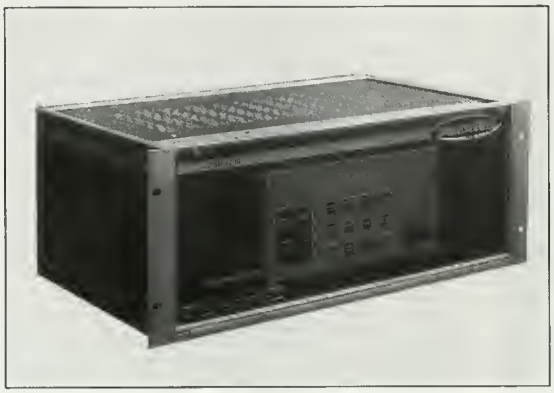
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specifications on three standard sizes: 18" x 36", 30" x 60" and 30" x 84". A line of stock designs is also available. Call **Venmark Intl.** at (617) 237-5860.

Response Number 306.

Smart Theatre Systems has come out with a **new model of the THX-approved CSP4235 PANSTEREO cinema stereo processor,** which incorporates the functions and controls of the remote control unit into **a more compact and efficient model.** The control buttons are now built into the front panel of this rack-mounted product. The **new model CSP1200** maintains all the features of the companion product, but now **has a front panel LCD status display that provides more information to the operator.** The performance and specifications of the CSP1200 are identical to the original processor, but carries a lower theatre net price.

Smart also recently released a **Digital Signal Processing matrix** designed to **replace the analog matrix used in Dolby optical stereo processors.** The digital system ensures accuracy and consistency in decoding 4-channel signals. The processor does not require modification or adjustment to use the new matrix.



The matrix also includes the SRS sound retrieval system, which can be activated by switch on the card. Call (800) 45-SMART or e-mail: smart@america.net.

Response Number 307.

QSC Audio Products is offering an addition to their PowerLight series. The **PowerLight 2.0HV amplifier** is **optimized for maximum power at eight and four ohms.** The amplifier uses QSC's PowerWave Switching Technology, and weighs only 18 pounds. QSC also announces that its **USA 900 and USA 1310 amplifiers** are **now THX-approved** for the cinema market. Additionally, the USA Series has recently been improved with **new features:** Included now are the **Neutrik Combo connectors,** providing both XLR and 1/4" TRS inputs, **selectable input limiters** to reduce clipping, **variable low-frequency filters** to protect speakers, and **more power** than before thanks to larger, improved power supplies. For more information, call (714) 754-6175 or e-mail info@qscaudio.com. http://www.qscaudio.com.

Response Number 308.

The Electro-Voice **TS992-LX speakers** are **space-savers as well as THX sound systems.** The behind-the-screen speakers reduce the screen to back wall distance by one third,

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allowing theatre owners to move the screen back and add an extra row of seats. The matte-black speakers will not reflect light back through the screen. Call (800) 234-6831 for more information.

Response Number 309.

The **Dolby CP45 six-channel analog processor** is not a new product, to be sure—theatres have been long been using Dolby. However, there is something different about this Dolby processor: the **price has been reduced to $4,300,** less than some non-Dolby processors. Call Dolby at (415) 558-0213 for more information.

Response Number 310.

Star Manufacturing International has two new concession products to keep profits steaming. **The Model #4RW-P warmer** has a 3 1/2 quart capacity and boasts portion-control dispensing of cheese, sauces and hot fudge. The machine's all-stainless steel construction should stand up to hard use and cleaning.



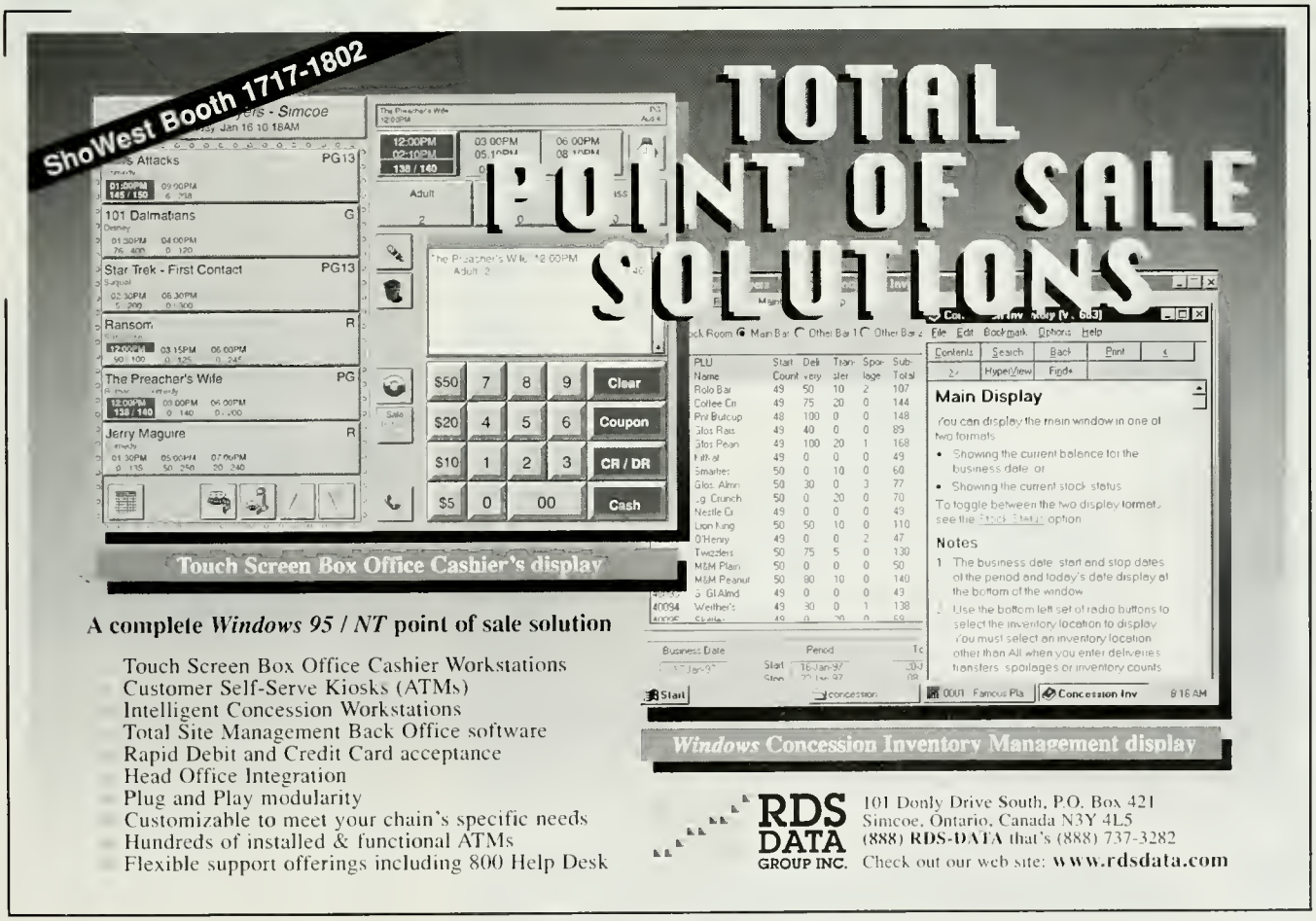
Also from Star is the Model **#615F Star-Max 15 lb. Counter model gas fryer.** This appliance matches other Star-Max machines in appearance and is also designed for ease of cleaning and durability. For safety, the thermostat includes a hi-limit. A set of twin-sized baskets is included. Call Star Manufacturing at (800) 264-7827.

Response Number 311.

Now that you've invested in a state-of-the-art sound system, you want it to work at its best. To the rescue comes **Audio Control Industrial** with **Iasys, a diagnostic electro-acoustic analyzer** which can recommend where to set the crossover point, the crossover level, the limiter and the delay. Iasys uses fuzzy logic to perform its analysis, and includes a useful help button to suggest what to do next. Phone (206) 775-8461.

Response Number 312.

You can make all kinds of modifications in your theatre to accommodate the hearing impaired, but it won't do any good unless they know that assistance is available. A **new trailer** from **Filmack Studios** takes just



Response No. 209

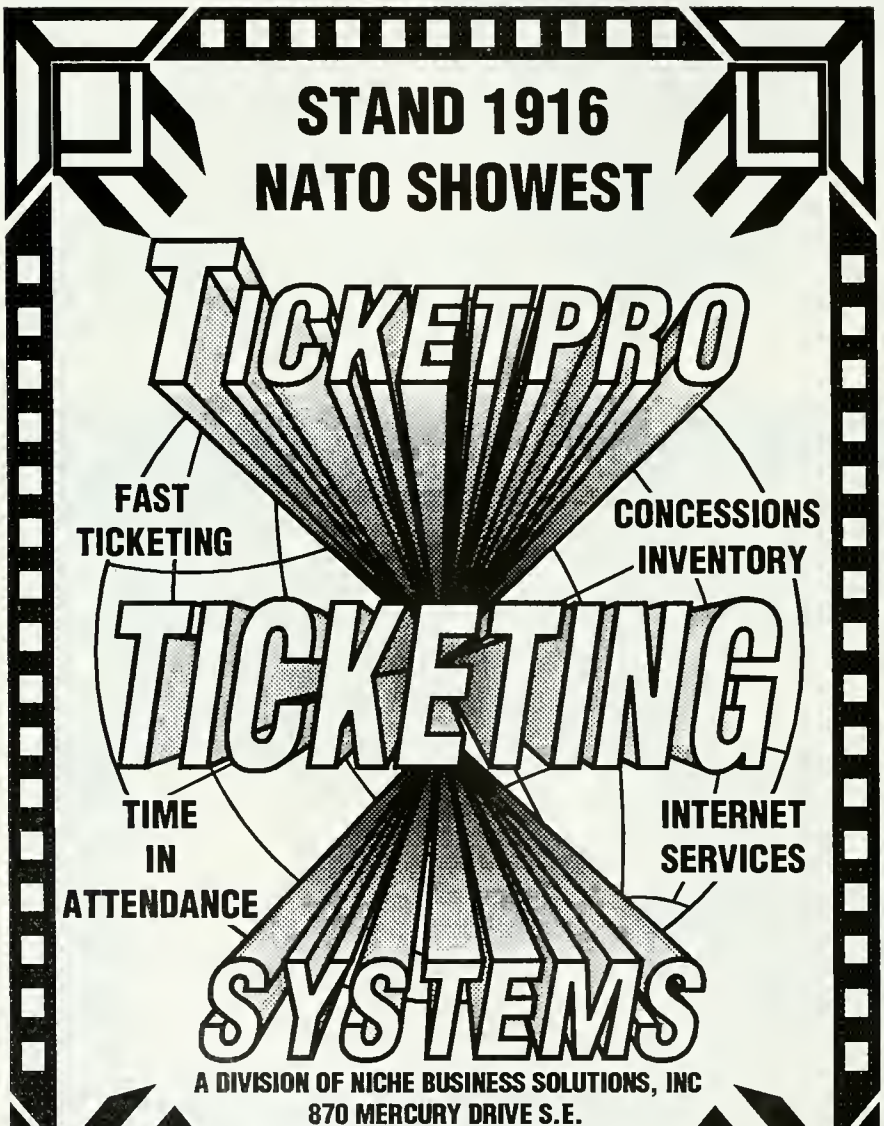
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twelve seconds to **inform your patrons that they can pick up special listening devices at the concession stand.** This is one message which should come through loud and clear. Call toll-free: (800) 345-6225.

Response Number 313.

The **Tac-Fast carpet system** from **3M** offers a number of innovations. The carpet is designed not to unravel at the edges, meaning that it can be installed flush with tile, wood or linoleum without a tack-down bar. More impressively, the carpet is installed with a velcro-like system of hooks and loops; it isn't bonded directly to the floor surface, and can be removed for easy replacement when it becomes worn. This also makes it possible to combine different carpet types to create custom designs. Because liquid adhesives are not used, no offensive chemical odors are created and ventilation is not an issue. To learn more about Tac-Fast, call (800) 440-2965.

Response Number 314.



Response No. 240

Now your customers can get **free postcards** in your lobby. **Pik:Nik Cinema Free Postcards**, distributed in theatres in 50 major markets worldwide, will provide a selection of free, high-quality postcards for your customers to collect and mail. If you place advertising for your theatre on Pik:Nik cards, it will be seen not only at the displays, but by anyone who receives the cards by mail. Call Pik:Nik at (213) 665-2556 for details.

Response Number 315.



If you're looking for ways to spruce up your lobby, **Lawrence Metal Products** may have the answer. They offer two **new metal planter designs:** Model 62, which is polished brass with a lacquered finish and decorative handles, and Model 63, hammered brass with a lacquered finish, plus handles and feet. Both planters are 17" high, 16" in diameter and weigh 14 lbs. each. Call (516) 666-0300 or



write to P.O. Box 400-M, 260 Spur Dr. S., Bay Shore, NY 11706.

Response Number 316.

Yamaha Electronics Corporation is introducing **two new subwoofers** that **produce low bass from relatively small cabinets.** The **YST-SW300** has been especially designed for use with Dolby Digital. The speaker offers extra-low end bass and can be used to broadcast movies or music. The **YST-SW40** is

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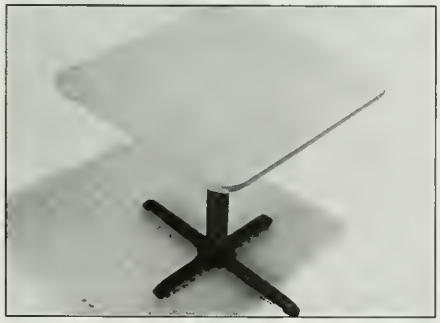
Yamaha's least expensive subwoofer; it incorporates magnetic shielding and Active Servo Technology. Additionally, a **new 5-channel AV receiver** from Yamaha, the **RX-V990,** replaces Yamaha's RX-V890 and retails for the same price, even though the new model adds capability for 5.1 channel sources, such as Dolby Digital. Five additional RCA jacks have been added and the new receiver also includes Yamaha's Cinema DSP processing. The machine will still handle traditional



Dolby Surround Sound. It offers 10 different sound programs offering a variety of auditory environments. For details, call (212) 545-7424.

Response Number 317.

If you have an eating area in the lobby, **The Swan Corporation** is introducing **seamless tabletops** made of Swanstone for easy clean-up. The tabletops have dropped edges with chipboard inserts, and are available in the following sizes: 20" x 24", 24" x 42" and 30" x 30". The material is impervious to boiling



water, high temperatures and normal abrasion. The color goes all the way through the table surface, so it cannot be worn away. For more information, call Swan at (314) 231-8148, or write: One City Centre, St. Louis, MO 63101.

Response Number 318.

Flavor Wear has a **new line of clothing for your employees,** incorporating whimsical, **movie-oriented designs.** Vests, ties, aprons and hats for concession staff, ushers, ticket booth attendants and managers are available in a design called "Showbiz," which will be premiered at ShoWest at Flavor Wear's booth, number 1909. For more information, call (619) 749-1332.

Response Number 319.

If you run trailers and previews before the show, **Goldberg Brothers Inc.** has an easy way to retrieve them from the projector. The **Trailer Retrieval Reel** slips inside the loops of unspooled film, and expands to lock it in place for easy transport to the rewind bench. Call (303) 321-1099 for more details, or write to Goldberg Brothers Inc., 8000 E. 40th Ave., Denver, CO 80207.

Response Number 320.

The Earth Communications Office has produced a **new trailer to promote awareness of the importance of coral reefs.** The two-minute public service announcement is narrated by actress Linda Hunt. For more information or to order the trailer, call (310) 571-3141.

Response Number 321.

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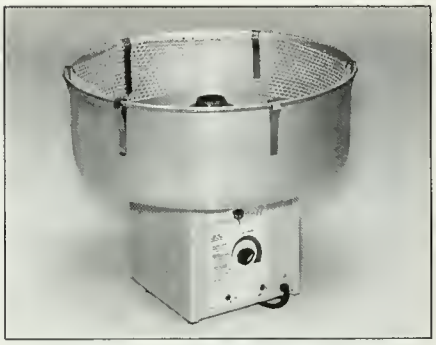
If your counter space is at a premium but you still need a computer to run your **point-of-sale operations, Indiana Cash Drawer** may have the answer. Their **MPC3412 microPC** measures only 3"x4"x12", small enough to fit in the back of their SLD cash drawer, but includes four serial ports to support various peripherals plus a programmable Solid State Disk, data backup and floppy drive. The case is industrial-strength, to stand up to hard retail use. For information and to learn about a special introductory offer, contact ICD at (800) CASHDRW (227-4379), or visit ICD's website at http://www.icdpos.com.

Response Number 322.

Strong International is introducing **two new automation control systems.** The **CNA-100** is the base-level version, while the **CNA-200** offers the same features with the addition of backlit graphic readouts and new automation enhancements. The systems are modular and designed to be easy to troubleshoot, since they sport simplified wiring designs. Call (402) 390-2929.

Response Number 323.

Looking for a new taste treat to add to the concession stand? **Gold Medal Products** is offering the **Floss Boss,** an inexpensive "starter" cotton candy machine that allows you to test the profit potential of adding cotton candy to your line-up. The machine produces



two servings per minute and requires counter space of 26" in diameter. Other cotton candy and "fun food" machines are also available. For details, call (800) 543-0862.

Response Number 324.

Server Products offers a line of **nacho chip and cheese dispensers.** The cheese warmer has an adjustable thermostat and water bath to keep cheese at the perfect temperature, and the chip servers have attractive flouresc-



ent lighting. Call toll-free, (800) 558-8722, for more information.

Response Number 325.

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ShoWest 1997 New Products Guide

Box Office Buddy cards can **make vital film information easily available** to your patrons and staff alike. The cards stand in acrylic holders and **display film genres, show times, ratings, a synopsis and the list of director and stars.** These cards make sure your staff is fully



informed and cut down on time-consuming questions from customers. Available from Theatre Service Network, (630) 553-0588.

Response Number 326.

B.I.C. America is introducing a **two-way in-ceiling speaker** with a swivel-tweeter so that high-end can be positioned where desired. The speaker uses a neodium magnet to minimize space consumption. The tweeters



can be installed without separate mounting brackets. Call (800) 348-6492 for details.

Response Number 327.

Make your concession stand more attractive and the food more appetizing in appearance with **Hatco Corp.'s** designer series of **Glo-Ray Infrared Foodwarmers.** These aluminum strip heaters are available in a number of colors, including white granite, gray granite, warm red, hunter green, navy blue and black. Models are available up to eight feet long, in widths from six inches to fifteen inches. Hatco is also offering the **Flav-R-Savor Heated Display Cabinet model WSFT-1X** to **display wrapped food items** on standard bun pans. The rack has four removable, adjustable shelves, and is available in black or clear finishes. The precise combination of heat and humidity within the cabinet keeps food fresh and appealing. The Flav-R-Savor sits on the countertop; it measures 32" wide by 32 3/4" high and 22 3/4" deep. Call (800) 558-0607.

Response Number 328.

Make sure consumers recognize your name, or make a little extra profit selling ad space to local businesses, with **ASF's site furniture grouping.** These **benches, trash receptacles and banners** feature colorful custom advertising graphics. It's easy to change the graphics periodically for a new ad or a different look, and all pieces are weather- and fade-resistant. Call (800) 378-3080 for further information.

Response Number 329.

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Response No. 240

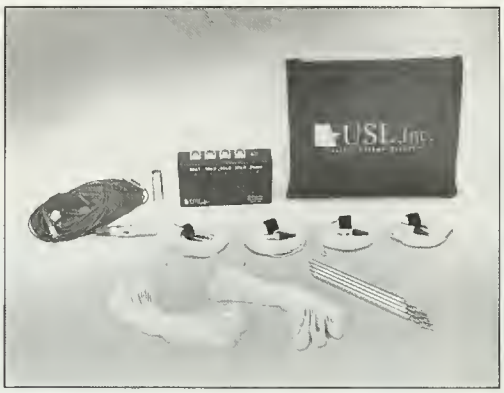
ShoWest 1997 New Products Guide

To discreetly keep an eye on customers and employees while providing site lighting at the same time, **Tivoli Industries** is introducing its new **Paravision lighting system.** These **suspended, linear downlights also incorporate miniaturized video cameras.** The cameras are only one-third inch in size and can be positioned immediately over a cash drawer or concession area without being intrusive in appearance. At the same time, low-voltage lighting is provided to the area. Also new from Tivoli, **Lumitred glare-free illuminated step lights** will help your patrons enter and leave your theatre safely. Energy-efficient 7-watt lamps inside a non-skid tread surface offer light without distracting glare. Call Tivoli at (714) 957-6101, for details.

Response Number 330.

Ultra-Stereo's MMP-10S Microphone Multiplexer is a **portable, battery powered unit that can be used with almost any analyzer.** Four omnidirectional, laboratory-quality microphones can be used singly or sequentially at an adjustable rate. Contact Ultra-Stereo at (818) 609-7405.

Response Number 331.



J&J Snack Foods introduces the **Gourmet Pretzel Roll.** These **soft sourdough pretzel rolls** are available in Bavarian and whole-wheat recipes, and are pre-sliced for sandwich fillings. Call (609) 665-9534.

Response Number 332.

Stein Industries Inc. offers their **Counter Top Nacho Warmer** to **keep nachos hot and crisp.** The machine includes a merchandising sign and factory-set thermostat. Call (516) 789-2222 for more information.

Response Number 333.

For a whole new dimension to the movie-going experience, **Aura Virtual Sound adds the sensation of movement to film soundtracks.** The system uses **25-watt electromagnetic transducers to cause seats to resonate** when crashes, explosions or swelling music occur in the film. This allows you to run lower sound pressure levels, reducing sound leakage into other auditoriums, while still giving the audience the sensation of traditional bass. For information, call (310) 643-5300.

Response Number 334.

Promotional Management Group offers **Movie Graphic Collectables** to boost your concession sales. These **cups, popcorn tubs and kids' trays** feature graphic images from

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Response No. 145

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your current releases to encourage concession buys. Call (913) 831-7644 for details.

Response Number 335.

Three new trailers let your patrons know that you're offering them a **Dolby** sound experience. **"Canyon"** and **"Egypt"** showcase Dolby Digital sound, while **"Temple"** demonstrates Dolby SR Analog Audio. For details, call (415) 558-0200.

Response Number 336.

Promotion in Motion Inc., offers **two new candies** in its line of concession treats. **Slice fruit candies** come in six flavors, and **Mighty Malts** are malted milk balls. The company also handles Care Bear Gummi Bears, Red Hots, Lemonheads, Sun-Maid Milk Chocolate Raisins, and more. Call (201) 784-5800.

Response Number 337.

Increase your gift certificate sales with **Pike Productions' new gift trailer.** With full-color animation and a Dolby soundtrack, this trailer offers reasons for your patrons to buy gift certificates. Call (401) 846-8890 for more details.

Response Number 338.



If you use **Peavey's Mediamatrix computer software,** you can get a **free upgrade** from the company. Version 2.1 of the software includes many new features, including a Sub-Preset Event Scheduler, Runtime Hardware Failure Detection and much more. Call Peavey Architectural Acoustics at (601) 483-5376, or write: 711 A Street., Meridian, MS 39301.

Response Number 339.

The newest addition to **OSRAM's** XBO Xenon Lamp Line is especially designed for new, bigger screens, with **an extra-high 5000 watts.** OSRAM is also introducing **"Ceramic seal" technology** to reduce the volume of the lamp and the amount of xenon filling, while still providing reliability. Initially, this technology will only be available in the 1600 through 3000 watt lamps. For details, contact Osram at (615) 661-5966.

Response Number 340.

If you're on-line or would like to be, **Schult Industries** offers **Net Solutions, Inc., a full-service Internet Service Provider.** Net Solutions can help with web design and hosting, e-mail and networking for your Linked Area Network. Call (816) 540-4798 or (of course) visit their web site at www.schult.com.

Response Number 341.

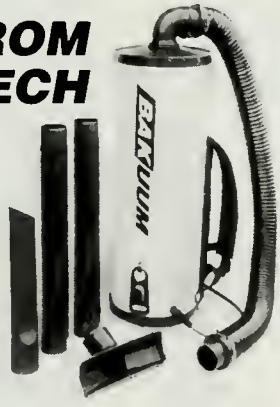
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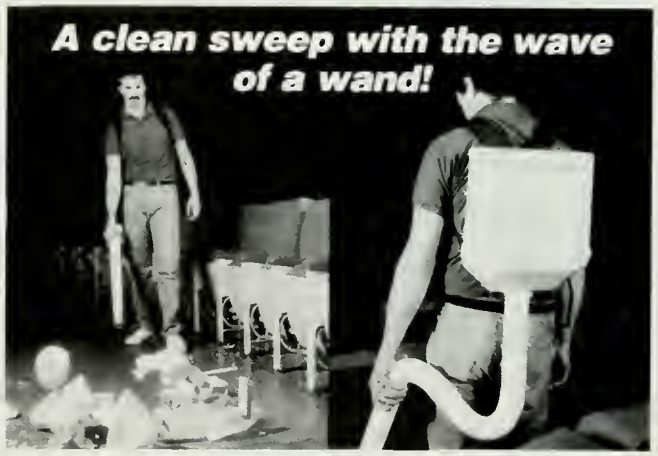
This lightweight, 2 stage motor, 2.3 horsepower electric backpack vacuum produces a high volume, high lift suction, capable of inhaling even large debris. Constructed of high impact polymers, it comes with 2 ½" hose and accessories, reuseable 2 ½ gallon cloth bag and quick release latches for easy emptying. See your theatre supply dealer or call us at (800)676-2569.

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Response No. 429

ShoWest '97 New Products Guide

American Site Furniture is offering a **new, free brochure of their line of benches, trash receptacles, banners and clocks.** Write to 56 Winthrop St., Concord, Mass. 02181.

Response Number 342.



Proctor Companies is now offering a line of **scales and label printers** suitable for bulk candy sales in theatres. The PC-10, PC-20 and PC-30 scales have a stainless steel platform and metal base. There's a keypad for vendor use and LCD tower display so that customers can see their totals. They can be used in conjunction with the TLP-4 label printer, which provides net weight, unit price and



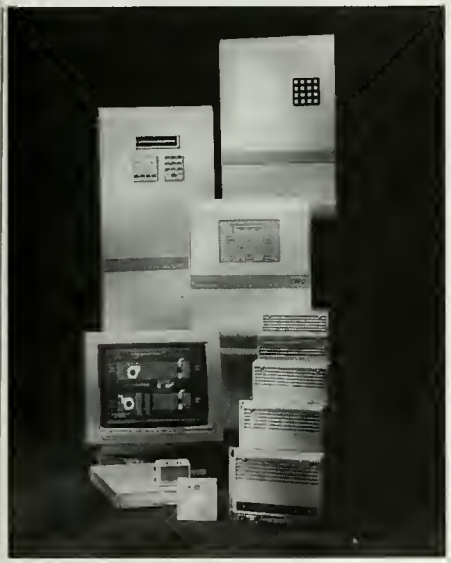
total price information. Labels can be customized to various sizes. For additional information or a free catalogue, call (800) 221-3699.

Response Number 343.

ShoWest '97 New Products Guide

Novar Controls are now available with **optional access to Ethernet/TCPIP networks.** Using the Windows environment, programming can be handled via telephone modem, Hayes modem, satellite, and fiber-optic communications. Programs include optimized start/stop, time-of-day scheduling, demand limiting, temperature reset, lead/lag and staged turn on, and much more. For details, call (216) 745-0074.

Response Number 344.



Maverick Marketing International, an **ATM brokerage,** offers its services to the theatres industry. Theatre owners can **generate more revenues by installing an ATM** and offering customers access to instant cash. It can generate more traffic, stimulate impulse buys and increase repeat business. Receipt advertising is also available. Buy or lease-to-own. All ATM programs include shipping, installation and training. Call Maverick at (800) 989-2828 for a free evaluation.

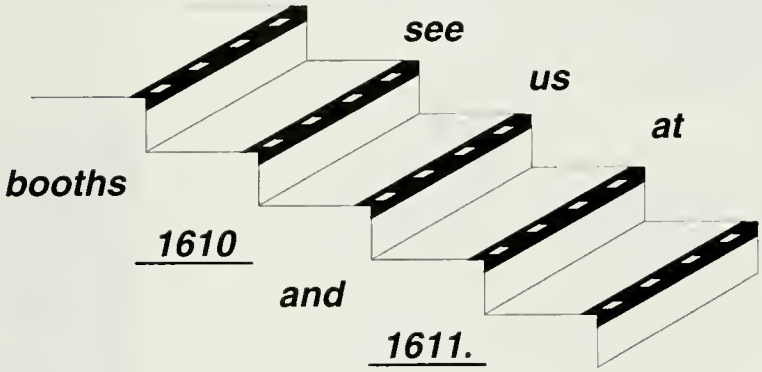
Response Number 345.

The all-new **P4000 trans*nova DIABLO** (Dynamically Invariant A-B Linear Operation) is **Hafler Professional's** latest in amplifier technology. The 200 watt-per-channel @ 8 ohm convection cooled unit features full LED display, gain controls and balanced inputs. A full five-year warranty is included. Call marketing director Rick Gentry at (602) 967-3545, or write to Hafler at: 546 S. Rockford Dr., Tempe, AZ 85281.

Response Number 346.

SHOWEST '97

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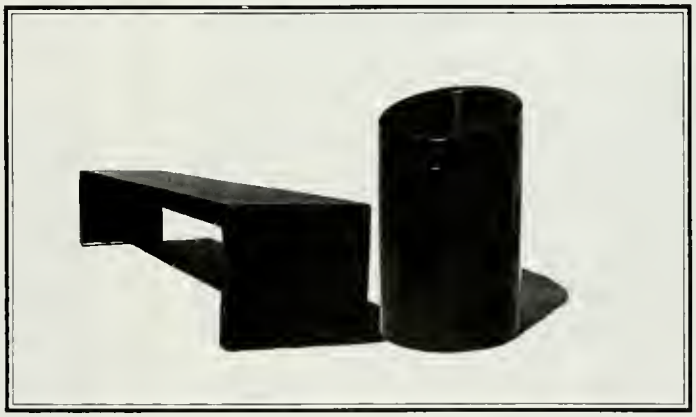
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Response No. 106

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Response No. 62

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Response No. 215

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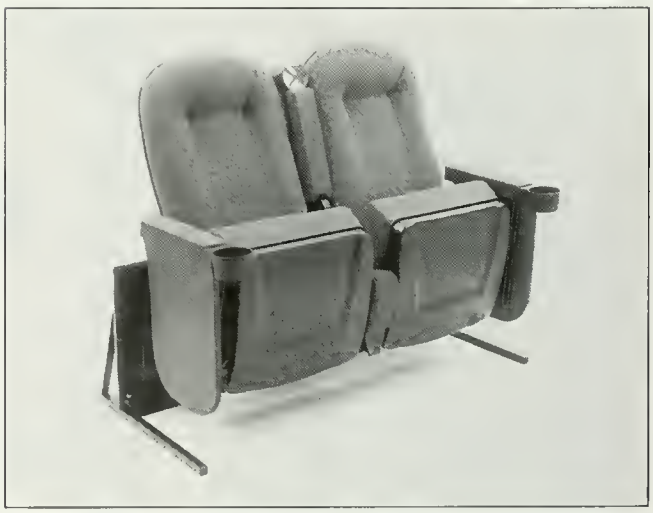
Increase movie-going excitement with a new **Special-FX Policy Presentation** from **Willming Reams.** Animated comets and spinning vortices promote the effects-laden films that are so popular at present. The trailer runs 45 seconds and includes welcoming titles and policy statements on crying babies, litter, smoking and talking, and informs patrons of the location of fire exits. Finally, the trailer



introduces your feature presentation. The trailer can be customized with your logo, policies and concession-stand offerings. Call (800) 972-6468.

Response Number 347.

Irwin Seating Company has several new seating lines to meet your theatre design needs. The **EuroChair Luxury Line** adds style and flair to any auditorium and offers **taller backs and wider seats** for extra comfort. The chairs also feature flip-up cupholder armrests, and are available in 38" and 44" heights. The #28716 **Ambassador Chair** has been modified to incorporate a flip-up cupholder as well, allowing patrons to either define space between seats or create a love-seat for couples. The new **Celebrity High Back** is a taller version of Irwin's



popular Celebrity rocker. Five inches have been added to the back height. Contact Irwin Seating Co., P.O. Box 2429, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49501; Phone: (616) 784-2621; e-mail: dsales@irwin-seat.com.

Response Number 348.

Response No. 117

ShoWest 1997 New Products Guide

The MTS Group has been selected to distribute **Gradus Lighting** in the United States. Gradus Lighting offers **LED step lighting with non-skid design.** Both the top and front of the step are illuminated, and each light has its own resistor, increasing life expectancy. Gradus Lighting was founded in 1966 and has grown to become the largest UK manufacturer of stair and floor extrusions and lighting systems, and they have branch offices in London, Paris and Singapore. For more information, contact the MTS Group at (612) 829-0161.

Response Number 349.



Cine-Sign is the latest theatre product from **Lighting Services, Inc.** These **"Exit" signs** look completely standard, but **only consume 1.35 watts of electricity**—offering annual lighting costs per sign of about a dollar a year. The light level is variable so that the signs can be dimmed during performances to avoid annoying patrons, then brightened when it is time to leave. The signs use LED technology, meaning that there are no burnt-out bulbs to replace. For details, call Lighting Services, Inc. at (800) 225-0263.

Response Number 350.

FOR INCLUSION IN THE NEXT BOXOFFICE NEW PRODUCTS GUIDE, PLEASE SEND A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF YOUR PRODUCT OR SERVICE AND A BLACK AND WHITE, PUBLICATION QUALITY PHOTO TO: NEW PRODUCTS DESK, BOXOFFICE MAGAZINE, 6640 SUNSET BLVD., HOLLYWOOD, CA 90028. FAX: 213-465-5049. BOXOFFICE CANNOT ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE RETURN OF NEW PRODUCTS MATERIALS.

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Response No. 72

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Theatre Equipment Association TEA

Response No. 188

GO FEST, PT. 2

BOXOFFICE criss-crosses North America to cover nine film fests

SUNDANCE

(PARK CITY, UTAH)—Most attendees of this year's Sundance Festival left disappointed. The quality-to-quantity ratio left much to be desired: There were more films but fewer standouts; more crowds but fewer tickets; more cellphones but fewer deals. That might be due in part to fest programmer Geoffrey Gilmore's determination to avoid commercial films that spawn bidding wars, such as last year's "Spitfire Grill." In steering clear of high-profile projects, however, the selection committee failed to choose anything comparable to last year's "Shine," "Welcome to the Dollhouse" or "Big Night." Certain themes emerged; many films seemed to share a certain bleakness, and complex approaches to gender politics and family relations were prevalent motifs. In the absence of a runaway hit, the jury awarded its grand prize to the bittersweet drama "Sunday," while the audience prize was shared between the stylized romance "love jones" and the coming-of age tale "Hurricane."

ULEE'S GOLD ★★★★

Starring Peter Fonda, Patricia Richardson and Christine Dunford. Directed and written by Victor Nunez. Produced by Victor Nunez, Peter Saraf and Sam Gowan. An Orion release. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 113 min. Opens in June.

The triumph of this bittersweet family drama is Peter Fonda's performance, which by way of its langorous understatement eerily recalls his father Henry. As Florida beekeeper Ulee Jackson, Fonda gives a turn of such quiet yet sustained intensity that it seems like a revelation. Not since "Easy Rider" has Fonda had such presence onscreen.



Peter Fondo in Orion's "Ulee's Gold."

When Ulee's incarcerated son Jimmy (Tom Wood) calls him asking for a favor, the terse family patriarch reluctantly agrees: He'll rescue Jimmy's estranged wife Helen (Christine Dunford) from a pair of Orlando hoodlums holding her hostage for a stockpile of cash that Jimmy owes them. But saving Helen, a recovering drug addict, is no easy task; only with the help of a kindly local nurse (Patricia Richardson of TV's "Home Improvement") and his recalcitrant granddaughters (Vanessa Zima and Jessie Biel) can Ulee wrest control of a volatile situation that holds his family in crisis and his own life in danger.

Writer/director Victor Nunez ("Ruby in Paradise") sketches a sensitive, delicate portrait of Ulee and his family. That Ulee is a beekeeper by trade resonates on several levels: his careful, methodical approach to the bees incorporates patience and skill in the face of danger, while his inveterate behavior shows resistance to growth and change. Taking a warts-and-all approach to characters, situations and dialogue, Nunez seems to hail from the John Sayles school of realism. That's not always a blessing: "Ulee's Gold" is sometimes painstakingly slow and takes a while before it becomes truly absorbing. But Fonda's graceful performance makes it well worth all the waiting.—*Lael Loewenstein*

CHASING AMY ★★★1/2

Starring Ben Affleck, Joey Lauren Adams and Jason Lee. Directed and written by Kevin Smith. Produced by Scot Mosier. A Miramax release. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 105 min. Opens March 28.

Best known for his award-winning debut film "Clerks," Kevin Smith returns to form

★★★★★ OUTSTANDING
★★★★ VERY GOOD
★★★ GOOD
★★ FAIR
★ POOR
(no stars) BOMB

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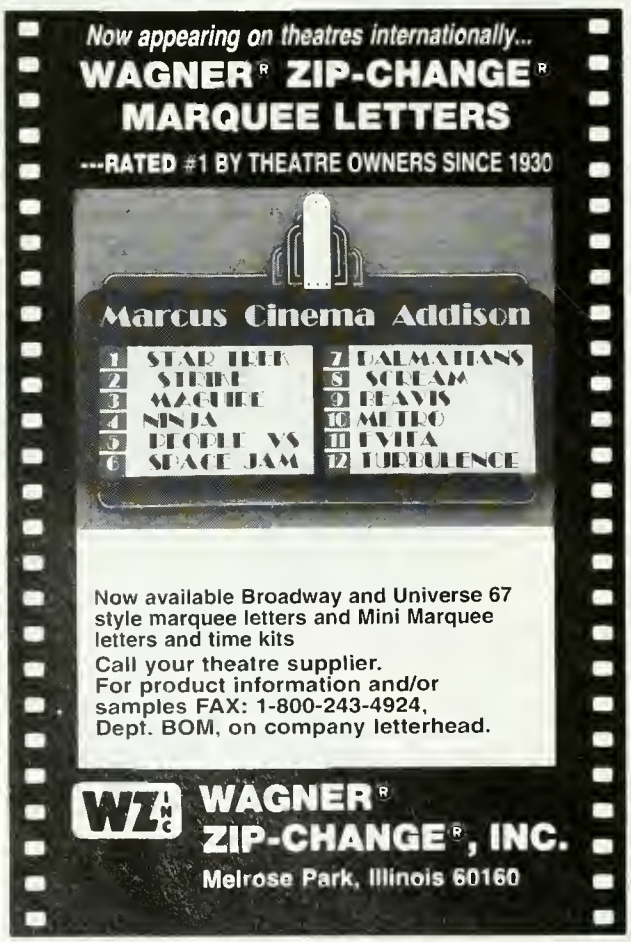
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after the dismal "Mallrats" with a film that is at once sensitive, funny and insightful. A contemporary romance with several twists, "Chasing Amy" is one of the most carefully rendered portraits of gender relations in recent years. The third installment in Smith's New Jersey trilogy, "Chasing Amy" eclipses anything Smith has done so far and displays an impressive capacity for depth.

Holden (an excellent Ben Affleck, also in "Going All the Way") and his best friend Banky ("Mallrats'" Jason Lee) are twentysomething comic artists who pass their time attending comic book conventions, dallying in romance and goofing around. All of that changes when Holden meets the lovely and coquettish Alyssa ("Sleep With Me's" Joey Lauren Adams), who seems just as taken with him as he is with her. But, when Alyssa informs Holden that she is a lifelong lesbian, he finds himself confronted with a difficult challenge: Can he be friends—and nothing more—with a woman he clearly loves?

The jealousy, confusion and wounded emotions that come into play here are tightly woven and deftly handled. When Holden confesses his feelings for Alyssa, Affleck's integrity and Smith's heartfelt dialogue meld beautifully. Equally authentic is Alyssa's subsequent revelation of her feelings for Holden. Although he occasionally and regrettably seeks comfort in the scatological, bottom-of-the-barrel humor that is his trademark, Smith is capable of intelligent, searching dialogue that reveals the complexity and sensitivity of his characters' rich inner lives.—*Lael Loewenstein*

THE MYTH OF FINGERPRINTS ★★★1/2

Starring Blythe Danner, Hope Davis, Julianne Moore, Roy Scheider and Noah Wylie. Directed and written by Bart Freundlich. Produced by Mary Jane Skalski, Tim Perell and Bart Freundlich. A Sony Classics release. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 90 min. Opens in September.

Bart Freundlich's star-studded, masterful film about the simultaneous unraveling and restructuring of a seemingly all-American family during a Thanksgiving reunion was an unexpected Sundance surprise and a big hit with audiences of all ages. In the Good Machine production, after a three-year absence siblings Warren, Mia, Jake and Leigh reluctantly return to their parent's home in New England for a standard holiday get-together. From the moment of arrival, the personality conflicts and infighting that have kept this family apart for so long resurface.

Through the constant conflict, the characters are forced to reevaluate who they are and where they stand, not only as members of the family but as adults. In a mature homage to the Bergman classic "Smiles of a Summer Night," several characters, almost mystically, fall in and out of love with those they perhaps shouldn't, and revelations are made that were best kept as secrets.

The only failing notes are that the film's short running time doesn't allow for in-depth character analysis and intense dramatic situations, and the pacing is erratic throughout. Nonetheless, "The Myth of Fingerprints" is an impressive piece of work by a new filmmaker that, despite its low budget, looks just as good as studio fare.—*Jon Alon Walz*

THE FULL MONTY ★★★★

Starring Robert Carlyle, Mark Addy and William Snape. Directed by Peter Cattaneo. Written by Simon Beaufoy. Produced by Uberto Pasolini. A Fox Searchlight release. Comedy. Not yet rated. Running time: 90 min. Opens in '97.

An enchanting British comedy of gender politics, "The Full Monty" is an unqualified delight. With its entirely unpretentious portrayal of a group of male buddies whose layoff from a south Yorkshire steel mill forces them into stripping, "The Full Monty" manages a difficult feat: Even as it's unafraid to lampoon the men, it also sensitively reveals their insecurities.

Robert Carlyle (memorable as "Trainspotting's" knife-happy Begby) plays Gaz, who hatches the seemingly nutty plan to launch a striptease act in order to earn himself and his down-and-out friends some much-needed cash. Unlike the Chippendale dancers whose show inspires him, Gaz and

FEST REVIEWS

chums like Dave (Mark Addy), ex-foreman Gerald (Tom Wilkinson) and Lomper (Steve Huison) are the least likely strippers imaginable: Dave is overweight and self-conscious, Gerald is nearing fifty, and Lomper is depressed.

But soon they're grinding to Donna Summer in an act that distinguishes itself in an important way: They strip down to "the full monty"—that is, leave nothing to the imagination. But their plan nearly collapses under a slew of mishaps, miscommunication and even arrests, only to lead to a memorably hilarious finale.

"The Full Monty" is a gender-reversed "Striptease" with the comedy intact; it also packs the punch of a "First Wives Club" yet feels more authentic and less vindictive. Because director Peter Cattaneo allows latitude for mockery, and because his players infuse their performances with admirable charisma and pathos, both men and women walk away feeling satisfied—and humming "Hot Stuff."—*Lael Loewenstein*

GOING ALL THE WAY ★★★

Starring Jeremy Davies, Ben Affleck and Amy Locane. Directed by Mark Pellington. Written by Dan Wakefield. Produced by Tom Gorai and Sigurjon Sighvatsson. A Gramercy release. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 115 min. Opens in '97.

High production values distinguish this coming-of-age story adapted from Dan Wakefield's novel of displaced Korean War vets returning home. At nearly two hours, however, it feels unwieldy; a shorter cut would make it a more enjoyable ride. Jeremy Davies, so memorable in "Spanking the Monkey," demonstrates similar star quality in yet another tale of turbulent, misunderstood youth and sexual awakening.

As Sonny Burns, an awkward young man coming home to Indiana, he finds himself suffocating under an overprotective, religious mother (Jill Clayburgh) and a dull, devoted girlfriend ("Carried Away's" Amy Locane). Instead, he prefers the company of a fun-loving, hard-drinking fellow GI named Gunner (an engaging Ben Affleck of "Chasing Amy"). Sonny, meanwhile, is grappling with raging hormones and sexual guilt. When he finally beds a lovely young woman ("Scream's" Rose McGowan), he can't perform; this botched encounter sends him into a suicide attempt and then on a journey with Gunner. Together, both frustrated youths embark on a search for deeper meaning and fulfillment in their lives.

At its best, "Going All the Way" recalls some of the better male bonding films. Davies and Affleck, though actors of different styles, share a genuine rapport, and their scenes together seem honest and compassionate. Yet Wakefield's script doesn't go far enough into Sonny's angst or alienation. The film's overall look, enhanced by Therese DePrez's snappy design and Arianne Phillips' evocative costumes, effectively establishes 1954 Indianapolis as a place at once familiar and menacing. But too often director Mark Pellington and cinematographer Bobby Bukowski employ simplistic color symbolism—flashes of red and blue—that distracts rather than engages the viewer. With colors, as with running time, sometimes less is more.—*Lael Loewenstein*

HURRICANE ★★★

Starring Brendan Sexton III, Isidra Vega and Jared Harris. Directed and written by Morgan J. Freeman. Produced by Gill Holland and Galt Niederhoffer. An MGM release. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 89 min. Winner, best director; audience award for best film; best cinematography. Opens in '97.

"Hurricane" swept up a slew of awards at Sundance—the audience prize for best film and honors for director Morgan J. Freeman and cinematographer Enrique Chediak. A boy's coming-of-age story on the order of "400 Blows," "Hurricane" features top-notch production values and grittily realistic performances.

At the center of the metaphorical hurricane is Marcus (Brendan Sexton III of "Welcome to the Dollhouse"), a 15-year-old who lives with his grandmother in lower Manhattan while his mother serves a prison sentence. Marcus and a renegade band of friends engage in petty theft, pass time at their clubhouse and ride their

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bicycles like stormtroopers through the city's crowded streets. When Marcus meets Melena, a Latino girl with an overprotective father, he adds love and danger to the adolescent despair swirling throughout his life.

As Marcus, Sexton has a powerful authenticity that shines through in a complex performance: Marcus acts selfishly, but he is only trying to make sense of an unsympathetic world. That he is an asthmatic heightens the irony; Marcus literally fights for his breath. When he bikes through Manhattan to an accelerated tune of "Staying Alive," it lends the song and the image a specific irony. These are the moments where Freeman and Chediak's work is superb—high-speed tracking shots that portray Marcus' life spinning out of control. Though there are continuity problems that, with a tighter script, could have been resolved, "Hurricane" heralds the arrival of a bold actor and a director who understands cinema's potential.—*Lael Loewenstein*

LILIES ★

Starring Brent Carver, Marcel Sabourin, Aubert Pallascio and Gary Farmer. Directed by John Greyson. Written by Michel Marc Bouchard. Produced by Anna Stratton, Robin Cass and Arnie Gelbart. No distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 95 min.

Based on the play "les fleurettes" by Michel Marc Bouchard (who adapts), "Lilies" is probably John Greyson's most beautifully crafted movie yet. Yet it's still pretty silly. In trying to tell a tragic tale about a gay love triangle that involves jealousy and murder, Greyson ("Zero Patience") falls for the cliches that haunt purple melodramas of heterosexual love, above all in the sentimentality of the key love affair between two boys, portrayed as chaste and tender.

"Lilies" (which won the audience Best Canadian Film Award at the Montreal fest and four Genies) takes place in Quebec in 1952 when an aging bishop agrees to hear a prisoner's confession inside a penitentiary. Greyson deftly shifts between the past and the present using Brechtian devices to frame the action, but part of what goes wrong in the material is that the prisoners come across as a cast set more in a gay bar.

Perhaps Greyson believes he's showing a view of gender through a gay sensibility, but having some of the male actors playing women in this way only confuses the issues in the story. "Lilies" is about coming to terms with secrets, an idea that extends itself to the secrets that homosexuals have had to bear in a culture that shuns them. But it's too bad that Greyson can't see that, by creating positive gay stereotypes, they are still stereotypes.—*Kevin Courrier*

THE HOUSE OF YES ★★★1/2

Starring Parker Posey, Josh Hamilton, Tori Spelling and Genevieve Bujold. Directed and written by Mark Waters. Produced by Beau Flynn and Stefan Simchowitz. A Miramax release. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 90 min. Winner, special recognition award for Parker Posey. Opens in '97.

It would be hard to imagine a more shocking tale of family secrets and closet skeletons than "The House of Yes." Blisteringly funny, horrifyingly tragic, "The House of Yes" (based on a Wendy MacLeod play) invites varied interpretations. When Marty ("Kicking and Screaming's" Josh Hamilton) and his fiancee Lesly (Tori Spelling of TV's "Beverly Hills, 90210") decide to spend a holiday weekend with Marty's family, they're unprepared for the trouble that awaits. And neither are moviegoers: Though Marty's mother (Genevieve Bujold), twin sister Jackie-O (Parker Posey, also in "Clockwatchers") and younger brother Anthony (Freddie Prinze Jr.) appear to be a normal family, writer/director Mark Waters soon strips away layers of deception that veil madness, violence and incest.

Jackie-O makes invitations to her brother; Anthony comes on to Marty's girlfriend; the mother seemingly condones this bizarre behavior. More perplexing and eerie still are the family anecdotes, such as: The Kennedy-obsessed Jackie once shot her brother when he threatened to leave her.

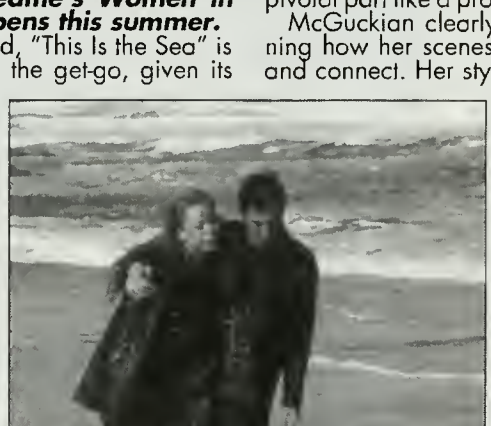
Waters takes pains never to caricature the family members. Even Jackie-O, who could have easily become the stuff of high camp, is reigned in by Posey's performance, which is one of her best; she manages to be arch, touching and acerbic all at once. Hamilton plays Marty as an ambivalent participant in the family game; he wants to resist the madness, but he seems aware that he cannot. And Spelling, as the slightly dizzy Lesly, is astonishingly good, blending incredulousness with giddy earnestness. For a debut feature, "The House of Yes" is a remarkable achievement. Ably supported by production designer Patrick Sherman's fully envisioned sets—the decaying Pascal mansion is a haunting metaphor for the corroding family it houses—Waters shows that he is a director to watch.—*Lael Loewenstein*

SEATTLE/WOMEN IN CINEMA FEST

THIS IS THE SEA ★★

Starring Samantha Morton, Richard Harris, Marc O'Shea and Gabriel Byrne. Directed and written by Mary McGuckian. Produced by Michael Garland. A First Look release. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 103 min. Screened at Seattle's Women in Cinema fest; opens this summer.

Filmed in Ireland, "This Is the Sea" is advantaged from the get-go, given its setting's splendid scenery, political tension and haunting music, not to mention attractive characters with lilting accents and fabulous sweaters. Director/writer Mary McGuckian has a solid eye (and ear) for the cinemotic attributes of the Emerald Isle, but tying them together proves a formidable task. This Celtic version of "Romeo and Juliet" with an Irish Republican Army twist too often fails to connect with its audience.



First Look's "This Is the Sea," which also opens the Santa Barbara fest.

The tale's fair maiden is Hazel (pretty Samontha Morton), who lives on a farm with her hyper-protective, Protestant porents; the lad is Malachy (the prettier Marc O'Shea), who lives in Belfast with his lenient, Catholic family. Their courtship is abetted by Hazel's elderly neighbor, Jacobs (Richard Harris), and is complicated by local fear-monger Rohan (Gabriel Byrne on auto-brood). Both Morton and O'Shea emit moviestar-style charisma, and Harris performs his pivotal part like a pro.

McGuckian clearly took pains planning how her scenes would look, flow and connect. Her style is meat and potatoes, and for the most part it works. But "This Is the Sea" needs more structure from a tighter script, in particular additional background and foreshadowing. For example, although Hazel and Malachy presumably dig each other because opposites attract, their relationship—upon which the entire movie rests—never seems believable, because we learn so little about either suitor. Likewise, the political plotline of "This Is the Sea" fails to thrill for lack of buildup. The effect is bewilderment: Events pop out of left field, and the audience has no context in which to interpret them.—***Ian Hodder***

FESTIVAL REVIEWS

ARRESTING GENA ★

Starring Aesha Waks, Summer Phoenix and Sam Rockwell. Directed and written by Hannah Weyer. Produced by Margot Bridget and Ted Hope. No distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 90 min.

"Arresting Gena" is such a misguided, unstructured effort that it's a mystery the movie was accepted in Sundance's usually strong dramatic competition. Ostensibly a rite-of-passage story for adolescent Gena (Aesha Waks), "Arresting Gena" is about (per the production notes) "the ways in which innocence is lost and, sometimes, knowledge and understanding are gained." But the movie Hannah Weyer has made, however inspired by real events and friendships, bears little resemblance to that aim.

Set in suburban New Jersey, the loose narrative tracks 16-year-old Gena, drawn unwittingly into a web of drug deals and gang warfare when her good friend Jane (Summer Phoenix) mysteriously disappears. What happens next is unclear; characters come and go with impunity. Suddenly and inexplicably, Gena is in a beauty salon with a gun aimed at an assailant. But there is no character arc, no suggestion of personal understanding or maturation on Gena's part. With more forethought, "Arresting Gena" could have packed the power of a "Fresh" or perhaps a "Bye-Bye"; instead, it simply baffles and disappoints.—*Lael Loewenstein*

FAST, CHEAP & OUT OF CONTROL ★★★

With Dave Hoover, George Mendonca, Ray Mendez and Rodney Brooks. Directed and produced by Errol Morris. A Sony Classics release. Documentary. Not yet rated. Running time: 82 min. Opens in '97.

Renowned documentarian and social critic Errol Morris, best known for his controversial film "The Thin Blue Line," has once again pushed the boundaries of film narrative with this new work. Either by design or accident, "Fast, Cheap & Out of Control" is less a classically structured documentary than a strangely urgent examination of what the human race is becoming.

Culled from interviews with four unrelated men—a robotics designer, a lion tamer, a man who studies mole rats, and a topiary gardener—Morris weaves the stories of their job obsessions together with footage of old movies and stylized b-rolls of the men at work, creating a warped narrative that keeps his actual content (and intent) a mystery for most of the picture. Out of this jumble comes an interesting meditation on the nature of human control over environment and other life forms, and on the theory that—because of this behavior in a world of increasing information and technology—humans are on a path that could lead to us inventing ourselves out of existence.

Much as he did in 1992's "A Brief History of Time," Morris in this Fourth Floor/American Playhouse production uses stark visual imagery (courtesy of Oscar-winning director of photography Robert Richardson) and heavy original music to set moods to emphasize his narrative points. One is left wondering if the universal questions posed would have even been suggested if a different group had been selected for study. But it's still amazing that Morris was able to pull such deep, probing material out of such a motley group of "normal" people, and it's here where the film and the filmmaking succeeds.—*Jon Alon Walz*

IN THE COMPANY OF MEN ★★1/2

Starring Aaron Eckhart, Matt Malloy and Stacy Edwards. Directed and written by Neil LaBute. Produced by Mark Archer and Neil LaBute. An Alliance production; no distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 93 min.

One of few films at this year's festival to generate much controversy, Neil LaBute's "In the Company of Men" is a flawed but fascinating look at male bonding, misogyny, and Machiavellian competitiveness in contemporary corporate culture. Chad (Aaron Eckhart) and Howard (Matt Malloy), two disgruntled junior execs, decide to find the most fragile, unassuming female they can, emotionally and sexually exploit her and then summarily dump her. Why? Simply to prove they can do it.

As their unwitting quarry, Christine (a superb Stacy Edwards), a secretary in their office, is everything they had hoped for and more: lovely, trusting, vulnerable—and deaf. After she's dated both men and fallen blindly for Chad, he brushes her off unsympathetically in a scene so heartless it leaves the audience reeling. Eckhart, at times flat, at others chillingly good, excels particularly in this rejection sequence, exuding a blend of arrogance and smarminess.

What is so troubling about the film is that Chad receives no comeuppance. Not only

SEATTLE/WOMEN IN CINEMA FEST

SLAVES TO THE UNDERGROUND ★1/2

Starring Molly Gross, Marisa Ryan and Jason Bortz. Directed by Kristine Peterson. Written by Bill Cody. Produced by Kristine Peterson, Bill Cody and Raquel Caballes Maxwell. Drama. Rated R for strong sexuality and language. Run time: 93 min. Opens summer.

An attempted documentation of slacker-style hipness, "Slaves to the Underground" taps into several topics it considers trendy: bisexuality, grunge music, living in squalor, Seattle, and 'zines. The fatal problem, of course, with a supposedly cutting-edge film that appropriates the above as a definition of what's hat is that it's hopelessly out of date. As twenty-something Seattleites know, Gen-X has been there, done that.



First Look's "Sloves to the Underground," which screened at the Seattle/Women in Cinema fest.

Between trends of yesteryear, "Slaves" traces a love triangle between selfish Shelly (Molly Gross), wimpy Jimmy (Jason Bortz) and politically active Suzy (Marisa Ryan). Shelly and Suzy are lovers and musicians in the same all-girl band. Their self-conscious bliss is thrown for a loop when, one night at a gig, Shelly bumps into ex-boyfriend Jimmy and promptly reignites their affair. While Jimmy and Suzy battle over Molly, side plots explore the band's growing popularity and Jimmy's professional struggle between publishing his underground comic and getting a real job. Well-crafted characters and solid direction could have rescued "Slaves" from the chains of sub-mediocrity.

Alas, such time-tested qualities are apparently no longer in vogue. The movie is shot as a faux documentary—with jerky filming and characters talking directly to the camera—and the technique is indeed appropriate to film's investigative flavor. The downside is that director Kristine Petersen uses cinema verite as an excuse for cinematic sloppiness. Too many scenes are poorly planned and left to the often bewildered actors to steer the action. Acting, too, ranges from cringe-inducing to satisfactory, with Ryan delivering the only semi-watchable performance. To top it all off, "Slaves" employs same pretty darky music (specifically, an excruciating ditty titled "Let's F—") whenever character development or pacing begins to sag. The result is a self-important, humorless wallow that might've made a great 'zine—seven years ago.—***Ian Hodder***

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FESTS

has he manipulated an unsuspecting female, he also manages to take advantage of his friend Howard. Because Chad never pays for his cruelty, the film is a real departure from classical convention: The climax has not one ounce of moral restitution. As such, writer/director LaBute's tacit acceptance of this kind of behavior comes perilously close to an endorsement. It leaves the viewer piqued but fundamentally unsatisfied. Worse, the inconsistent acting and poor production values compromise the film; the dialogue itself is sharp and incisive but, as one strains to hear it, crucial words and ideas are lost.—*Lael Loewenstein*

POWER ★★★

Directed by Magnus Isaacson. Written by Glen Salzman and Magnus Isaacson. Produced by Glen Salzman. A Cineflix production; no distributor set. Documentary. Not yet rated. Running time: 80 min.

In 1989, the Quebec provincial government announced plans to proceed with James Bay Phase II, a massive hydroelectric project that would dam waterways, including the Great Whale River. After James Bay I was built in the '70s, the region's Cree Indians found that their water had become poisoned with mercury.

In "Power," veteran Canadian filmmaker Magnus Isaacson documents the Cree's successful battle against the Quebec government. He follows their journey by Odeyak—part canoe, part kayak—down the Ottawa, St. Lawrence and Hudson rivers as they stop at strategic points to plead their cause and enlist the support of key American politicians and the general public.

Isaacson presents Quebec's complex politics in comprehensive and easy-to-follow fashion. However, he is clearly on the side of the Cree, and as a result the film lacks objectivity. At the same time, it's a heartening story that proves that perhaps one can fight city hall.—*Craig Vickers*

SANTA FE ★★★1/2

Starring Gary Cole, Lolita Davidovich, Sheila Kelley and Jere Burns. Directed by Andrew Shea. Written by Mark Medoff and Andrew Shea. Produced by Larry Estes and Andrew Shea. An Absolute Unequivocal production; no distributor set. Comedy/drama. Rated R for language, a sex scene and a violence sequence. Running time: 97 min.

The proliferation of new-age cultists in Santa Fe, N.M. over the past decade has given screenwriters Mark Medoff (who wrote the play and film "Children of a Lesser God") and Andrew Shea (who also here directs) the impetus to create this often hilarious and surprisingly intelligent movie about a troubled man and his battles with a cult leader. Paul Thomas ("The Brady Bunch's" Gary Cole) has just returned to Santa Fe to visit the wife and daughter he saved, at his personal injury, from a bizarre Waco-esque military standoff in Wyoming several years back. So he's shocked to find his wife associating again with fringe cult

FESTS

types, including her boss, Dan, a spiritual chiropractic guru, as well as a woman his daughter Crystal calls "Aunt Eleanor" ("The Inner Circle's" Lolita Davidovich), who runs a self-help resort outside of town.

In an attempt to pull his life back together, Paul persuades the city to reinstate him as a cop and, at the demand of his precocious daughter, he begins dating again. His only respondent to a personal ad is, ironically, Eleanor; in trying to explain her beliefs to him, she unintentionally draws him into her "circle" while, conversely, she begins to reject a lot of her ideals after Paul relates the stories about his past. It's a train wreck waiting to happen, but it can end with nothing less than love.

Medoff and Shea together create a world that teeters on the edge of reality but never falls off into the wildly absurd. The dialogue, peppered with sharp political discourse and musings about the nature of cult obsessions, is as engaging as the superb ensemble acting.—*Jon Alon Walz*

CLOCKWATCHERS ★1/2

Starring Toni Collette, Parker Posey and Lisa Kudrow. Directed by Jill Sprecher. Written by Jill Sprecher and Karen Sprecher. Produced by Gina Resnick. A Goldcrest production; no distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 105 min.

Conceptually speaking, the makers of "Clockwatchers" had a interesting and wonderful premise around which to craft a movie: the intertwining lives of several temporary workers in a laughably stoic corporate environment. They even had a wonderful pool of talent, including one of TV's "Friends," Lisa Kudrow; the always wonderful Parker Posey ("Party Girl"); and "Muriel's Wedding" star Toni Collette. Despite all of this, director/co-scripter Jill Sprecher has managed to make a technically proficient film that is totally without a plot or a point.

The film opens with a young girl named Iris (Collette) who arrives one morning at Global Credit Association, a faceless by-the-numbers company, as a temporary assistant. She is kept waiting for several hours before being interviewed and shown her cubicle. Making fast friends with the other temp workers there, she finds solace in their companionship and joins in their constant bickering about not being accepted or respected by management. From here, the film dissolves into a series of random scenes featuring the twentysomething leads griping about their lives' emptiness—but doing nothing to make a change for the better.

Until the head of Global Credit issues an ultimatum stating that a recent rash of office theft must stop, and one of the girls is accused and summarily fired, there's not a hint of drama or tension. Cinematographer Jim Denault's wonderful compositions and beautiful lighting are the only contributions of note in this wholly disappointing picture.—*Jon Alon Walz*

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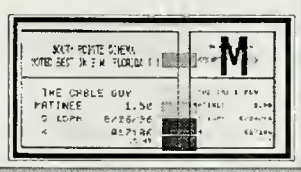
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FESTIVAL REVIEWS

SLAMDANCE

FALL ★★★

Starring Eric Schaeffer and Amanda de Cadenet. Directed and written by Eric Schaeffer. Produced by Terence Michael and Eric Schaeffer. A Capella production; no distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 89 min.

Despite the fact that the ever-irritating Eric Schaeffer ("When Lucy Fell") has bared everything in this sexually obsessive reworking of the beauty and the beast myth, he has managed to make a rather compelling picture about two totally messed-up people who meet by chance in New York City. Schaeffer stars as Michael, an intelligent, charismatic cab driver who instantly falls in love with a fare, Sarah (Amanda de Cadenet), a high-dollar supermodel whose husband is in Rome on business.

Michael chances upon her on the street several days later and soon after, again by chance, picks her up as a fare. Luring her back to his apartment, they embark upon a wild and erotic sex marathon ended out of guilt by Sarah. Starved for love and attention, the two decide to stay friends. At this point, "Fall" glides into a cold, harsh realism, becoming a gratifying character study of two people trying to create and maintain an authentic human relationship.

Schaeffer hasn't resisted the temptation to give himself closeups or the best lines. In fact, all the good lines from the other characters concern or praise his character. Despite his ego, Schaeffer has a gifted ear for dialogue and directs with style and flair. De Cadenet, a real-life model, is respectable in her limited role, though it's hard for the audience to dredge up sympathy for a character with such a lucrative career.—*Jon Alon Walz*

EIGHT DAYS A WEEK ★★

Starring Keri Russell, Joshua Schaefer and R.D. Robb. Directed and written by Michael Davis. Produced by Martin Cutler, Gary Preisler and Michael Davis. An Underdog production; no distributor set. Comedy/drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 90 min.

Peter (Joshua Schaefer) has long been in love with Erica (Keri Russell)—or maybe in lust. As his neighbor, she has been an unavoidable presence for years, but he's been too shy to make any move; in her eyes, he's sort of blended into the neighborhood environment, like a shrub or a fence.

One summer, things are different. Taking advice from his crazy uncle, Peter vows to spend every second under Erica's balcony professing his love until she becomes his. And he does. And she, finally, does.

Writer/director Michael Davis has made a sweet if unexceptional film, chockful of true moments of teenage angst and romance. It fails, on one level, in trying too hard to tell a Romeo and Juliet story using the comic sensibilities of an average TV sitcom. The writing needs more sharpness, and the situations need more unexpectedness and fun. And that's a shame, because "Eight Days a Week" has a potential to be a smart, engaging romance in a Cameron Crowe vein. But the lovely Russell is perfectly cast as the goddess, and she carries her role above the material.—*Jon Alon Walz*

THE SIZE OF WATERMELONS ★★★★

Starring Paul Rudd, Ione Skye, Donal Logue and Adam West. Directed by Kari Skogland. Written by Rob Stefaniuk. Produced by Margaux Mackay and Kari Skogland. A Skogland/Mackay production; no distributor set. Comedy/drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 92 min.

As an ironic twist to this year's madness in Park City, the high quality and variety of the films at Slamdance, the anti-Sundance festival, has probably given the third-year entity a clout its organizers had never imagined. One of the better films in town was "The Size of Watermelons," a sharp, energetic film about twentysomethings who actually bring motivation and drive to their quest to succeed, in one way or another.



Ione Skye in "The Size of Watermelons."

A funny script by Rob Stefaniuk introduces the audience to the early life of Alex (Paul Rudd), a social outcast who as a child dressed in black and idolized Batman and who got butt kicked on a daily basis by his peers for his outcast ways. Finally making it to art school in the beach community of Venice, Calif., he hooks up with school activist/candidate Gnome (Donal Logue) as friend and campaign manager. Maturing as a person, Alex for the first time begins dating regularly. Falling for a lovely, albeit distant, music video director named Maggie (a magnetic Ione Skye, of "Gas, Food Lodging"), he finds his true calling in life: the movies. Endeavoring to shoot a documentary about Gnome's mad politcal quest to free Hawaii, he finds purpose, love and, finally, Adam West.

Refreshingly, the picture does not take itself as seriously as the legions of other films in Park City that concerned young people. The film's consistent use of humor and pathos to drive its plot forward recalls devices used at one point or another by comic masters like Wilder and Sturges—and were used with a maturity unexpected from such young filmmakers at this stage of their careers.—*Jon Alon Walz*

PALM SPRINGS

COMMANDMENTS ★★★1/2

Starring Aidan Quinn, Courteney Cox and Anthony LaPaglia. Directed by Daniel Taplitz. Written by Daniel Taplitz. Produced by Ivan Reitman, Michael Chinich, Joe Medjuck and Daniel Goldberg. A Gramercy release. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 105 min. Opens in March.

Seth (Aidan Quinn) suffers troubling questions about life and his place in it after his wife dies in a drowning accident. Finding no solace in his faith, he decides to try a test in which he will break each of the Ten Commandments. He thinks that, after he has done so, if God intends him to learn and go on then God will send him a message. Seth's wife was the sister of Rachel ("Scream's" Courteney Cox), who is married to Harry ("Paperback Romance's" Anthony LaPaglia).

They know Seth is suffering, but each reacts in a different way—Rachel tries to help Seth through his grief, but Harry thinks Seth is going off the deep end and not worth the bother of being concerned. As Seth begins to carry out his Commandments test, an intriguing parallel develops, in that the jerky Harry thinks nothing of breaking any of God's rules if it suits his goals. The parallel continues throughout the film, giving it delicious movement from its light beginning to its mysterious and dramatic middle and end. As each man breaks one commandment after another, the two eventually work their way to the last and toughest: Thou shalt not kill.

The gripping conclusion comes in a lighthouse during a hurricane; there is more mystery and finally a true miracle occurs, with Seth receiving his message. "Commandments" is a study in the questions of life shown through a unique and curious slant. Quinn and LaPaglia provide masterful interpretations of their characters, giving the audience everything it needs to see the direction each is taking toward right and wrong. Cox's performance augments the film's flow, but it's the work of Quinn and LaPaglia that gives it its study in contrasts and its message of darkness being overcome by light.—*Stephenie Slahor*

FESTIVAL REVIEWS

SHILOH ★★★★

Starring Michael Moriarty, Blake Heron, Scott Wilson and Rod Steiger. Directed and written by Dale Rosenbloom. Produced by Zane W. Levitt and Dale Rosenbloom. A Legacy release. Drama. Rated PG for mild violence. Running time: 93 min. Opens in '97.

This bears all the elements Walt Disney said a family movie must possess: make audiences laugh, make them cry, make them think and give them a happy ending. "Shiloh's" only drawback is it's a bit too intense for very young children. The villain doesn't hesitate to abuse dogs or practice physical or mental cruelty.

The film's basic premise is typical (he followed me home, can I keep him?) but "Shiloh" goes beyond that. Marty Preston (Blake Heron) is on a rescue mission to save a dog from the savagery he knows it will suffer from its rightful owner Judd Travers (Scott Wilson). Marty gets little backing from parents but does get help from Doc (Rod Steiger), a kindly grandfather of Marty's best friend who explains that one must often fight hard for the things one loves. Marty makes a pact with Judd, work in exchange for Shiloh—but when the work is done Judd breaks the agreement. But, in true boy-and-his-dog fashion, Judd relents.

Audiences might feel that Judd doesn't get a proper comeuppance, but they can warm with the knowledge that Marty and Shiloh win in the end. Set in West Virginia and bearing comforting music (by Joel Goldsmith), "Shiloh" creates a place where small-town life still thrives. W.C. Fields famously admonished about films with kids and dogs, and here the comedian is proved right. Marty and Shiloh steal this movie; even the dog's few "lines"—spoken in beagle bark—are endearing.—***Stephenie Slahor***

MESSAGE TO LOVE ★★★1/2

Directed, written and produced by Murray Lerner. A Strand release. Documentary. Unrated. Running time: 128 min.

On the heels of Woodstock, British organizers plan a "Festival of Music" on the Isle of Wight to feature such performers as The Doors, Donovan, the Moody Blues, Leonard Cohen, Kris Kristofferson, Joni Mitchell, Miles Davis, Emerson Lake and Palmer, Jimi Hendrix, Joan Baez, Jethro Tull and The Who. There are not only 60,000 paying customers, but 550,000 more who refuse to pay and who camp just outside the fest, insisting the event isn't a concert but a happening that should be free to everyone.

This 25-year-old documentary is an insider's look into the world of rock promotion and the headaches that accompany it. Even those unfamiliar with the music will find this an interesting film, especially thanks to skillful editing (by Einar Westerlund and Stan Warnow) that gives fascinating views of the festival from idea to end. In chronicling the last such fest, the film's archival aspects capture a slice of rock history and the now-vintage music of those times.—***Stephenie Slahor***

A MONGOLIAN TALE ★★★★★

Starring Tengger, Dalarsurong and Naren Hua. Directed by Xie Fei. Written by Zhang Chengzhi. Produced by Jin Jiwu and Du Yongling. A New Yorker release. Drama. Unrated. Running time: 100 min.

The vast, sweeping land of Mongolia is home for a grandmother (Dalarsurong) who moviegoers can quickly cherish as one who loves and nurtures life with a youthful zeal. Because of her wisdom and experience, she is given all manner of creatures, from orphaned foals to children, to raise and teach. Surrogate mother to a girl named Somiya, her joy is multiplied when she is given Bayanbulag, a boy to raise as Somiya's brother. An orphaned colt joins the group, and the film vividly and touchingly portrays the contentment, security and love this little family shares on the steppes of Mongolia.

When Bayanbulag (Tengger) and Somiya (Naren Hua) mature, their adoptive grandmother wants them to marry, but Bayanbulag leaves, pledging to return when eight months of schooling are completed. Three years pass, and a lonely Somiya falls for another man and now carries his baby; finally come back, a marriage-minded Bayanbulag is crestfallen upon learning of Somiya's state. He departs and years pass, but he yearns for Somiya. When their paths cross again, he learns of Somiya's marriage and family, and of the grandmother and colt's deaths. Bayanbulag again leaves with another pledge to return some day.

The film's anchor is Dalarsurong's stunning portrayal of the grandmother—a characterization that shows the love, security and experience of a grandparent, and the tenacious grasp she has on the good in youth. The film is a brilliant and touching portrayal of the universal themes of love and nurturing, and the lesson of learning that there are consequences to one's actions. The plot artfully weaves through tradition and change, and it carries a moving wistfulness.—***Stephenie Slahor***

THE BOY FROM MERCURY ★★★1/2

Starring James Hickey, Rita Tushingham, Tom Courtenay and Hugh O'Conor. Directed and written by Martin Duffy. Produced by Marina Hughes. A Le Studio Canal production; no distributor set. Comedy. Not yet rated. Running time: 87 min.

Nine-year old Harry Cronin (James Hickey) is a likable, good child. He also insists he's a scout from the planet Mercury, here to learn about Earthling life. And, funny enough, moviegoers will almost think he is. As he experiences childhood's wonder, fear and love, he takes mental notes for his future report to his fellow Mercurians. Actually, Harry's otherplanetary world stems from his favorite Saturday pastime of sitting in the theatre watching Flash Gordon battle Ming the Merciless. Harry has only the barest memory of his deceased father and can't quite fathom what role he played or should play in his life. Troubles with a cruel teacher and a class bully compound his problems but, no matter what, Harry believes his Mercurian powers will save him—until the day his big brother steps into the role of hero and Harry finally reconciles fantasy with reality.

Scenes are often viewed from Harry's height to depict his perspective and let the audience experience the magic of make-believe and the childhood test of balancing it with life's ups and downs. "The Boy From Mercury" is a delightful look at young imagination and coping.—***Stephenie Slahor***

MILK AND MONEY ★★

Starring Robert Petkoff, Dina Merrill, Peter Boyle, Robert Vaughn and Olympia Dukakis. Directed, written and produced by Michael Bergmann. An RKO production; no distributor set. Comedy. Not yet rated. Running time: 86 min.

Dropping out of medical school seems to David (Robert Petkoff) the right thing to do but, when his mother (Dina Merrill) immediately urges him to look for work, his real troubles begin. He is approached by a woman who asks him to help her make a film; moments later, another woman asks him to look after a wrapped package. Zany events follow, seemingly unrelated, but they finally sort into an interlinking solution to everyone's problems, including David's.

Despite the anchoring efforts of pros Merrill, Robert Vaughn and Olympia Dukakis, "Milk and Money" often has the feel of a comic doing an improvisation that's not succeeding with the audience. David meets up with bizarre characters and plot twists that lead him along different paths, but he doesn't try very hard to sort out his dilemmas. He blithely swims along with the flow but, unfortunately, that flow is too implausible.—***Stephenie Slahor***

BRILLIANT LIES ★★★

Starring Gia Carides, Anthony LaPaglia, Zoe Carides and Ray Barrett. Directed by Richard Franklin. Written by Peter Fitzpatrick and Richard Franklin. Produced by Richard Franklin and Sue Farrelly. A Beyond Films production; no distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 93 min.

It's Susan Connor (Gia Carides) versus Gary Fitzgerald (Anthony LaPaglia, Carides' co-star in Goldwyn's upcoming "Paperback Romance") in this intricate weaving of lies and truth in which Susan accuses Gary of sexual harassment and unlawful termination from her job. "Brilliant Lies" takes every path of belief and disbelief until it's impossible to know for sure who is lying and to what extent.

The intensity of being caught up in a battle of justice gives this film both its cohesion and its puzzling aspects. The two characters become more spiteful as the story continues (Carides and LaPaglia work to hilt to provide conniving nastiness) and so the audience might begin to hate both, but the tale of deception holds a fascination as it unfolds. Augmenting the enigma is an effective camera technique: There is no

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FESTS

fadeout between scenes. Rather, the character on screen exits from the previous scene in a particular direction, then enters from that direction in the next. Graphic language is used throughout this adaptation of David Williamson's play, further lending the film a corrosive edge.—*Stephenie Slahor*

KING OF MASKS ★★★★★

Starring Chu Yuk, Chao Yim Yiu, Zhang Riuyang and Zhao Zhigang. Directed by Wu Tianming. Written by Wei Minglun. Produced by Wu Tianming. A Shaw Brothers production; no distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 101 min.

Wang (Chu Yuk) is an elderly street performer called the King of Masks who enchants audiences. Seeking a grandson to whom he can teach his art, he buys a child from an impoverished family, only to determine later his "grandson" Doggie (Zhang Riuyang) is a girl. Pride in his craft won't allow him to pass his trade secrets to a female, so he instead teaches her acrobatics. One night, Doggie rescues a kidnapped boy and gives him to Wang to be the grandson he has always sought. Wang is arrested for kidnapping and Doggie desperately attempts to clear Wang of the charges.

In this masterwork, visual balance and imbalance, the juxtaposition of characters, and rich scenery and props dazzle the eye and focus concentration on the significance not only of the dialogue but also of the actors' movements and expressions. The film also profits from meticulous camera work and attention to lighting detail, from subtle and indirect to brilliant and gleaming; each scene is like a photograph of perfect composition.—*Stephenie Slahor*

IRISH WHISKEY ★★★

Starring John Bradford Pagano, Nan Morganne and Cassandra-Nailah Brown. Directed and produced by Jon Stevens. Written by Jon Stevens and Mick McGovern. An Irish Whiskey production; no distributor set. Drama/comedy. Not yet rated. Running time: 103 min.

Get all the brothers, sisters, spouses and children together for a traditional Thanksgiving dinner and the hot and cold of the foods won't be the only heat and ice present. There are bound to be sparks and icy moments when diverse characters come together under one roof, and that's exactly what happens in this tale of the battle of the mindsets.

Sometimes funny, sometimes touching and always true to life, "Irish Whiskey" makes the audience feel like accidental eavesdroppers tucked into a corner of Michael's house, watching everything happen and overhearing all the expressions of love, hate, bigotry, rebellion and compassion that occur. A frequent fault of this low-budget production is wobbly camera work, but for those drawn into the comedy/drama that can be ignored. In this tale of life's transformations, director/producer Jon Stevens is clearly an actors' director, giving his cast free rein to deliver a depiction of family in its many nuances.—*Stephenie Slahor*

FESTS

BEYOND SILENCE ★★1/2

Starring Sylvie Testud, Tatjana Trieb, Howie Seago and Emmanuelle Laborit. Directed and written by Caroline Link. Produced by Thomas Wobke. A Roxie-Film GmbH production; no distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 109 min.

Lara (Tatjana Trieb), the daughter of deaf parents (Howie Seago and Emmanuelle Laborit), is their link to the hearing world. Her true heroine is the aunt she emulates, who gives her a clarinet. It becomes Lara's new life beyond that of her parents' silence. Grown, a mature Lara (Sylvie Testud) realizes music will be her career, but her father wants her to stay home for him. Instead, Lara spends a summer in Berlin, preparing for a music academy audition.

The strongest portion of "Beyond Silence" is its first two-thirds. Its last section should focus on the conflict between Lara's career choice and her guilt at leaving her family, but it becomes preoccupied with showing that Lara is reaching adulthood. Trieb's performance steals the film, and she accounts for much of the film's early strength; most of that richness is lost when the older Lara appears, her character becoming predictable and distanced.—***Stephenie Slahor***

TO HAVE AND TO HOLD ★★1/2

Starring Tcheky Karyo, Rachel Griffiths and Robert Kunsa. Directed by John Hillcoat. Written by Gene Conkie. Produced by Denise Patience. A Southern Star production; no distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 100 min.

"Disturbing" is the word to characterize this raw, violent and mysterious film. The first wife of Jack ("La Femme Nikita's" Tcheky Karyo) has died under circumstances not immediately made clear; the story then jumps ahead two years when Jack sees Kate ("Cosi's" Rachel Griffiths), an author touting her book. He marries her and takes her to his home in New Guinea, where he runs an open-air theatre that shows violent films to the island's native inhabitants. At first, the marriage seems to work, but all is not what it appears with either spouse. Kate is using her experiences in the marriage and its unique environment as the basis for her new romance novel; Jack has more deep-seated problems as he substitutes Kate for his first wife. Slowly, Kate realizes Jack is mad, but she can't easily escape him until Luther (Robert Kunsa), an enigmatic native, comes to her rescue.

Unfortunately, the film's first half is ponderous. The film also suffers from a dreadful overuse of extreme closeups of Jack's face, dead-center in the frame; the technique becomes almost humorous. Audiences might also suffer vertigo from the film's many spinning motions, from amusement park rides to ceiling fans to dancing in a circle. The fetish with movement goes nowhere until late, when it's revealed as a symbol of Jack's entrapment. The Down Under setting lends some scenic strength, but not more: The native population (except for Luther) and their life there remain underdeveloped.—***Stephenie Slahor***

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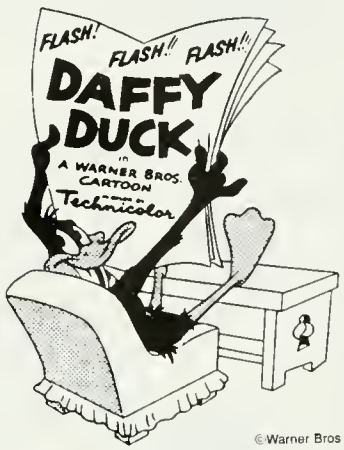
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UNDERWORLD ★

Starring Denis Leary, Joe Mantegna, Annabella Sciorra, Abe Vigoda, Traci Lords and James Tolkan. Directed by Roger Christian. Written by Larry Bishop. Produced by Robert Vince and William Vince. A Trimark release. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 100 min. Opens in March.

What hath Quentin Tarantino wrought? Apparently, a new genre: the Cinema of Self-Consciously Quirky Thugs. Judging by "Underworld," screenwriter Larry Bishop ("Mad Dog Time") and director Roger Christian—Christian, no less!—have sold their souls to this derivative devil. And they've persuaded some otherwise well-respected performers to worship with them at the "Pulp Fiction" altar.

In this dreadful concoction, Joe Mantegna ("Eye for an Eye") is Frank, a mob boss abducted by an ex-con ("Two If By Sea's" Denis Leary) named Johnny. Together, they ride always rain-slicked, steamy city streets in a red stretch limo as Johnny searches for an answer to the question, "Who popped my pop?" With his old man brain-dead after an assassination attempt, he suspects Frank, who has many opportunities to escape but is content to stick close to Johnny and smolder.

Taking place on Father's Day, the story is an elaborate pseudo-existential riff on familial bonds. A radio station broadcasts "Oh, My Papa." Someone discusses Oedipus. Johnny talks about being "an expert on dead dads." Yet this mind-numbing wordplay is far less obnoxious than when the hoodlums start debating, in true Tarantino style, the merits of Danny Kaye, organ donations and Rodgers & Hammerstein musicals. Bloodbaths abound as gangsters—stopping first to chat about cultural trivia—massacre everybody in sight.

As Frank's squeeze, Annabella Sciorra has little to do other than be one of the many scantily clad females and strippers; Abe Vigoda shows briefly as his estranged parent. James Tolkan plays Ned, a scum-of-the-earth sort who, of course, killed his own father. And Johnny gets to spout a scintillating line of dialogue to Frank: "I want to be frank about your frankness and, frankly, I don't give a damn." Frankly, neither does the audience.—***Susan Green***

GUANTANAMERA ★★★1/2

Starring Carlos Cruz, Mirtha Ibarra, Raul Eguren and Jorge Perugorria. Directed by Tomas Gutierrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabio. Written by Eliseo Diego Marruz, Tomas Gutierrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabio. Produced by Geraldo Herrero. A CFP release. Romantic comedy. Not yet rated. Running time: 104 min. Opens in May.

The mad, mad, mad, mad world of Cuban socialism has been a creative touchstone in films by the late Tomas Gutierrez Alea, best known for his ironic 1968 masterpiece, "Memories of Underdevelopment." Filmmaker Juan Carlos Tabio collaborated with the ailing director on 1994's popular "Strawberry and Chocolate" and helped out again on what proved to be Alea's swan song, "Guantanamera." Fidel Castro is nowhere to be seen in this Latin screwball comedy with a hint of wistful magic realism, but the patchwork society he rules comes in for satirical nudging.

A middling civil servant, Adolfo (Carlos Cruz), hopes to improve his status by offering a bold plan for the gasoline-poor country: to share the financial burden of transporting corpses to their far-flung burial destinations through a relay system of vehicles supplied by every major town along the route. On the domestic front, Adolfo expects his wife, Gina (Mirta Ibarra, Alea's widow), a former economics professor, to stay home and dress in matronly fashions. When Gina's elderly aunt dies in the arms of her childhood sweetheart, Candido (Raul Eguren), Adolfo must make sure her casket is transferred from Guantanamo to Havana according to his untested scheme.

Adolfo becomes increasingly irate as the funeral procession meets with all the mishaps any carefully devised policy might expect to encounter when negotiating a bureaucratic nightmare. Without all its laughs, "Guantanamera" probably would have seemed even more of a thorn in Castro's tropical socialist paradise.—***Susan Green***

BANDWAGON ★★★1/2

Starring Kevin Corrigan, Steve Parlavecchio, Lee Holmes, Matthew Hennesey and Doug MacMillan. Directed and written by John Schultz. Produced by John Schultz and Alyson Poole. A Transatlantic Entertainment production; no distributor set. Comedy. Not yet rated. Running time: 107 min.

Slackers with ambition, four North Carolina lads decide to rock 'n' roll for a living in "Bandwagon," a fresh, witty road movie and feature debut by writer/director John Schultz ("The Making of Jurassic Park"). Like the similarly loquacious character in "Clerks," long-winded drummer Charlie (Matthew Hennessey) works in a video store. Singer/songwriter Tony (Lee Holmes) pens an obsessive repertoire of tunes about a girl named Ann and is so shy that he can perform only with his back to the audience. Lead guitarist Wynn (Kevin Corrigan of "Walking and Talking" and TV's "Pearl") remains a resolutely cynical latter-day hippie. Bass player Eric (Steve Parlavecchio) is the most volatile player in Circus Monkey, as the group members decide to call themselves, having vetoed Porch Key and Talentless Bastards. After playing a fractious fraternity gig and recording a single, the not-yet-fab four buy an ancient van to go on tour with Linus (Doug MacMillan), their enigmatic road manager. Naturally, many misadventures await them in this more downbeat, contemporary American kin to "A Hard Day's Night."

Schultz, who played as a drummer with several ensembles while in college, seems to have a sure sense of what it's like to be in a twentysomething Southern garage band. His endearing tale is bolstered by

FEST REVIEWS

composer Greg Kendall's songs, which the actors lip-synch convincingly. Snappy camera work by Shawn Maurer helps move things along as Circus Monkey winds through the South, squabbling and dreaming about that improbable pot of gold at the end of the touring rainbow. Moviegoers who liked the fun of hardscrabble rock 'n' roll sagas—"The Buddy Holly Story," "The Commitments," "Backbeat"—doing that thing they do are likely to get aboard for this "Bandwagon."—*Susan Green*

MOJAVE MOON ★★★

Starring Danny Aiello, Anne Archer, Alfred Molina, Angelina Jolie and Michael Biehn. Directed by Kevin Dowling. Written by Leonard Glasser. Produced by Matt Salinger. A Northern Arts release. Comedy. Unrated. Running time: 95 min. Opens in '97.

Although periodically double-crossed by its own confusion of motives, "Mojave Moon" is an intriguing, audience-friendly venture from director Kevin Dowling ("The Sum of Us"). The recently divorced Al (Danny Aiello) is hoping to reinvent his life when Ellie ("Foxfire's" Angelina Jolie), a vixen young enough to be his granddaughter, lures him into a seemingly surefire sexual assignation. Instead, she takes Al home to her mom, Julie (Anne Archer, using a distracting Marilyn Monroe voice), who lives in a desert trailer with a hot-tempered biker boyfriend ("Tombstone's" Michael Biehn). Al seems to be a patsy in some prearranged mother-daughter conspiracy, but audiences are never quite sure why. During a bizarre evening in their company, Al falls for the ditzy Julie before finding a body in the trunk of his car. He calls on his pal Sal ("The Perez Family's" Alfred Molina) for help. And so it goes in this messy but endearing comic oddity.—*Susan Green*

HOLLOW REED ★★★

Starring Martin Donovan, Joely Richardson, Ian Hart, Jason Flemyng and Sam Bould. Directed by Angela Pope. Written by Paula Milne. Produced by Nik Powell and Stephen Woolley. A CFP release. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 109 min. Opens in April.

Given the way TV movies-of-the-week consistently trivialize social issues, it's remarkable that a cinematic view of child abuse can resist sensationalism. In "Hollow Reed," director Angela Pope ("Captives") manages to tell a restrained yet harrowing story about a child caught in the purgatory between divorced, warring parents and his mother's violence-prone boyfriend.

Oliver (Sam Bould) is a small boy with enormous, soulful eyes and the bad luck to be on the losing end of a custody battle. His mom, Hannah ("101 Dalmatians'" Joely Richardson), is still bitter about the dissolution of her marriage to Martyn ("The Portrait of a Lady's" Martin Donovan), a doctor now in a monogamous gay relationship with Tom ("Land and Freedom's" Ian Hart). Hannah has rebounded into the loving arms of Frank (Jason Flemyng), whose hands are problematical: When no one else is around, he beats Oliver. After Martyn begins to suspect the worst, the film evolves from thriller to courtroom drama, with Oliver too terrified to talk, Hannah seeking the easy road of denial and Jason proving himself very adept at deceit.

Complex characters save Paula Milne's sometimes sketchy script. A Hal Hartley regular, Donovan has the appropriate intensity for a father battling to protect his son and overcome society's homophobia. Although somewhat on the sidelines here, Hart is always a compelling actor to watch; Richardson remains harder to read as a woman willing to ignore her maternal instincts to keep a man.

In America, this is material that probably would have exploded in a Hollywood-style bloodbath. Under the skillful eye of Pope, the film maintains a British reserve. That is a mixed blessing at times, but what might have turned maudlin in "Hollow Reed" is instead quite moving.—*Susan Green*

WIND IN THE WILLOWS ★★★

Narrated by Vanessa Redgrave. Voices by Alan Bennett, Rik Mayall, Michael Palin and Michael Gambon. Directed by Dave Unwin. Written by Ted Walker. Produced by John Coates. A Legacy release. Live-action/animated fantasy. Rated G. Running time: 78 min.

Almost 90 years ago, Kenneth Grahame wrote "Wind in the Willows," destined to become an enduring children's classic. In this 1995 production, British director John Coates brought the tale of Mole (Alan Bennett, who wrote "The Madness of King George"), Rat (Monty Pythoner Michael Palin), Badger (Michael Gambon of "The Singing Detective") and Toad (Rik Mayall) to the big screen via London's TVC Animation Studio.

Vanessa Redgrave narrates, after a brief live-action prologue during which she begins reading the book to her own brood while on a turn-of-the-century steamboat journey. Beautifully rendered visuals depict the travails of neurotic but basically charming critters who inhabit Riverbank, including dreamers, adventurers and poets; there are no Disney-babes like Pocahontas or big-eyed lion cubs. The madcap Toad gets into a bit of trouble with the law but, when things settle down, life once again is fairly peaceful in their lovely but never syrupy-sweet world.—*Susan Green*

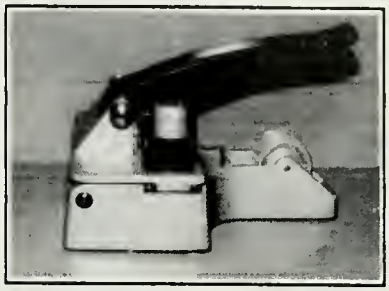
THE SUN, THE MOON AND THE STARS ★★

Starring Elaine Cassidy, Angie Dickinson, Aisling Corcoran, Gina Moxley and Jason Donovan. Directed and written by Geraldine Creed. Produced by Brendan McCarthy. No distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 97 min.

The anguish of a family coming apart is at the heart of Geraldine Creed's "The Sun, the Moon and the Stars," an uneven film with feminist sensibilities. Shelley (Elaine Cassidy) is a Dublin teenager alienated by her parents' separation. Her unreliable fa-

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FESTS

ther has a new ladyfriend. Shelley's mother, Mo (Gina Moxley), does not get a promotion where she works because her bosses believe she has inopportune "family pressures."

Off she goes with Shelley and her younger daughter, Dee (Aisling Corcoran), for a holiday at the beach. There, they meet a mysterious American named Abbie (Angie Dickinson). Shelley, deciding Abbie must be "a sea witch," begins practicing her own voodoo rituals. Mo strikes up a warm friendship with Pat (a captivating Jason Donovan), to Shelley's dismay. The story, which is a bit silly, slow and contrived at times, retains some wonderfully tender moments, and the Irish seashore provides some lovely scenery.—*Susan Green*

TALK TO ME 1/2

Starring Cheryl Clifford, Peter Welch, Elizabeth Landis and Gary Navicoff. Directed by George Esguerra. Written by George Esguerra and Robert Foulkes. Produced by George Esguerra. No distributor set. Romantic comedy/drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 90 min.

Co-writer/director George Esguerra's empty-headed "Talk to Me" gives a big stamp of approval to stalking. Heck, it even celebrates such behavior. Betty (Cheryl Clifford) meets Arnold (Peter Welch) through a telephone "party line," on which sex-obsessed adults can indulge in naughty chatter from the anonymity of their own homes. Betty lets him believe that she is Miranda—her dead mother's name. After they consummate the relationship in person, Arnold is furious when he discovers the truth; Betty begins to shadow him, even showing up for dinner at his parents' house. Her best friend, Ronnie (Elizabeth Landis), sleeps with a lothario she meets via the same party line and then starts to pursue him when he ditches her. Arnold, meanwhile, is in therapy with his brother, Michael (Gary Navicoff, in a robotic performance). Credibility is not this movie's strong suit. But, then again, nothing is.—*Susan Green*

CANNES MAN ★★★

Starring Seymour Cassel, Francesco Quinn, Rebecca Broussard, Johnny Depp, Jim Jarmusch, John Malkovich, Treat Williams and Jim Sheridan. Directed by Richard Martini. Produced Tom Coleman and Holly MacConkey. No distributor set. Comedy. Not yet rated. Running time: 98 min.

With somewhat less bite than "The Player," Richard Martini's "Cannes Man" spoofs Hollywood within a largely improvised mockumentary format. At the film industry's annual French Riviera schmoozefest, legendary low-budget producer Sy Lerner (Seymour Cassel) makes a bet with real-life counterpart Jim Stark ("Down By Law"): Can Sy turn a nobody into the hottest new somebody? Enter Frank Rhinaslavsky (Francesco Quinn), a clueless cabbie who'll soon be wearing hip clothes, mingling with festival glitterati and sporting a new name, Frank Rhino.

When Sy cranks the hype machine, this loser becomes the most sought-after screenwriter on the Croisette, that Cannes boulevard of broken dreams. Never mind that there's no actual script, everybody from Johnny Depp and Jim Jarmusch—who take a meeting at a Buddhist shrine—to John Malkovich to Dennis Hopper wants a piece of the action. Rebecca Broussard checks in as Sy's estranged wife, but most celebrities are playing themselves. To perfection.—*Susan Green*

DOGS: THE RISE AND FALL OF AN ALL-GIRL BOOKIE JOINT ★★

Starring Pam Columbus, Pamela Grey, Eve Annenberg, Melody Beal and Toby Huss. Directed by Eve Annenberg. Written by Eve Anenberg and Stephanie Sharpe. Produced by Heather D'Amato. No distributor set. Comedy. Not yet rated. Running time: 83 min.

Eve Annenberg's "Dogs: The Rise and Fall of an All-Girl Bookie Joint" conveys much the same Lower East Side *joie de vivre* as "Rent." In this case, four underemployed female roommates are just one step up from being squatters, even showering together to save hot water in their cramped tenement apartment.

While Leila (Pam Columbus) mourns her recently deceased mother, she persuades the others (Pamela Grey, Eve Annenberg,

FLASHBACK: *FEBRUARY 1, 1971*
What BOXOFFICE *said about...*

WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH

[Sharp-eyed cineastes caught Steven Spielberg's nod to this 1971 film in the "when dinosaurs ruled the earth" banner across the museum hall in "Jurassic Park." With dinosaurs about to rule the multiplex come the May 23 opening of Spielberg's sequel, "The Lost World," we thought we'd take a quarter-century trip back in time to see what BOXOFFICE *thought of this Hammer production.]*



Each new Hammer Film—this one arriving from Warner Bros.—brings with it a promise of another potential Raquel Welch. Because "When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth" is quite close to "One Million Years B.C.," star Victoria Vetri has a chance to achieve Miss Welch's success. Obviously, the dazzling Miss Vetri, a blonde, comes close to the Welch measurements in a particularly revealing costume. In fact, nearly everyone in the cast wears extremely brief costumes for a G picture. The kids will be well entertained by the monsters and monosyllabic dialogue (which derives from the 1940 Hal Roach "One Million B.C.," remade at Hammer as the 1966 Welch starrer). Parents might fret about exposing their children to so much skin, even though there isn't any actual nudity. Adults, especially science-fiction buffs and action fans, will be greatly amused, making this one of the first big moneymakers of the new year. Jim Danforth's visual effects, very important to a film of this type, are fine, and the music by Mario Nascimbene (who provided the percussive score for "One Million Years B.C.") is equally good. Robin Hawdon is a muscular hero, enduring as many challenges in 96 minutes as the hero of any 15-chapter serial. Val Guest directs and scripts, with J.B. Ballard credited for the treatment; both do their jobs in the best tongue-in-cheek fashion. Aida Young produces. Imogen Hassall, Patrick Allen, Patrick Holt and Magda Konopka co-star. In Technicolor. Shot in the Canary Islands.

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Enter an Age of Unknown Terrors, Pagan Worship and Virgin Sacrifice...From the Creators of "One Million Years B.C." Comes Their Most Gigantic Spectacle.

FESTIVAL REVIEWS

Melody Beal) to help her run a kitchen betting parlor. Leila hopes to win the hard heart of Sammy (Toby Huss), her petty crook of a boss. The four nascent bookies experience temporary success in Mayor Rudolph Guliani's get-tough-on-crime city.

A classically trained Julliard actress, Annenberg is the most accomplished among a mixed bag of a cast. The script is iffy, the editing is choppy and the sound quality is marginal, but there's enough *la vie boheme* to keep things lively.—*Susan Green*

LOOSE WOMEN 1/2

Starring Sherry Ham, Melissa Errico, Maria Lisa Costanzo, Corey Glover, Giancarlo Esposito and Keith David. Directed by Paul Bernard. Written by Sherry Ham. Produced by Chris Matonti. No distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 90 min.

Some movies leave only two choices: head for the exit or slink lower in your seat. A vanity production by a husband-and-wife team, director Paul Bernard and screenwriter/star Sherry Ham, "Loose Women" is a particularly awful production about a struggling actress trying to save an unhinged roommate. Discovering that schoolteacher Gail (Melissa Errico) has a secret life as a prostitute, Rachel (Ham) teams up with a detective (Tom Verica) to battle Gail's calculating family for her soul.

Weighed down by idiotic dialogue, sloppy direction and abominable acting, this sounds far more interesting than it actually is. Replete with stereotypes—Giancarlo Esposito and Keith David vamp as gay hairdressers—the melodrama piles on gratuitous plot twists about sex and the single girl. In a bartender cameo, Charlie Sheen has a short monologue that however brief seems endless.—*Susan Green*

LOVE ALWAYS ★1/2

Starring Marisa Ryan, Moon Zappa and Michael Reilly Burke. Directed by Jude Pauline Eberhard. Written by Jude Pauline Eberhart and Sharlene Baker. Produced by Isaac Artenstein. No distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 93 min.

Despite interesting characters and situations, "Love Always" tends to shout its intentions from the rooftops. Jude Pauline Eberhard's directorial debut presents Julia (Marisa Ryan), a young woman trying to return to her Spokane-based sweetheart (Michael Reilly Burke) after six months in San Diego living with a friend (Moon Zappa). Hitchhiking north, she finds herself going in various unplanned directions. Julia encounters a speed-freak (Doug Hutchinson), a woman who crafts gigantic ceramic cows (Beth Grant), an all-chick rock band called the Virgin Sluts, the amorous Mac (Jerry O'Donnell), an AWOL Marine (Aaron Kuhr) and a sensitive photographer (Tracy Fraim), before finally experiencing a bit of instant karma back in Washington.

Ryan has an effective screen persona that some of her fellow performers lack, but the story by Eberhart and Sharlene Baker opts for subplots that go nowhere. In the cameo-for-cameo's-sake department, a familiar face appears and disappears before you can say, "Beverly D'Angelo!"—*Susan Green*

MENNO'S MIND ★1/2

Starring Bill Campbell, Stephanie Romanov, Corbin Bernsen, Robert Vaughn, Robert Piccardo and Michael Dorn. Directed by Jon Kroll. Written by Mark Valenti. Produced by Larry Estes. No distributor set. SF/thriller. Not yet rated. Running time: 94 min.

An ambitious enterprise, "Menno's Mind" is an independent sci-fi feature with financing from cable's Showtime network. Boasting numerous radio, TV, theatre and documentary credits, Jon Kroll brings much technical polish to a production punctuated by uneven acting and mean-spirited violence.

In some Orwellian future shock of a society, Menno ("The Rocketeer's" Bill Campbell) works in a state-controlled theme park where patrons experience their wildest fantasies through virtual reality. Presidential candidate Felix Medina (Corbin Bernsen), meanwhile, plots a fiendish mind-control scheme to win the election. When a rebel leader is killed, sexy comrade-in-arms Loria (Stephanie Romanov) downloads his brain power into Menno's handsome head. The previously apathetic hero now has to battle Medina for a brighter tomorrow, despite the trepidation of his best friend, Simon ("Star Trek: First Contact's" Michael Dorn). Robert Vaughn appears as a government official and Robert Piccardo as one of the generally cartoonish villains.—*Susan Green*

NIGHT ORCHID ★★

Starring Dale Paris, Alyssa Simon, Rachel Carter, Joe Nassif and Mary Ellen O'Brien. Directed and written by Mark Atkins. Produced by Ralph Clemente. No distributor set. Thriller. Not yet rated. Running time: 110 min.

Nothing if not atmospheric, Mark Atkins' student film "Night Orchid" is cliche-ridden right from an opening sequence that practically screams, "It was a dark and stormy night...." Accordingly, a psychic drifter named Clay (Mark Paris) has all the right film-noir moves. When he arrives in a small, dusty Florida town—accompanied by twangy guitar music—Clay senses the locals share a dark secret. The three-decades-old question: Who killed Sarah (Alyssa Simon), a pretty girl who flirted with all the guys? The suspects are most memorable for overacting with gusto.—*Susan Green*

AFI

KRZYSZTOF KIESLOWSKI: I'M SO-SO ★★★★

Directed and written by Krzysztof Wierzbicki. Produced by Karen Hjort. No distributor set. Documentary. Polish-language; subtitled. Running time: 56 min.

Anything additional from or about the late Krzysztof Kieslowski, the Polish director who died early last year, leaving the film world wanting so much more, must be considered a plus. Brief though "Krzysztof Kieslowski: I'm So-So," is, this documen-

SANTA BARBARA FEST

ROSEANNA'S GRAVE ★★★1/2

Starring Jean Reno, Mercedes Ruehl and Polly Walker. Directed by Paul Weiland. Written by Saul Turteltaub, Dick Clement and Ian Le Frenais. Produced by Paul Trijbits, Alison Owen and Dario Poloni. A Fine Line release. Comedy. Rated PG-13 for sexuality and brief language. Running time: 99 min. Opens the Santa Barbara fest. Opens 4/18.

Fine Line for a while considered retitling this "For the Love of Roseanna," probably hoping to avoid the death-title boxoffice jinx and to better capture the spirit of this light-hearted affair. Although the story seems a grave one—a dying wife ("The Fisher King's" Mercedes Ruehl) wants to be assured of being laid to rest in the same cemetery as that of her dead child—director Paul Weiland and his three scripters ensure that "Roseanna's Grave" remains a comic affair. They do this by using a droll scenario that wouldn't be out of place in foreign-language fare (though set in an Italian village, the film is in English): With the local graveyard almost full, Roseanna's loving husband ("Mission: Impossible's" Jean Reno) begins to stash bodies as townspeople die.

But the film never crosses over to slapstick, and that's thanks in part to the surprisingly genuine humanity of the key characters. Reno and Ruehl make for a convincing married couple—though accustomed to each other's day-to-day presence, the two players make the audience see there remains a deep romance between them. As Roseanna's single sister, who shares the couple's home so as to be close to her sister and who Roseanna sometimes envisions becoming her husband's wife after she's gone, Polly Walker ("Restoration") is sexual yet loyal.—***Kim Williamson***

tary is a wondrous tease for those who don't know his movies, and a charming reminder for those who do, about the appeal of his mind's eye. Of course it is not a fully satisfying exploration of his life and his work, but it fulfills its own design and concept, the blueprint for which seems clearly dictated by the subject himself, although via the hands of filmmaker Krzysztof Wierzbicki, a long-time assistant. Kieslowski announced his retirement from filmmaking prior to participating in this little vignette, but his taste and viewpoint shape this work almost as sharply as when he was an active director creating his own films.

The film reflects much integral to Kieslowski and his work, though only the briefest of clips are shown from just a few of his movies—for example, a touch of "Red," but no "White" or Blue." Visual reflections are picked up in the choice of backdrops for segments of the interviews, which include a conversation held while walking along a railway platform and a question-and-answer session during which he nuzzles circling horses. Philosophical theories are constant in the witty evasive conversation, which includes such self-analytic comments as "I'm a pessimist" (something he suggests is his one really good characteristic) and "I turn the camera on myself in a way which nobody can see." Kieslowski also remarks that he's often felt like "leaving my films unfinished." This little movie, a soft pencil sketch of a life that should be etched in stone, is an intriguing glimpse through a doorway left slightly ajar.—*Bridget Byrne*

THE BRYLCREEM BOYS ★1/2

Starring Gabriel Byrne, Jean Butler, Bill Campbell and William McNamara. Directed by Terence Ryan. Written by Terence Ryan and Jamie Brown. Produced by Alan Latham, Bernie Stampfer, Terence Ryan and Paul Madigan. No distributor set. Drama/romance. Not yet rated. Running time: 106 min.

A potentially interesting twist on the prisoner-of-war genre has scant impact in "The Brylcreem Boys," a sort of "top of a misty morning to you" soft-soap version of a World War II adventure set in 1941 Ireland.

Because of Ireland's neutral stance, both British and German troops who have washed up or crashlanded on Southern Irish soil are interred in the same camp, separated only by thin strands of barbed wire and implacable animosity. To further complicate matters, both sides are allowed out under the Irish blarney theory that spending a day at the race and swilling a jar at the local pub will make them less inclined to attempt to escape. The political and emotional climate is thus very confused, but this film doesn't probe any depths, merely skipping lumbrously over the surface.

There isn't even an Englishman, at least not center stage—just a couple of overseas guys, a Canadian and an American who have got into the conflict early. Bill Campbell is the safely handsome O.K. Canadian and William McNamara the safely handsome O.K. American who vie with the Germans—most of whom are cliche nasty, apart from one safely handsome O.K. officer, played by Angus MacFadyen. The world these men are plonked down in has all the expected Irish accessories, including a pony and trap, a Jack Russell terrier, toe dancing, stone walls, whiskey and stout, and a red-headed beauty. As the latter, Jean Butler has little to do except look good as the men spar and spat over her, while Gabriel Byrne has even less to do, beyond looking comfortably handsome as the good-natured Irish officer in charge of the whole sorry debacle. Without tension or heart, this is a dull yarn ill-told.—*Bridget Byrne*

A SATURDAY ON EARTH ★★★

Starring Elsa Zylberstein, Eric Caravaca and Johan Leysen. Directed by Diane Bertrand. Written by Diane Bertrand and Guillaume Laurent. Produced by Georges Benayoun and Michel Propper. A Canal Plus production; no U.S. distributor set. Mystery. French-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 95 min.

This stylish jigsaw puzzle of a movie proves both likable and confusing. Nonlinear in structure, with dozens of flashbacks, the film tells the sad tale of a brother and sister. Separated as children and adopted by different families, they years later meet and share a tragic fate. Claire (Elsa Zylberstein), a shy and fetching gamin who works as a freelance journalist in Paris, meets Franck (Johan Leysen), the head of a munitions factory, while she is covering a story. They fall in love and marry. Meanwhile, Claire's brother Martin (Eric Caravaca), who knows neither that he is adopted or has a sister, works at Franck's factory. Despondent after accidentally running over a man with his car, Martin crosses paths with Claire.

"A Saturday on Earth" ("Un Samedi Sur La Terre") is about lives intersecting and the randomness of tragedy, although it retains a somewhat comical tone throughout. The actors prove agreeable, although no character is shown long enough—or presented deeply enough—for the audience to really get to know them. Franck wears his love for Claire on his sleeve, revealing a wonderful melancholic sweetness that makes him most appealing. Claire, a woman seemingly destined to sadness, also proves engaging. Director Diane Bertrand brings a colorful crispness and insouciant manner, yet still allows for moments of emotion. She is ably assisted by her crew, especially cinematographer Michel Amathieu.—*Jean Oppenheimer*

SPECIAL FORMATS

FOX HUNT ★★★

Starring Lewis Arquette, Timothy Bottoms, George Lazenby, Rob Lowe and Gary Coleman. Directed by Michael Berns. Written by Matt Pyken and Michael Berns. Produced by Adam Berns and Matt Pyken. No stateside distributor set; intl. distribution by Redwood Comm. Action/comedy. Unrated. Running time: 93 min.

Media is synergy, now and forever. Witness: homages, references, sequels, sampling, based-on-the-novels, based-on-the-TV-shows, and the latest: repurposing, which consists of taking actual video footage and using it in another medium or in the same medium but for a different purpose.

"Fox Hunt," an off-the-wall, fast-paced comedy, is purported to be the first CD-ROM ever to be reverse-engineered into a feature film. A similar trajectory was ridden by "Super Mario Brothers" and "Mortal Kombat," which had been arcade and cartridge games. Neither movie was a big hit, and this movie is unlikely to break the string. But it's an attention-getter for the talented group behind it: 3Vision, the independent production company that also developed the successful CD-ROM "National Lampoon's Blind Date."

The plot of the movie, as could be guessed, is a subset of that of the interactive game; where the game offers multiple paths and endings, one path was chosen for the film. The story has to do with Russian spies leaving messages in bad '60s TV shows. The clues needed to deactivate a bomb aimed at Los Angeles must be decoded by Jack Fremont, a sort of slacker James Bond. It's contrived, to say the least. As Fremont, Andrew Bowen appears to have had his training from Maxwell Smart at the Jim Carrey School of Acting. But he makes you laugh despite yourself; especially infectious is his Popeye style of muttering to himself.

The film does well in combining action with comedy, such as a bit on a jet-powered wheelchair and a kickboxing fight between Las Vegas showgirls. One long 'n' trippy tunnel sequence gives the movie audience a chance to play its own game. It's called "Spot the game sequence." Fights and "traveling" segments are common in CD-ROM games. Purists might bemoan tampering with the film form and film's TV-ization or game-ification, but the truth is: The aesthetic is changing. The young developers/filmmakers here are throwing back their own internal images, which resemble and are about TV. If certain filmmakers see the world as a television show, perhaps that is how many of their audience members see it as well.—***Ann Kwinn***

FEST REVIEWS

DYING TO GO HOME ★★1/2

Starring Diogo Infante and Maria D'Aires. Directed by Carlos da Silva and George Sluizer. Written by Carlos da Silva and Jennifer Field with additional dialogue from George Sluizer. Produced by George Sluizer and Carlos da Silva. Fantasy. Dutch/Portuguese/English-language; subtitled. Running time: 106 min.

For a film shot and produced in two different countries by two different directors, performed by a cross-cultural European cast in three languages and numerous accents, telling a story that slips constantly back and forth from drama to comedy to fantasy to romance, "Dying to Go Home" is a remarkably cohesive work. Carlos da Silva and George Sluizer's film also possesses charm, genuine sentiment and moments of dark sadness absent from similar soft-touch ghost stories so popular in Hollywood. Ultimately it provides few surprises—its point about the importance of not denying your roots is immediately apparent and explored at too much length—but the sympathetic depiction of its central characters sustains interest through much of the meandering.

Manuel, who before his untimely death had drifted away from home and family, finds that rest is not possible unless his bones are returned home. He can wander at will to observe those he has left behind, but he can only communicate with them through their dreams. Passive though much of his performance has to be, Diogo Infante gives Manuel a real sense of need, while Maria D'Aires is entirely convincing as Julia, his Portuguese sister drawn to Holland on a curious journey. Helped along by Jack Wouterse, portraying an unlikely object of romance, she manages to make the shy, disappointed woman's flowering into attractive fulfillment seem an individual experience, not a tired cliche. The natural contrasts between countries and cultures need no additional artifice to provide a suitable backdrop for a film about the external and internal boundaries that can be broken down and those that need to be honored just as they stand.—*Bridget Byrne*

NEROLIO ★★★

Starring Marco Cavicchioli and Vincenzo Crivello. Directed and written by Aurelio Grimaldi. Produced by Giancarlo Lourenzi and Ettore Mancini. No distributor set. Drama. Italian-language; subtitled. Running time: 85 min.

Marco Cavicchioli's performance as a rejected literatus seeking unattainable love gives "Nerolio" the compassion necessary to raise it above the pitfall of being seen merely as a fictionalized semi-biographical study of the murky fate of the controversial Italian director Pier Paolo Pasolini. Without in any way seeking to give a performance that asks to be liked, Cavicchioli renders vividly the dilemma of a man tortured by his inability to be lovable. His plain face at once scrunched up with hidden horrors and laid bare with needy desires, Cavicchioli makes it possible to watch things that would in reality be better left unexposed.

Aurelio Grimaldi's intimate black-and-white movie follows the defiantly angry man through his last grasps at love with a number of young men, both casual pick-ups and, more hopefully but ultimately equally disastrously, a would-be author posing as a student writing a thesis. With a nonartificial sense of documentation, Grimaldi shows the objects of the poet's desire in a way that is at once both uncomfortably prurient and exquisitely adoring, capturing exactly the emotion reflected in Cavicchioli's eyes as he hopes for more both physically and emotionally than he is ever going to get—except, of course, at the end. But equally telling are the scenes of an awkwardly mundane domesticity in the home he shares with his aged mother, weighed down with her own silent disappointment about life's unfilled tease of happiness.

The sense of how fleeting everything is, including even obsessive feelings, is pointed up by the movement of the film as it follows the poet into the dark edges of a hypocritical world. It finds wayward beauty in the deserted outskirts of suburbia just as the poet finds unsatisfied bliss in the young men he desires.—*Bridget Byrne*

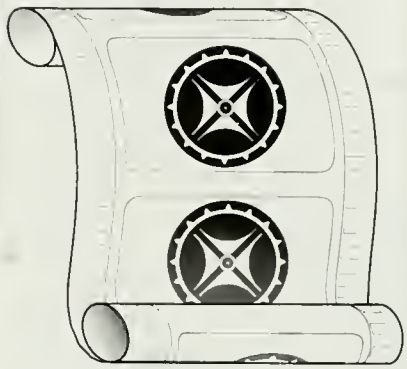
BAD BOY BUBBY ★★

Starring Nicholas Hope, Claire Benito and Ralph Cotterill. Directed and written by Rolf de Heer. Produced by Domenico Procacci, Rolf de Heer and Giorgio Draskovic. A Bubby Pty. Ltd. production; no distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 114 min.

Sometimes, well-made films are hard to watch, and the 1993 Australian independent film "Bad Boy Bubby" is a perfect example. It's tony, gruesomely realistic and as engrossing as a car accident, but it's a tough haul for the average Saturday-night moviegoer. Indie film aficionados and fans of the avant-garde will probably enjoy its bleak, film-noir universe and its slow but thorough evolution of character. But the drifting plot and claustrophobic setting might make a lot of others squirm.

Bubby is 35 years old and, apparently, has never left the shabby and windowless one-room apartment where he lives in uneasy truce with his plump, aging, salvation-happy mother. With his stunted mind and haunted scarecrow appearance, Bubby has been convinced by mom (who never leaves the place without a gas mask) that the toxic air of the outside world will kill him if he leaves. So his entire life is spent toying with cockroaches, tormenting his cat, eating gruel, and lying back passively as his mother uses him for sexual pleasure. It isn't until one day when his long-lost father, a lowlife priest, rearrives that his life begins to change. Not that his crusty old man has much more concern for dim-bulb Bubby than his mother does; it's only when Bubby inadvertently kills them both by enveloping their heads in plastic wrap (to see if they can breathe) that he dares venture into the world, wandering dumbly in and out of one strange situation after another.

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FESTIVAL REVIEWS

"Bad Boy Bubby" is an equally drifting affair. It doesn't have much sense of direction or much of a point beyond the portrayal of a seriously abused young man. Yet director Rolf de Heer has a way of making us want to watch this strange story despite our every instinct to turn away. The movie isn't juiced-up with an evocative score or other device that might render it a more traditional fictional film; it occasionally looks almost like a documentary, having that kind of honesty and realism about it. But it also might make moviegoers wonder why they're watching this odd creature and his seemingly dead-end tale when there is, on the face of it, little appealing about him or his story. The answer is that Bubby exerts that perverse fascination because anything is possible at any moment. But filmgoers will have to be in the right mood, and be of the right constitution, to endure this skillful if eerie experience.—*Thomas Quinn*

SWEET ANGEL MINE 1/2

Starring Oliver Milburn, Margaret Langrick, Alberta Watson and Anna Massey. Directed by Curtis Radclyffe. Written by Sue Mahen and Tim Willocks. Produced by Sam Taylor and Christopher Zimmer. No distributor set. Horror. Not yet rated. Running time: 88 min.

For a few minutes, because of the beauty of the scenery and competence of the players, it seems possible "Sweet Angel Mine" will have something to say. Not so. This movie swiftly reveals itself as another distasteful slice of standard horror, built around sexual malice and incestuous murder.

Oliver Milburn makes the best of his part as a stranger on a motorbike who finds himself ensnared by a trio of unbalanced women living in backwoods isolation on an island off Nova Scotia. He projects enough suitable cockiness to suggest why he hangs around longer than is clearly safe, but still nothing saves the plot from stepping into the old cliches that pave the path of most traditional things-that-go-bump-in-the-night terror flicks. The three women passing their nasty little secret through three generations are played with suitably different levels of decay. Margaret Langrick tries to maintain credibility as the traumatized adolescent, while Alberta Watson ("Spanking the Monkey") can rely on her sexy, bruised beauty as a hemmed-in mother, and Anna Massey can just go for broke as a spooky grandmother.—*Bridget Byrne*

DEACON BRODIE ★★

Starring Billy Connolly and Catherine McCormack. Directed by Philip Saville. Written by Simon Donald. Produced by Greg Brenman. No distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 91 min.

It's easy to see why the Scottish comedian Billy Connolly considered the title role of "Deacon Brodie" a rich opportunity to strut his stuff in an unexpected way but, unfortunately, this character study fails to resonate as much beyond a curious aside. It's a respectable attempt at depicting in an affectionate and sympathetic manner a disreputable man, but its fondness for its hero seems sorely misplaced.

Convincingly set in 1788 Edinburgh, the story holds relevance for the modern age, but Simon Donald's screenplay takes a confused path through the narrative, destroying most elements of surprise and bringing a numbing ambiguity to feelings for the central characters. Brodie's slippery slide—from town worthy, master cabinet maker and city councilor to a bankrupt criminal sentenced to swing on a gibbet of his own design—is too early understood, and no ironic twist ending can restore excitement. A need to be liked holds sway so that the gallows humor, literal at times, is underplayed, while the truly dark twists and turns are skirted uneasily.

All the cast, under Philip Saville's vigorous direction, are at ease with their roles, often offering more than the screenplay hands them. The ambience of 18th-century life is captured without need for lingering on period objects, and the costumes by Caroline Harris give a realistic sense of the discomforts of going around in periwigs and ruffles and provocative decolletage. Gracing this era of the ultimate wonderbra is Catherine McCormack ("Braveheart"), as the whore who loves the anti-hero hero and, occasionally, vice versa. Her role is thankless, but she offers not just beauty but also touching moments, which give Connolly more chance to expose Brodie's complexity than he finds elsewhere.—*Bridget Byrne*

THE BRUCE ★1/2

Starring Sandy Welsh, Brian Blessed and Oliver Reed. Directed and produced by Bob Carruthers and David McWhinnie. Written by Bob Carruthers and Michael Leighton. A Cromwell production; no U.S. distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 110 min.

Hoping, perhaps, to capitalize on the popularity and success of last year's "Braveheart," which chronicled the adventures of Scottish patriot William Wallace, "The Bruce" looks at the succeeding chapter in Scottish history: the tale of Robert Bruce, who defeated the armies of England's King Edward I and won independence for Scotland. Amateurishly staged and without the financial resources of the Oscar winner, "The Bruce" pales by comparison, failing to generate any of the excitement or romance of Mel Gibson's spectacular "Hollywood" film.

American audiences, unfamiliar with Isles history, might have trouble following the story, but the bigger problem is how lightweight the whole enterprise feels. Battle sequences and crowd scenes in particular suffer from schooldays staging, unconvincing extras and a general air of inauthenticity. Background music is far too prominent, nor does the acting raise the level of the film. Although comparisons might seem unfair, Sandy Welsh in the lead lacks the charisma of a Gibson, Dee Hepburn proves far too contemporary as Bruce's wife, and Brian Blessed makes for an overly mannered Edward I.—*Jean Oppenheimer*

KIDS RETURN ★★1/2

Starring Masanobu Ando and Ken Kaneko. Directed and written by Takeshi Kitano. Produced by Masayuki Mori, Yasushi Tsuge and Takio Yoshida. No distributor set. Drama. Japanese-language; subtitled. Not yet rated. Run time: 106 min.

In "Kids Return," Takeshi Kitano has created a depiction of modern youth that steps beyond its specific culture to pick up on many universal truths about young people in an interlinked world. Although not as alienated from mainstream society as the drug-addicted dropouts shown in the Scottish film "Trainspotting," the characters in this film also are shown to be affected by the struggle of the young to feel a sense of worth and individuality in a world that sells conformity and success, but often at the expense of moral values.

Using almost throwaway humor and a sense of prevailing sadness, Kitano follows emotionally deprived young men as they fail to find their dreams, revealing the way they are trapped once again in worlds full of discipline but not morality or kindness. Against a backdrop of shabby modern decor and unspontaneous pleasure, the youths move in joyless limbo. Their only hope of happiness seems to lie in true friendship. Not a bad point of view to take away from a film about apparent no-hopers.—*Bridget Byrne*

MONTREAL

RIVER STREET ★★★★

Starring Aden Young, Bill Hunter and Essie Davis. Directed by Tony Mahood. Written by Philip Ryall. Produced by Lynda House. A House and Moorhouse production; no distributor set. Comedy. Not yet rated. Running time: 89 min.

It would be hard to heap too many accolades on Tony Mahood's "River Street," a delicious Australian romp that works as film noir, comedy and parable alike. Juxtaposing humor and fatalism, this fable of an avaricious real estate agent who's taught the lesson of a lifetime is a rare gem. Inviting comparisons to "Muriel's Wedding," with which it shares its producers, "River Street" manages to be terrifically funny and earnestly touching at the same time.

As Ben, the smooth-talking agent on the make, Aden Young is so slick he makes Johnnie Cochran look like a naif. Ben seems to have it all: a comfortable income, a relationship with his boss's daughter, a life of luxury. But, when Ben accidentally breaks the window of his own Mercedes and the police mistakenly arrest him, a series of mishaps forces him to reevaluate his life.

After assaulting the cops, Ben finds himself sentenced to a volunteer term at the local community center. There, its lovely young director, Wendy (Essie Davis), begins to enlighten—and attract—him. When Ben discovers that the center sits on a valuable strip of riverfront property, he initiates a real estate swindle to please his cutthroat

boss (Bill Hunter, so memorable in "Muriel's Wedding" and "Strictly Ballroom"). Torn between duty to his boss and responsibility to Wendy and the center, Ben makes the biggest decision of his life.

Everything is top notch in this debut outing by Tony Mahood, who apprenticed as P.J. Hogan's assistant director on "Muriel's Wedding." Impeccably cast, intelligently written and tightly helmed, "River Street" ought to be a stateside favorite.—*Lael Loewenstein*

LIBERTARIAS ★★

Starring Ana Belen, Ariadna Gil and Victoria Abril. Directed by Vicente Aranda. Written by Vicente Aranda and Jose Luis Guarner. Produced by Andres Vicente Gomez. No distributor set. Drama. Spanish-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 125 min.

Well-crafted but simplistic, Vicente Aranda's paean to strong women should attract the same audiences that went for the equally sentimental and didactic "Antonia's Line." Taking place in 1936 during the Spanish Civil War, "Libertarias" opens with a convent being shut down by Republican soldiers. Instead of going home, one of the nuns, the innocent Maria ("Celestial Clockwork's" Ariadna Gil), decides instead to hook up with a feminist brigade called The Free Women, who are intent on fighting on the frontlines against Franco's fascists. She finds love, freedom and tragedy in the process.

Director/co-writer Aranda ("Lovers") does get at the immediacy of war and its frequent absurdities, but his take on the obstacles women faced during that time is obvious. All of his women, including Ana Belen as a lesbian soldier and Victoria Abril ("French Twist") as a hot-blooded widow, are strong and positive figures; all of the men are either villainous or ineffectual. Aranda should have offered a more complex view of the war's gender battles.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

THE DESTINY OF MARTY FINE ★

Starring Alan Gelfant, Catherine Keener and James LeGros. Directed by Michael Hacker. Written by Michael Hacker and Mark Ruffalo. Produced by Jeffrey Miller and Michael Hacker. No distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 85 min.

This painfully amateurish black-and-white drama about punch-drunk ex-boxer Marty Fine (Alan Gelfant) is notable only for the cameo appearances of some name actors who should have known better, including Michael Ironside as a mob boss; Catherine Keener ("Walking and Talking") as the pugilist's ex-girlfriend; and James LeGros ("My New Gun") as one of Marty's low-class acquaintances.

Gelfant gives an irritatingly one-note performance as Marty, who stubbornly and stupidly harbors hopes of becoming a boxing manager. But he's bereft of money, out of work and being pressured to commit a hit for a sleazy crime lord (Norman Fell). More "The Killing of a Chinese Bookie" than "Pulp Fiction," "The Destiny of Marty Fine" lacks Cassevetes' rigor or Tarantino's verve. It wants desperately to be the new "Death of a Salesman," with Marty as the symbol of what an uncaring America discards, but it doesn't come close to achieving that lofty goal.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

TO SPEAK THE UNSPEAKABLE—THE MESSAGE OF ELIE WIESEL ★★★

Narrated by William Hurt. Directed and written by Judit Elek. Produced by Richard-Martin Jordan, Michel Ferry, Stephane Singier and Kati Kemeny. No distributor set. Documentary. Not yet rated. Running time: 105 min.

Less a conventional biography of the Holocaust survivor/philosopher than an impressionistic account of Elie Wiesel's return to his Romanian home town of Sighetand to the site of the Auschwitz concentration camp, "To Speak the Unspeakable" brings Wiesel's incisive writing to life through William Hurt's sensitive readings.

Dedicated to making sure the horrors of the Holocaust are never forgotten, the Boston-based Nobel Peace Prize winner in 1994 went back to Romania to glean what he could of his past and to retrace the path that led from his home to the death camps. Mixing archival footage, photos of the young Wiesel and even clips from the Yiddish films that show small-town shtetl life in Europe, "To Speak the Unspeakable"—directed by Hungarian-Jewish survivor Judit Elek—succeeds in its attempt to get at the demons and dreams that guide Wiesel on his quest. It's overlong but indelible.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

SLEEPING MAN ★★

Starring Ahn Sung-ki, Christine Hakim and Koji Yakusho. Directed by Kohei Oguri. Written by Kiyoshi Kenmochi and Kohei Oguri. Produced by Hiroshi Fujikura and Munashi Masuzeka. No distributor set. Drama. Japanese-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 103 min. Won a Special Grand Prix of the Jury at the Montreal fest.

Carefully composed to a fault, "Sleeping Man" literally refers to that—a man who's been in a coma since a mountain-climbing accident. His parents tend to his needs, his best friend visits to ruminate about their relationship, and various villagers continue their existence while he lies unconscious at home.

In symbolic terms, Kohei Oguri's meticulous direction is meant to convey the sleeping man's influence over the lives of others, but it's more likely to put its audience to sleep. There's no tension, no differentiation among the villagers (except for an Indonesian bar girl, played by Christine Hakim, who knew the sleeping man), and precious little drama. Everything unfolds oh-so-slowly and, although Osame Maruike's cinematography is gorgeous, the film doesn't go beyond its artful imagery. "Sleeping Man" is serious cinema, but it's for those who love pretty pictures, not motion pictures.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

PUDDING CHOMEUR ★★

Starring Chloe Ste-Marie, Louis-Philippe Davignon-Daigneault and Francois Leveille. Directed and written by Gilles Carle. Produced by Claude Gagnon and Yuri Yushimura-Gagnon. An Aska Films production; no distributor set. Comedy. French-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 100 min.

There's a reckless insouciance to this farce by Quebecois director Gilles Carle ("Blood of the Hunter"). Nevertheless, "Pudding Chomeur"—an inexpensive meringue dessert common among Quebec's down-and-out; "chomeur" means unemployed—has too many ingredients for its own good. It follows the exploits of Yo-Yo (Chloe Ste-Marie) and her young ward Alphonse (Louis-Philippe Davignon-Daigneault), well-meaning misfits who operate a faith-healing service.

It would take more than a road map to follow the plot, however; characters come and go without reason, and events happen without motivation. At times, the burlesque tone, neon costumes and mood of general frivolity recall some of Pedro Almodovar's work. Technical aspects, including Pierre Letarte's photography, are first rate. Yet, as with a meringue, there is less here than meets the eye.—*Lael Loewenstein*

LULU ★

Starring Kim Lieu, Clark Johnson and Michael Rhoades. Directed by Srinivas Krishna. Written by Srinivas Krishna and Robert Armstrong. Produced by Robert Bergman and Srinivas Krishna. No distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 90 min.

Srinivas Krishna's sophomore outing doesn't have a scintilla of the wit and cutting satire of his fine 1991 debut "Masala." Moving from his own East Indian background in that film to that of his lead actress (Kim Lieu), who plays Khuyen, a Vietnamese woman, is gutsy, but Krishna doesn't back up the move.

Nominally, "Lulu" concerns itself with Khuyen, her ineffectual husband Lucky (Michael Rhoades)—who has nicknamed her Lulu—and Clive (Clark Johnson), an old pal of Lucky's who's just out of jail. As the film meanders from dull scene to even duller scene, the acting is generally atrocious, particulary Lieu in the lead; she seems to be reading her dialogue phonetically. And the whole thing is set in a Toronto where no one behaves logically or believably.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

L'ELEVE ★★

Starring Vincent Cassel, Caspar Salmon and Jean-Pierre Marielle. Directed by Olivier Schatzky. Written by Olivier Schatzky and Eve Deboise. Produced by Josee Banabent Loiseau. No distributor set. Drama. French-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 92 min. Won the best director prize at the Montreal fest.

Based on "The Pupil," a short story by Henry James, "L'Eleve" revolves around

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the warm relationship between Julien (Vincent Cassel), a neophyte tutor, and Morgan (Caspar Salmon), a precocious, sickly 11-year-old boy he is hired to teach. The two quickly grow close, but their ties are frayed by Morgan's family, whose wealth and social standing are soon revealed as pretense.

Although its late 19th-century French societal setting is fascinating, "L'Eleve" fails to engage the emotions. It's never apparent why Morgan takes to Julien or why Julien becomes so attached to the boy. Had the film delved more into the sad plight of Morgan's penniless parents (Jean-Pierre Marielle and Caroline Cellier) and his unmarried sisters, "L'Eleve" could have been gripping. That type of desperate social climbing, and the prejudices against aspirants to upper-class life, is what the movie should have been about. Instead, it's tepid melodrama.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

WOMEN ★★

Starring Michal Bat-Adam, Amos Lavi and Ilor Harpaz. Directed and written by Moshe Mizrahi. Produced by Michael Sharfstein and Amitan Manelzon. No distributor set. Drama. Hebrew-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 98 min.

The latest film from Israeli director Moshe Mizrahi ("Madame Rosa") is a static tale of religious traditions and their impact on a loving marriage in 19th-century Jerusalem. Jacob (Amos Lavi) and Rebecca (Michal Bat-Adam) have been married for more than a decade, but their union has not produced any children. That doesn't perturb Jacob—who accepts that fact as a manifestation of God's will—but Rebecca blames herself and decides on the unthinkable: finding a virginal young woman (Ilor Harpaz) who will bear her husband a child, a practice permitted by ancient Orthodox Jewish law, which mandates procreation.

Though "Women," based on the Yehuda Burla novel "Bikdusha," deals with jealousy and fierce emotions, its style is overly muted. It fails to exude atmosphere—it could have been set decades later—or tension. And the actors, though fine, have little to do.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

TORONTO

SCHIZOPOLIS ★★1/2

Starring Steven Soderbergh, Betsy Brantley and David Jensen. Directed and written by Steven Soderbergh. Produced by John Hardy. A Northern Arts release. Satire. Unrated. Running time: 96 min. Opens in April.

"Schizopolis" is Steven Soderbergh's berserk and uneven attempt to mimic Bunuel's "Un Chien Andalou"; he wants to provoke reaction but he's not quite sure how to go about it. The story—if it can be called that—is something of a comedic attack on the cult of Scientology, here labeled Eventualism and led by one T. Azimuth Schwitters (David Jensen). Soderbergh plays two characters, the put-upon Munson, who works for Schwitters, and Dr. Jeffrey Korczak, a dentist who abruptly falls in love with a patient, "Attractive Woman No. 2."

There's a lot of that type of off-kilter wordplay; "generic greeting" is used instead of "hello," and characters often speak in other languages—French, Italian, Japanese—while being answered in English. Then there's the exterminator Elmo, who has been adopted by a couple who are filming him in his own cinema verite "Clockwork Orange"-like scenarios. Does such absurdity add up to anything? Not really, but there's no denying that Soderbergh is having fun with his "home movie." Stretches are inventive and amusing, but the middle section is aimless. His "raw" technique, lines on the screen, badly lipsynched sound and no credits grow tiresome quickly.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

GRAY'S ANATOMY ★★

Starring Spalding Gray. Directed by Steven Soderbergh. Written by Spalding Gray and Renee Shafransky. Produced by John Hardy. A Northern Arts release. Documentary. Unrated. Running time: 83 min. Opens March 19.

The third feature (after "Swimming to Cambodia" and "Monster in a Box") to be based on a monologue by the versatile Spalding Gray is the least of the trio, mostly because director Steven Soderbergh ("Schizopolis") and Gray have cluttered it with extraneous detail. Once again, Gray sits at a desk and talks to an audience, in this case about an eye problem that prompted thoughts of mortality and led him on a wild goose chase to find an alternative to surgery. He has tried them all, from Christian Scientists to New Age gurus to Filipino psychic healers, and his anecdotes regarding each are hilarious.

The humor, however, onstage was matched with a touching and thoughtful meditation on life and death. But the film has lost some of that. It opens, brilliantly, with a few horrifying accounts of people who've done severe damage to their eyes, but it unnecessarily returns to them to make banal observations on Gray's various endeavors to escape the surgeon's scalpel. Any time that Gray is not onscreen generally is wasted time.

Stylistically, Soderbergh should have left well enough alone, rather than shooting Gray from behind or through screen doors or just taping his voice over backdrops. Audiences that thought Nick Broomfield's direction of "Monster in a Box" intrusive will emerge from "Gray's Anatomy" with even harsher criticism of Soderbergh. Enough of the delightful Gray wit and wisdom remain to propel the film, but with perhaps 20 minutes of the stage production here excised what's left is too glib. Whether Gray and Soderbergh wished to increase the film's commercial chances or just became carried away with camera trickery, the end result has compromised Gray's show and, by extension, his integrity.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

DEEP CRIMSON ★★★★

Starring Regina Orozco, Daniel Gimenez Cacho and Marisa Paredes. Directed by Arturo Ripstein. Written by Paz Alicia Garciadiego. Produced by Miguel Necoechea and Pablo Barbachano. A New Yorker release. Horror. Spanish-language; English subtitles. Unrated. Running time: 114 min. Opens in June.

This lively and daring satirical horror/romance, set in Mexico, concerns a suave womanizing philanderer, Nicholas (Daniel Gimenez Cacho), who seduces Coral (Regina Orozco), a lonely, overweight mother. Coral's insatiable desire to be with him leads her to abandon her home, livelihood and children. It also leads her to become his confederate, obtaining women for him, which ultimately takes them on a bloody rampage.

In this story reminiscent of the famous killing spree of Martha Beck and Raymond Fernandez, who were executed in 1951, director Arturo Ripstein (a former assistant to director Luis Bunuel) shows some of Bunuel's talent for mixing a sacrilegious sense of humor with prankish horror. "Deep Crimson" begins as a clever comedy about a Don Juan who's met a woman whose desires are more voracious than his. But the humor deepens darkly when their game of seducing women and robbing them becomes part of what binds their love, making "Deep Crimson" a smartly funny film about the debasement of romance.—*Kevin Courrier*

FETISHES ★★★

Directed by Nick Broomfield. Produced by Michele D'Acosta and Nick Broomfield. A Cinema Village release. Documentary. Unrated. Running time: 83 min. Opens in April.

A distinct change of pace for British documentarian Nick Broomfield ("Heidi Fleiss: Hollywood Madam"), "Fetishes" is less journalistic expose and more travelogue, albeit a distinctly kinky one. Exploring the dynamics of Pandora's Box, a sadomasochistic Manhattan haven run by leather-clad dominatrices, "Fetishes" generally succeeds in getting at the real stories of the people who work at and frequent the place.

The clients are thoughtful and sometimes very sad. With a modicum of archival footage and some explanatory information on the different disciplines—e.g., infantilism, rubber wear—"Fetishes" benefits tremendously from the candidness of its subjects, more willing than most Broomfield interviewees to speak out on camera. Wisely, and atypically, he's let them talk and stayed out of the picture.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

VISITING DESIRE ★★

Starring Lydia Lunch, Kembra Pfahler and Chloe Dzubilo. Directed and produced by Beth B. A B Prods. release. Documentary. Unrated. Running time: 70 min.

In April 1996, filmmaker Beth B ("Two Small Bodies") invited a select and diverse group of people to a New York hotel room for the express purpose of acting out their fantasies on camera. It's an irresistible concept, but "Visiting Desire" doesn't live up

to its theme. Despite opening with a group of psychologists discussing the ramifications of fulfilling one's fantasies, the movie's subjects—including punk performer Lunch, a drag queen, some bisexual women and a skinhead—are as likely to discuss feelings and reactions than do anything concrete involving their purported desires.

That makes for pretty boring cinema verite, especially as a good many of the participants in "Visiting Desire" have little insight into their inner workings. Those fantasies that are carried out are quite mundane; mild domination and masturbatory acts predominate. The film has a few genuine, touching moments, but far too many of them seem staged.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

illtown ★1/2

Starring Michael Rapaport, Lili Taylor, Kevin Corrigan, Isaac Hayes and Tony Danza. Directed and written by Nick Gomez. Produced by David L. Bushell, Larry Meistrich and Donald C. Carter. No distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 97 min.

Nick Gomez, acclaimed for both "Laws of Gravity" and "New Jersey Drive" by critics citing a new talent on the rise, has really come a cropper on "illtown." This couldn't-be-more-appropriately-titled tale of drugs and vendettas is told in such a languid style, with such an emphasis on spiritual anomie and heroin-induced nodding, that the audience is in danger of nodding out. To get the idea, try to imagine Antonioni directing a Tarantino script.

Michael Rapaport ("Metro") plays veteran drug-dealer Dante, whose inferno consists of wanting to have a baby with his girlfriend Mickey ("I Shot Andy Warhol's" Lili Taylor), but the business—being what it is—has sucked him in with its violent ways. Matters become complicated when a betrayed former business partner returns with the heart of an avenging angel. His name (naturally) is Gabriel. "illtown" flies a lot of metaphoric flags, but never once finds a flagpole.—*Kevin Courrier*

TROJAN EDDIE ★★

Starring Stephen Rea, Richard Harris and Sean McGinley. Directed by Gillies Mackinnon. Written by Billy Roche. Produced by Emma Burge, Rod Stoneman, Alan J. Wands, Kevin Menton and Nigel Warren-Green. No distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 105 min.

The title might suggest a comedy about a new line of condoms, but there's no contraception yet invented that keeps moviegoers safe from films like this. "Trojan Eddie" is a tale of blarney about an Irish dupe, Eddie ("Michael Collins'" Stephen Rea), who has the gift of gab for selling household items in makeshift auctions; but, ironically, he doesn't have a pitch worthy enough to prevent his wife from bed-hopping or to convince his girlfriend that he loves her. He's also the stooge for the local "Godfather," John Power (Richard Harris), who has everything that Eddie can only dream of owning. When Eddie's assistant runs off with Power's treasured young bride, along with their dowry money, Eddie is caught between a rock and a hard place as to where to place his loyalties.

For "Trojan Eddie" to work well, Eddie's inventiveness as a carny auctioneer should be the motor of the movie, but with the moping Rea in the role the story grinds to a halt. Rea doesn't have the high spirit of a huckster; he's heavy-spirited and thus ineffectual, and that puts the movie in a blue funk. Harris doesn't summon much life, either; audiences are supposed to believe that the young woman he wishes to wed reminds him of his late wife, yet nothing on his face registers the euphoric bliss of a man recreating his desire for a lost love—his bliss is more like a drunken haze.

Gillies Mackinnon ("Small Faces") directs the film in such a nonchalant and perfunctory manner that one can't even register why Eddie lets his ex-wife back to live with the children. (She doesn't even bother to say hello to them.) "Trojan Eddie" not only doesn't do magic, it barely knows how to do reality.—*Kevin Courrier*

NENETTE ET BONI ★★★

Starring Gregoire Colin and Valeria Bruni-Tedeschi. Directed by Claire Denis. Written by Claire Denis and Jean-Pol Fargeau. Produced by Georges Benayoun and Francoise Guglielmi. No distributor set. Drama. French-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 103 min.

Claire Denis' fluid and lyrical style of storytelling in "Nenette et Boni" (which won the Golden Leopard best picture award at the Locarno fest) has an enrapturing quality. It takes audiences so far into the inner dynamics of a brother and sister, who have reunited for the first time in years, that they can practically read the duo's thoughts in the sway of their bodies. There's not much exposition, but the mere suggestiveness of the moviemaking makes one feel as thought caught in a strangely erotic dream.

Boni (Gregoire Colin) is a 19-year-old who works in a pizzeria in Marseilles; he's had a chip on his shoulder since his mother's death and his hated father's disappearance. But that chip proves as brittle as a pizza crust; it begins to crack when his 15-year-old sister, Nenette (Valeria Bruni-Tedeschi), escapes from boarding school to visit him when she becomes pregnant. Her arrival also stirs up the specter of their father, who re-enters both of their lives.

Colin gives a subtle performance of some skill, because he doesn't have many lines. Bruni-Tedeschi provides an unsentimental turn that never appeals for sympathy. (Both actors won Silver Leopard best acting prizes at the Locarno Film Festival.) Alice Houri and Vincent Gallo are fine as a loving couple who run a bakery. (Boni has violently erotic fantasies toward the baker's wife he never acts on.) Although the script sometimes wobbles a bit, and certain key plot developments are left vague, "Nenette et Boni" is an otherwise absorbing film that hefts quite an emotional kick.—*Kevin Courrier*

THE LEADING MAN ★★★

Starring Jon Bon Jovi, Lambert Wilson, Thandie Newton and Anna Galiena. Directed by John Duigan. Written by Virginia Duigan. Produced by Bertil Ohlsson and Paul Raphael. A Legacy release. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 100 min. Opens in '97.

In this clever tale of infidelity and seduction among London's theatre world, Lambert Wilson plays Felix Webb, a hot playwright who's having an affair with ingenue Hilary ("Jefferson in Paris'" Thandie Newton) while his jealous Italian wife Elena ("The Hairdresser's Husband's" Anna Galiena) fumes at home. A chance conversation with Robin Grange ("Moonlight & Valentino's" Jon Bon Jovi), the Brad Pitt-like American star of his play, gives Webb an idea. If the actor will seduce his wife, the pressure will be off Webb to make any immediate marital decision. The Yank agrees, for a price, but his motives are suspect, perhaps even malevolent.

"The Leading Man" sounds like a castoff Tom Stoppard farce, but it unfolds considerably better. Director John Duigan ("The Journey of August King") and writer Virginia Duigan take the time to tweak the usual thespian insecurities, superstitions and penchant for gossiping, but paying reverential tribute to the ideal of the theatre is not their cup of tea. There's a nasty undertone to "The Leading Man," which unsparingly documents the devious games that lovers and friends can play. None of it, though, would work without Bon Jovi at its center; the musician-turned-actor has genuine presence and charm. "The Leading Man" is occasionally heavy handed and it's not always persuasive—Webb's play doesn't seem to be as brilliant as everyone in the movie says it is—but it's fresh and unpredictable. And it's a movie that audiences won't figure out before the final credits.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

MARIAN ★

Starring Stefan Ferko, Milan Cifra and Tereza Zajickova. Directed by Petr Vaclav. Written by Petr Vaclav and Jan Sikl. Produced by Kristina Petrova and Petr Vaclav. No distributor set. Drama. Czech-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 109 min.

Petr Vaclav's feature debut, which won a Silver Leopard at the Locarno fest, is a humanistic attempt to show how an abandoned gypsy boy, incarcerated since age 3, grows up to be a criminal because the institutionalized violence and abuse to which he's subjected corrupts his wild spirit and destroys his gypsy heritage. Vaclav might have good intentions but, unfortunately, that doesn't make "Marian" a worthy successor to Truffaut's "The 400 Blows." Vaclav lurches from one scene to the next without giving the material (or the characters) dramatic shape or clarity. The film becomes so unimpressionable that, when one character turns up dead, a moviegoer is likely to forget who he was when he was alive.—*Kevin Courrier*

BOXOFFICE REVIEWS

April 1997

DONNIE BRASCO ★★★

Starring Al Pacino, Johnny Depp and Anne Heche. Directed by Mike Newell. Written by Paul Attanasio. Produced by Mark Johnson, Barry Levinson, Louis DiGiaimo and Gail Mutrux. A TriStar release. Drama. Rated R for some strong graphic violence, pervasive strong language and brief nudity and sexuality. Running time: 121 min.

When Lefty Ruggiero (Al Pacino), a sad-sack minor-league mobster, gets time away from his kiss-ass duties to the wiseguys, he likes to slump in his lounger watching nature movies—the kind in which beast eats beast. We get the picture, but the wild animals on Lefty's TV screen are on the whole a prettier bunch than the gangsters who make up his particular rat pack—or they were before agent Joseph D. Pistone, aka Donnie Brasco (a sweet-faced Johnny Depp), came along. We can forgive the wild animals their natural habits, but it's hard to develop any sympathy for the film's nastily manipulative humans, despite the best efforts of all involved in this newest slant on the mean-streets crowd (based on the real-life experiences of Pistone, who moled his way into the mob).



Johnny Depp and Al Pacino in TriStar's "Donnie Brasco."

Like its title character, a man who became a criminal in order to nab the bad guys, the latest from director Mike Newell ("Four Weddings and a Funeral") wants it both ways. It tries to get moviegoers hooked but is a bit too cool to do so. It wants you to be sucker-punched yet keep your reason. It expertly recreates scenes of late 1970s New York and Florida yet, careful not to seem time warped, it somehow downplays period detail, despite a proliferation of pointed shirt collars. It's kind of grim, yet full of unkind humor that is nevertheless funny. It's gruesome and violent but more interested in motivation than action; at times, it's almost turgid as it dwells on character at the expense of all else.

Like its protagonist, "Donnie Brasco" doesn't really know where its heart lies. It's not sure about what really counts and so ultimately it doesn't much matter in the vast schemes of things. Pacino, his face now almost the perfect mask of comedy and tragedy, clearly relishes this chance to be scuzzy, but he lets rip only now and then. Stuck with portraying a man who must keep his true feelings undercover, Depp is convincing but not as fascinating as he usually is; the script denies his character full-bodied complexity. Together onscreen, these two naturally compelling actors are fine, but their pairing is just missing some *je ne sais quoi*, so this Mandalay production seems to be conjuring tricks rather than real magic, a key flaw in a film that pins its best hopes of uniqueness on the characters' cross-generational, cross-wired relationship. Anne Heche ("Walking and Talking") does her best with a long-suffering wife role, and seasoned faces like Bruno Kirby, James Russo and Michael Madsen strut their stuff with comfortable ease as various levels of evildoer.—***Bridget Byrne***

ROSEWOOD ★★★

Starring Jon Voight, Ving Rhames, Don Cheadle, Esther Rolle and Michael Rooker. Directed by John Singleton. Written by Gregory Poirier. Produced by Jon Peters. A Warner release. Drama. Rated R for violence and some sexuality. Running time: 140 min.

John Singleton's newest release examines an appalling slice of American history, an actual incident everyone would rather forget or deny. In his fourth film, Singleton ("Higher Learning") tells the story of Rosewood, a flourishing black town in central Florida, which in 1923 was burned to the ground by whites in a neighboring burg. Fueled by a white woman's fabricated story that she was raped by a black stranger, a mob declares war on an unsuspecting community.

There are drawbacks the audience must endure in this film, one being the monotone drawl of Ving Rhames ("Striptease") in his portrayal of Mann, a World War I veteran passing through. Although Rhames' acting style added character depth to his earlier performance as a menacing mobster in "Pulp Fiction," it staggers the pace in this film. The lone good white man, John Wright ("Midnight Cowboy's" John Voight), jumps back and forth between what is right and what is expected of him. Ultimately, he comes off as a wishy-washy Schindler, only to save the day at the film's end. Another exasperating character is Sheriff Walker ("The Trigger Effect's" Michael Rooker). Screaming his lines throughout the film, the sheriff is a first-hand witness to all the bloodshed, knowing all along the assaulted female is lying; yet he stands idly by as the horrific events occur.

Despite these problems, and despite a plot that's mired with inconsistencies, the film's story is so powerful that the whole proves nothing less than engrossing. Comparisons to today's society can't help but be made while watching "Rosewood"; although moviegoers might wish to leave the theatre thinking we are living in a better time, they might not be able to. This New Regency production is meant to be a rallying cry, calling attention to the unthinkable acts of which people are capable, and which should not be forgotten.—***Jose Martinez***

COSI ★★★

Starring Ben Mendelsohn, Barry Otto, Toni Collette, Rachel Griffiths and Aden Young. Directed by Mark Joffe. Written by Louis Nowra. Produced by Richard Brennan and Timothy White. A Miramax release. Comedy. Not yet rated. Running time: 101 min.

It understandably takes a while to enter the spirit of this Australian comedy about a production of Mozart's "Cosi fan tutte" put on by the patients of an insane asylum. To the filmmakers' credit, rather than take the easy way out by making the inmates simply

endearingly wacky, they allow the audience to recognize that these people have serious problems that aren't at all funny. But this dose of reality does make it difficult to laugh at the proceedings; conversely, the somber side is never lingered on long enough to produce significant pathos. Nevertheless, as the opera's seemingly impossible production begins to take form, the movie audience is eventually able to warm to these characters, who flourish after being given an outlet for their previously untapped enthusiasm and creativity.

The perennially out-of-work and wannabe-director Lewis ("The Efficiency Expert's" Ben Mendelsohn) thinks he's gotten a break when he's given charge of this motley Mozart. But, of course, he gets more than he's bargained for when he finds that his cast is comprised of a frenetically bossy and overzealous operetta-lover; a vain, grating, obnoxious crone who makes unwelcome overtures; a withdrawn, broken-hearted woman with suicidal tendencies; an introverted heroine junkie; and an antagonistic pyromaniac. Lewis also has to deal with his girlfriend Lucy ("Jude's" Rachel Griffiths), who is none too pleased with the amount of time he's putting into his work; he also fears that his best friend ("Hotel de Love's" Aden Young) might be comforting Lucy a little too much. Lewis soon sees that the production he is putting on, which is about testing women's fidelity, might be paralleling his own life. On top of this, Lewis must fight the romantic feelings he has toward Julie ("Muriel's Wedding's" Toni Collette), a recovering addict and the only true talent in his troupe; she has the proverbial voice of an angel and her quirky, warm personality is an enticing change from no-nonsense Lucy. Performances all around are good, but the construct isn't really light enough for comedy, nor dark enough for black humor, leaving audiences just a little ambivalent.—*Christine James*

DANGEROUS GROUND ★★1/2

Starring Ice Cube and Elizabeth Hurley. Directed by Darrell James Roodt. Written by Greg Latter and Roodt. Produced by Gillian Gorfil and Darrell James Roodt. A New Line release. Drama. Rated R for strong violence, drug use and language, and for some nudity. Running time: 92 min.

Despite its laconic leading man, "Dangerous Ground" zips along in the confidently stylish hands of South African director and co-writer Darrell James Roodt ("Cry, the Beloved Country"). Sporting over-the-top irony mixed with heavy-handed indignation, this action/adventure rap is about an African returning to his roots after growing up in America's Oakland.

Ice Cube, chunky but self-assured as the reluctant visitor named Vusi who is transformed into an action hero, brings an odd but not unappealing casualness to his role as the homecomer who finds mean streets and drug cultures have no boundaries. Journeying first to his village birthplace to honor his dead father, he finds little to relate to in the local tribal customs and can no longer understand the ways and language of his elders or even his dutiful but angry middle sibling. But his American slang, style and humor is also out of kilter with the city streets of Johannesburg where, in search of his missing younger brother, he finds a newly liberated, post-apartheid society running too hard in the fast lane in the wrong direction.



Ice Cube and Elizabeth Hurley in New Line's "Dangeraus Ground."

Despite dialogue that's often too explicit, both literally and figuratively, the film speeds along an awkward path between conventional hardball slash-and-crash and acute insight into an emerging culture—but at least it speeds boldly. Roodt finds excellent visuals in both the rural and urban landscapes of his native land and draws striking performances from his international cast, which includes England's Eli- zabeth Hurley ("Passenger 57") as the lost brother's strung-out lady and Harlem-born Ving Rhames ("Striptease") as an evil Nigerian drug lord, as well as Ethiopian Sechaba Morajele and South African Eric Miyeni as Visu's siblings. But, essentially, though the film mixes up its visuals and booms over its score with real attitude, it is just another example of violence prevailing over all else.—*Bridget Byrne*

FOOLS RUSH IN ★★★

Starring Matthew Perry, Salma Hayek, Jon Tenney and Jill Clayburgh. Directed by Andy Tennant. Written by Katherine Reback and Joan Taylor. Produced by Doug Draizin. A Columbia release. Romantic comedy. Rated PG-13 for sensuality and brief language. Running time: 106 min.

The title "Fools Rush In" offers reviewers an almost irresistible chance to trash an honorable attempt at romantic comedy. Although it's true that brainless fans of TV "Friends" star Matthew Perry might be the only ones rushing to see this film, it has some moments of genuine feeling that other audiences would also enjoy.

PREVIOUSLY REVIEWED MARCH/APRIL RELEASES

In light of our continuing commitment to bring you reviews as early as possible, we now provide a reader guide to upcoming releases we've already critiqued. The alphabetical list below notes the issue of BOXOFFICE in which the review appeared, gives its star rating, and provides updated distributor and release date information.

"All Over Me" ★★★1/2: Fine Line, 4/25 NY/LA/SF; see Feb. 1997.
"Brassed Off" ★★★1/2: Miramax, 4/25; see March 1997.
"Crash" ★★: Fine Line, 3/21; see July 1996.
"Daytrippers" ★★★1/2: CFP, 3/7 exp; see Aug. 1996.
"Drunks" ★1/2: Northern Arts, 3/14 NY; see Dec. 1996.
"Female Perversions" ★★: October, 3/28 NY/LA; see Nov. 1996.
"Flamenco" ★★★: New Yorker, 4/4 excl; see Nov. 1995.
"Good Luck" ★★1/2: East West, 3/7 ltd, 4/4 exp; see March 1997.
"Kama Sutra" ★★: Trimark, 3/7 ltd; see Jan. 1997.
"Love and Other Catastrophes" ★★★: Fox Searchlight, 3/28; Aug. 1996.
"Madame Butterfly" ★★★: Arrow, 3/1 L.A.; see Aug. 1996.
"Mon Homme" ★★★: Artificial Eye, 3/7 NY; see March 1997.
"Nothing Personal" ★★★1/2: Trimark, spring; see July 1996.
"The Quiet Room" ★★★: Fine Line, 3/21 NY, 4/18 exp; see March 1997.
"The Sadness of Sex" ★★: Tara, 3/14 L.A.; see Feb. 1997.
"Salut Cousin!" ★★★1/2: Seventh Art, March undated; see Dec. 1996.
"Sleepover" ★: Artistic License, 3/10 NY; see March 1997.
"The Van" ★★: Fox Searchlight, 3/14; see Aug. 1996.
"Without Air" ★★1/2: Phaedra, March undated; see Aug. 1996.

Perry stars as Alex, who while planning to open a Las Vegas nightclub for his firm has a one-night stand with the Mexican-born Isabelle ("From Dusk Till Dawn's" Salma Hayek). She vanishes after their impulsive romp but returns three months later to tell Alex she's pregnant with his baby. Alex decides to marry her, but their marriage sinks because of their dramatically different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds. Both of them must finally decide if they can make a fresh start.

Based on a true love story about producer Doug Draizin and his wife, co-producer Anna Maria Davis, the Katherine Reback/Joan Taylor screenplay is chockful of needless stereotypes involving Isabelle's huge Hispanic family and Alex's WASP parents. Isabelle is portrayed as the classic Latin spitfire, bewitching Alex with her uninhibited dancing as she cooks in the kitchen. When she gets mad, she screams at him in rapid Spanish. Meanwhile, Alex's parents—whose conservative outfits shout "preppy"—turn up their Presbyterian noses at Isabelle's Catholicism.

Despite these cliches, Alex and Isabelle's relationship becomes more interesting as the movie goes along, and becomes particularly poignant when they split up. Perry makes a credible everyman, but he's oddly sexless in the lead. Hayek dominates the screen in one of the more commanding women's roles audiences are likely to see. Isabelle more than shares the action with Alex, which is the key to satisfying screen romance. (One hopes other filmmakers will note Hayek's talent and use her in roles for which ethnicity is irrelevant.) Jill Clayburgh is the funniest supporting performer, bringing a droll wit to her brief part as Perry's mom. Ultimately, this is a pleasant date movie that succeeds more with romance than comedy, although there are a few visuals that offer a chuckle at—naturally—Las Vegas' expense.—***Carole Glines***

DAY AND DATE: APRIL

BROKEN ENGLISH ★★★

Starring Rade Serbedzija, Aleksandra Vujcic and Julian Arahanga. Directed by Gregor Nicholas. Written by Gregor Nicholas, Johanna Pigott and Jim Salter. Produced by Robin Scholes. A Sony Classics release. Drama. Rated NC-17 for explicit sexuality (being appealed). Running time: 91 min. Opens in April.

Given its Romeo and Juliet plotting and the NC-17 question, moviegoers might expect this New Zealand film's "broken english" to consist of moans and exaltations. Instead, it refers to the second language spoken by the film's three main characters: a sultry Croatian immigrant, Nina (newcomer Aleksandra Vujcic); her angry and domineering father, Ivan ("Before the Rain's" Rade Serbedzija); and the robust Eddie ("Once Were Warriors'" Julian Arahanga), a Maori local who falls in love with Nina and over whom daughter and dad come to savage contretemps.



Aleksandra Vujcic stars in Sony Classics' "Braken English."

The setting is exotic, but the story is familiar: Disadvantaged natives and poor newcomers strike up conflict over the little that they have. And that conflict here is almost offputtingly real: "Broken English" doesn't take a comfortable dad-will-be-won-over approach. Ivan's idea of settling a debate is to wield a baseball bat (as he does with Eddie) or hold someone under a violent form of house arrest (as he does with Nina). Although the movie indicates the reason for the Croat's fury is the deadly treatment of his people in the much-missed homeland he had to flee (Ivan watches tapes of atrocities as he drinks beer), ultimately Serbedzija's character proves to be just as racist as the Serbs.

That truncates the film's effectiveness as political oratory, making that distant-carnage element almost unnecessary, and the father's rage burns out of audiences whatever feeling of romance the lusty assignations of Eddie and Nina engender. Not "Romeo and Juliet," not "Before the Rain," not "Once Were Warriors," although there are elements of each, in the end what "Broken English" becomes is a Down Under "Ghosts of Mississippi": a look into a heart of darkness. As such, the Communicado/Village Roadshow production leaves audiences speaking their own broken english: "yipes."—***Kim Williamson***

THE BEAUTICIAN AND THE BEAST ★★1/2

Starring Fran Drescher, Timothy Dalton and Ian McNeice. Directed by Ken Kwapis. Written by Todd Graff. Produced by Howard W. "Hawk" Koch Jr. and Todd Graff. A Paramount release. Comedy. Rated PG for some mild language and sensuality. Running time: 105 min.

A comedic remake of Margaret Landon's book "Anna and the King of Siam," which tells the true story of a proper English teacher in the 1800s and of her contentious relationship with a brash autocrat, "The Beautician and the Beast" is an update/parody that feels more like "The Sound of Music" meets TV's "The Nanny." Fran Drescher, star of that popular sitcom, transplants her Nanny persona intact into the role of the "teacher"—actually a beauty school instructor from New York, mistakenly dispatched to a tiny European country to tutor the children of an ill-reputed dictator (former Bond man Timothy Dalton). Inevitably, the sassy beautician gives Dalton's iron-fist personality a manicure.

Drescher has created a funny character, and those who haven't reached their Nanny saturation point will enjoy her antics. But the movie seems much too familiar and pat, and the one-joke twist of having a nasal-voiced, big-haired, outrageously-dressed fish-out-of-water replace the original's prim protagonist is not enough—especially when TV watchers can see a similar premise play out every week on the convenient small screen.—***Christine James***

THE PEST ★

Starring John Leguizamo, Jeffrey Jones and Edoardo Ballerini. Directed by Paul Miller. Written by David Bar Katz. Produced by Sid, Jon and Bill Sheinberg. A TriStar release. Comedy. Rated PG-13 for crude sexual, scatological and ethnic humor. Running time: 82 min.

Peter Sellers, Chevy Chase, Eddie Murphy and Jim Carrey are members of an elite multiple-personality-portrayal group. John Leguizamo ("Baz Luhrmann's Romeo & Juliet") is extremely talented and has what it takes to gain membership to that clan, but he hasn't found the right vehicle to gain such entre with "The Pest." Here, Leguizamo plays a con man who becomes a human target for a collector ("Ferris Bueller's Day Off's" Jeffrey Jones) who literally wants the head of a "Latinicus Spicticus" to add to his trophy case. If the con man can survive for 24 hours, however, he gets $50,000—which would come in quite handy, that being the exact amount he owes the Scottish mob. Along with staying alive, he must also keep a dinner date with his girlfriend to meet her parents.

During the course of the film, Leguizamo's character changes into a visually impaired person, a Chinese delivery boy, an African-American boyfriend and a Japanese karaoke crooner/businessman, to name but a few. His funniest bit comes as the delivery boy, who leaves his boss at the

Chinese restaurant puzzling over the slang variation of Chinese he speaks. But this Latin-laced "Ace Ventura" wannabe is likely to be one of the worst films of the year. Its biggest problem: The script and Leguizamo's talents don't mesh, so the actor comes off as more offensive than funny. Also, the filmmakers don't let a good supporting cast pull their own weight; Leguizamo gets all the funny lines, even though he's not the only comedian onscreen.—*Dwayne E. Leslie*

DANTE'S PEAK ★★★★

Starring Pierce Brosnan and Linda Hamilton. Directed by Roger Donaldson. Written by Leslie Bohem. Produced by Gale Anne Hurd & Joseph M. Singer. A Universal release. Action/drama. Rated PG-13 for disaster-related peril and gore. Running time: 108 min.

Not since "Jurassic Park" has a movie so stunningly created, through the use of special effects, such a realistic and terrifying disaster as that of "Dante's Peak," a film about a seemingly idyllic town in the Cascades that's suddenly transformed into a fiery death pit when a long-dormant volcano springs to life. This film is intense, from beginning to end, with an edgy score that keeps you poised at the edge of your seat, anticipating the worst. However, it is a film that works well for many reasons, including its stars' portrayals of realistic characters with warmth and depth and the all-important special effects, in which the filmmakers have apparently spared no expense.



Pierce Brosnan and Linda Hamilton in Universal's "Dante's Peak."

The film stars Pierce Brosnan ("Mars Attacks!") as Harry Dalton, a U.S. Geological Survey vulcanologist who is sent to the Pacific Northwest town of Dante's Peak to explore possible seismic activity. Dalton arrives as the townspeople are celebrating a major event: having been selected as the second-best place to live in the U.S., population under 20,000. In the process, he meets town mayor Rachel Waldo ("The Terminator's" Linda Hamilton), an attractive single mother of two who becomes increasingly concerned about the safety of her beautiful little town.

As a major investor gets ready to sign a lucrative contract, promising new jobs to the townspeople, Dalton discovers alarming signs of life in the mountain that towers over the town. However, in lieu of the impending deal, skeptism prevails—even his own U.S.G.S. team and supervisor do not feel the urgency of raising an alarm. When earthquakes begin to rock the town, however, all hell breaks loose as the residents try to flee for their lives from the encroaching cloud of incandescent gases, rivers of hot lava, the hot ash that begins to rain and the cascading flood of fast-moving melted snow.

Supporting both actors are some of the most magical special effects ever created to portray natural disaster, including 3-D digital computer generated imagery complete with a 3-D lava sequence, a 3-D pyroclastic cloud, some of the largest scale-model miniatures ever built and live-action practical effect shots. Add to that the prowess of producers Gale Anne Hurd ("Aliens") and Joseph Singer ("Daylight") and terror-realm screenwriter Leslie Bohem (also "Daylight"), plus the adventure/drama talents of director Roger Donaldson ("Species"), and the result is a unified effort that succeeds creatively as well. Overall, Dante's Peak is a film that explores not just natural disaster but the human elements involved that contribute to it: the reckless nature of greed, political indifference and volatile nature of human beings when their lives are at stake.—*Pat Kramer*

DAY AND DATE: APRIL

A BROTHER'S KISS ★★★

Starring Justin Pierce, Nick Chinlund, Michael Raynor, Cathy Moriarty, Rosie Perez, Marisa Tomei and John Leguizamo. Directed and written by Seth Zvi Rosenfeld. Produced by Bob Potter and E. Bennet Walsh. A First Look release. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 92 min. Opens in April.

For his first feature, playwright Seth Zvi Rosenfeld has chosen to expand a one-act play he wrote and directed in 1989. The best parts of "A Brother's Kiss" are grounded in a filmic tradition that stretches from "Dead End" to "Boyz in the Hood"; it's a gritty, no-holds-barred look at the lives of underclass urban youth that is gripping, moving and dead-on accurate in its details.



Michael Raynor and Nick Chinlund star in First Look's "A Brother's Kiss."

Set in the East Harlem of the late '70s, the first half of the film follows the fatherless Lex ("Kids'" Justin Pierce) and his kid brother Mick (Nick Chinlund) through the lures and snares of life in a rough neighborhood. Everything about these sequences—scripting, acting, directing, production design—is superb. There is convincing horror lurking in Central Park and real, giddy joy in a ritual Friday night Scrabble game with their dressed-up, boozed-up Mom (Cathy Moriarty).

When the film fast-forwards 15 years, some of that tightness begins to unravel. Mick is now a cop, and Lex is a never-was pro basketball player getting in over his head with a wife and baby. Though there are still some fine performances and truthfully observed moments, the film as a whole ratchets down a few notches. The plot suffers from too many incidents of narrative convenience, poorly motivated action, and occasional and annoying unbelievability. Lex's downward spiral is persuasively portrayed, but the reasons given for his fall, though plausible, are never presented as sufficiently overwhelming.

Some of the problems could lie in the story's genesis as a one-act; it seems, after the skill and talent he displayed in the film's first half, that Rosenfeld was easier on himself than he should have been. That is unfortunate, because this good movie could have been a great one.—***Alex Albanese***

REVIEWS IN BRIEF

I WAS A JEWISH SEX WORKER ★★1/2

Directed and produced by Phillip B. Roth. A Greycat release. Documentary. Unrated. Running time: 75 min.

Originally and more accurately titled "Family / Value," Phillip B. Roth's autobiographical account of his attempt to reconcile his family and his homosexuality is a choppy, unfocused but frequently amusing semi-documentary that should attract gay audiences and open-minded straights. Beginning with Roth engaging in sex with a stranger while his answering machine plays innocuous messages in the background, "I Was a Jewish Sex Worker" revels in its contradictions.

Moviegoers certainly are unlikely to hear Yiddish tunes played over scenes of men participating in a (safe) sex orgy anywhere else. Such sequences are mildly offensive but, essentially, this is a rather conventional film that showcases Roth's past work (which has starred the likes of ex-porn star Annie Sprinkle) interspersed with his ruminations about being gay and some videotaped footage of his colorful Jewish family, notably his two aunts, who influenced him deeply. It's fun but slight.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

TROUBLESOME CREEK: A MIDWESTERN ★★★1/2

Directed, written and produced by Jeanne Jordan and Steven Ascher. An Artistic License release. Documentary. Unrated. Running time: 89 min.

"Troublesome Creek" is more than a sad documentary about a family that must auction their farm in order to pay off a bank note. It's an intimate personal tragedy. When she hears her parents' bank loan is called, filmmaker/narrator Jeanne Jordan returns to their 450-acre farm in Iowa. With her husband/filmmaker Steven Ascher, Jordan captures the turmoil her parents face as they struggle to keep the land that's been in the family for 100 years.

Though there are moments that will rip your heart out, "Troublesome Creek" isn't sentimental or melancholy. Rather, it views misfortune objectively, as part of the inevitable cycle of life and death. It's no surprise that this film is nominated for an Academy Award and won the 1996 Sundance Grand Jury Prize and Audience Award.—*Lea Russo*

GET OVER IT ★★

Starring Deborah Cordell and Troy Morgan. Directed, written and produced by Nick Katsapetses. A Strand release. Comedy. Unrated. Running time: 75 min.

Yet another entry in the "Gen-Xers having relationship trouble" sweepstakes, "Get Over It" is the first feature by writer/director/ producer/actor Nick Katsapetses. Although overly loose and derivative of its many predecessors, the film has moments of humor and some clever insights into its characters.

Troy Morgan is an attractive lead as a young gay man decimated when his lover gives him the heave-ho. In an attempt to cheer him up, Troy's abrasive friend Pam (Deborah Cordell, amusing and annoying at the same time) gathers his friends—many of whom promptly embark on emotional tangles of their own.

The film is nicely lensed in black-and-white, but it take a longish time to go nowhere in particular. In a cast with a sizable contingent of amateurs, Christian Canterbury stands out as a supposedly straight young man who uses the weekend to flirt with his wild side; his less-professional colleagues generally don't embarrass themselves. Though it could have used an edit and a sharper script, "Get Over It" shows promise of better things to come.—*Cathy Thompson-Georges*

STREET CORNER JUSTICE ★

Starring Marc Singer, Kim Lanford, Beverly Leech, "Tiny" Lister Jr., Soon-Teck Oh and Steve Railsback. Directed by Chuck Bail. Written by Stan Berowitz, Gary Kent and Chuck Bail. Produced by Jack Brown and Chuck Bail. A Sunset International release. Action. Rated R. Running time: 102 min.

When a video shows only the end of a one-sided fight, Detective Justus ("Beastmaster" Marc Singer) is accused of using excessive force and has to retire and leave town. He moves to California, where he becomes involved in his neighborhood's struggle with drugs and gangs. When his girlfriend has to be hospitalized, Justus enlists the aid of a karate-kicking prostitute and a 6'7" ex-gangbanger/born-again Christian, and the three head out to accomplish a little street justice.

The film takes entirely too long to reach the plot's heart, and all of the action occurs during the last third. "Street Corner Justice" concentrates too much on establishing the bad of the bad guys: what the gangs can do, how much they can get away with, and their negative impact on the community. By the time the heroes do something, audiences no longer care.—*Dwayne E. Leslie*

PREDICTIONS OF FIRE ★★

Directed and written by Michael Benson. Produced by Michael Benson and Milan Blazin. An Artistic License release. Documentary. Unrated. Running time: 95 min.

As its apocalyptic title suggests, this documentary is far from light entertainment. Shot in 16mm in the newly formed country of Slovenia (formerly part of Yugoslavia), "Predictions of Fire" chronicles the Balkan area's past through German, Italian and French occupations, two world wars and different totalitarian regimes.

Stark images of Nazism, fascism, propaganda and battle bombard the viewer throughout as writer/director Michael Benson covers historical influences. Among dark and drab newsreel footage are flashes of the artistic/political/ideological movement NSK (Neue Slowenische Kunst) and Slovenia's notorious industrial-rock band Laibach, featured in performances and interviews.

"Predictions of Fire" is complex, but also difficult to follow. With the language track alternating from English to German to Serbian, subtitles come and go; there is also a mishmash of techniques employed in filming: newsreel, animation, stock footage and live performances. But the lack of consistency and the intricate subject make viewing tedious. Described as a work about "art, politics and war," "Predictions of Fire" is actually performance art on film, making its most likely audience those with a burning interest in the Balkan troubles and culture.—*Pat Kramer*

THE NOVEMBER CONSPIRACY ★

Starring Paige Turco, George Segal, Elliot Gould, Dirk Benedict, Conrad Janis and Bo Hopkins. Directed by Conrad Janis. Written by Maria Grimm. Produced by Maria Janis and John Michaels. A MiraCon release. Action. Rated R. Running time: 90 min.

The sexual relationship of Jennifer Barron (Paige Turco) turns into a mystery when her lover (Dirk Benedict), a man she thought she knew, is killed while on an assassination mission. The party responsible for his death believes Barron has a disk they need. Meanwhile, everyone she tells about the disk ends up dead; only one person might save her.

The film opens promisingly, with Barron performing martial-arts moves, but they disappear for too long, not returning until wannabe villains attack her and she starts leaving corpses. Also, Barron's killings leave her oddly unaffected; the antics of the bad guys verge on parody; and a previously unstoppable chief evildoer proves too easy a mark for Barron. Lackluster TV-style action scenes fail to live up to the potential of the film's beginning.—*Dwayne E. Leslie*

SHADOW OF IMAGINATION ★★

Starring E. Entezami and H. Panahi. Directed by Hossein Dalir. Written by M.J. Jozani. Iranian-language; English subtitles. A Dena release. Comedy/drama. Unrated. Running time: 101 min.

Although the premise of its story—a man invents an alter ego that then tries to take control of his life—is interesting, "Shadow of Imagination" has major flaws. The first is its all-too-complex narrative. The main character, Hossein, is a terrible would-be poet who invents an imaginary character named Ghombeli, who he blames for his flaws and conversely credits for inspiration when it seems to serve his purposes.

Hossein is weak in spirit; Ghombeli is strong. In hope of winning favor with two women guests at an important party, Hossein paints his shadow as a real man. When a theft occurs at the gathering, however, police begin searching for Ghombeli, and Hossein eventually finds that his invention costs him more than he bargained for.

That premise alone would have made for a diverting film. But, when the story takes twists and turns, the complex plot becomes hard to follow. Combined with serious technical problems and unexplained cultural ambiguities, that makes watching this film more work than most would wish to undertake.—*Pat Kramer*

REVIEWS

SHADOW CONSPIRACY ★★

Starring Charlie Sheen, Donald Sutherland and Linda Hamilton. Directed by George P. Cosmatos. Written by Adi Hasak and Ric Gibbs. Produced by Terry Collis. A Buena Vista release. Thriller. Rated R for violence and language. Running time: 103 min.

The smartest young comer on Capitol Hill, presidential aide Bobby Bishop (Charlie Sheen) becomes entangled in conspiracy via contact with a man who knows too much and then is hard-targeted by a high-level White House bunch who are scheming to control the government. Unable to come in to his mentor, the chief of staff (Donald Sutherland, believable despite a weak script), Bobby and reporter Amanda Givens (Linda Hamilton, given nothing to do but be beautiful) flee from a killer (Stephen Lang) modeled after the Terminator. Both Sam Waterston as the President and Ben Gazzara as the Vice President are quiet and professional, despite their cypher characters.

Sheen is a handsome and resourceful actor, but not enough so to win in this conspiracy of shadows over substance. Like beauty over brains, "Shadow Conspiracy" gives some pleasure as it presents a visually sumptuous movie containing minimal dialogue, no character development and a kindergarten plot. "Shadow Conspiracy," a Cinergi production for Disney's Hollywood Pictures, samples actions from "Three Days of the Condor," "The Conversation," "The Terminator" and "T2," but without their plot intelligence.

Instead, director George P. Cosmatos ("Tombstone") puts all his logic into Joe Alves' production design and Buzz Feitshans IV's cinematography. Shadows, reflections and obstacles abound in dark interiors and night exteriors shot through screens, grids and grills. Action sequences are noteworthy for their spectacular locations: underwater aqueducts, underpasses, elevator shafts, tunnels. Liberal use of high angle shots coupled with numerous satellite surveillance shots remind audiences of the only well-developed plot element: There is no privacy left.—***Karen Achenbach***

ZEUS AND ROXANNE ★1/2

Starring Steve Guttenberg, Kathleen Quinlan and Arnold Vosloo. Directed by George T. Miller. Written by Tom Benedek. Produced by Frank Price, Gene Rosow and Ludi Boeken. An MGM release. Adventure. Rated PG for mild thematic elements. Running time: 98 min.

Harmless kiddie fodder at best, this Rysher production (the company behind "House Arrest") is so full of cutesy acting, cutesy comedy and cutesy animal tricks that it's perfectly innocuous. But the hokey contrivances and lack of imagination in the script by Tom Benedek ("Free Willy") are compounded by the shoddy technique and insipid sensibility of George T. Miller's ("Andre") direction.

The title characters, a dog named Zeus and a dolphin named Roxanne, are given relatively little to do in this dull, predictable combination of story elements cribbed from "The Parent Trap" and "The Incredible Journey." A marine biologist and single mom (Kathleen Quinlan) studies the dolphin's behavior as research toward a university grant. Meanwhile, her two girls (Majandra Delfino and Jessica Howell) try to set her up with a scruffy song composer and widower (Steve Guttenberg), whose pet dog has struck up a friendship with the dolphin. A jealous rival suitor ("Hard Target's" Arnold Vosloo) for her affections and the grant attempts to capture the dolphin by using the dog as bait.

Because the characters are such pat and bland stereotypes, and Miller's style is bereft of pace and conviction, it's like a bad half-hour TV show stretched to more than 90 minutes. When Guttenberg moves away and his dog runs back to try to find his dolphin pal, there's nothing convincing in the plotting or execution to make the film tug at the heart. The later suspense, when Quinlan is trapped underwater in a submersible and the dolphin rushes to help, develops some dramatic urgency, but it's not enough to save the movie.

Charm and wonder are sadly missing in "Zeus and Roxanne," so what's left is a waterlogged adventure that will bore most families.—***Dale Winogura***

Review Digest

Story-type key: (Ac) Action; (Ad) Adventure; (An) Animated; (C) Comedy; (D) Drama; (Doc) Documentary; (F) Fantasy; (Hor) Horror; (M) Musical; (My) Mystery; (R) Romance; (Sat) Satire; (SF) Science Fiction; (Sus) Suspense; (Th) Thriller; (W) Western.

TITLE/MPAA DISTRIBUTOR	RUN TIME	GENRE	REVIEWED IN ISSUE	BOXOFFICE	VARIETY	H. REPORTER	L.A. TIMES	N.Y. TIMES	USA TODAY	AVERAGE	TOTAL BOXOFFICE$*
5 Excellent 4 Very Good 3 Good 2 Fair 1 Poor											
Beautician and the Beast **PG** (Par)	*105*	C	4-97	2	3	2	3		2	2.4	4.1
Beavis and Butt-head... **PG-13** (Par)	*80*	Ani	2-97	3	3	2	3	3		2.8	62.2
Beverly Hills Ninja **PG-13** (TS)	*85*	C	3-97	2	2	2	3	2		2.2	27.1
Big Night (Gol)	*110*	D	9-96	3	4	4	4	3		3.8	11.8
Breaking the Waves **R** (Oct)	*158*	D	7-96	2	3	5	2	4		3.2	2.5
The Crucible **PG-13** (Fox)	*115*	D	1-97	4	3	4	3	4		3.7	7.3
Dante's Peak **PG-13** (Uni)	*108*	Ac D	4-97	4	2	3			3	3.0	18.5
Daylight **PG-13** (Uni)	*114*	Ac D	2-97	2	2	3	2	2	2	2.2	32.7
The English Patient **R** (Mir)	*159*	R	1-97	3	3	4	4	4	4	3.7	42.0
Everyone Says I Love You **R** (Mir)	*100*	MusC	1-97	3	4	4	2	4	3	3.5	6.7
Evita **PG** (BV)	*136*	Mus	2-97	4	4	2	2	3		3.0	41.0
Fierce Creatures **PG-13** (Uni)	*93*	C	3-97	3	4	3	3	4	2	3.2	8.5
First Strike **PG-13** (NL)	*83*	Ac C	3-97	3	3	3	3	4	3	3.2	14.3
Gridlock'd **R** (Gra)	*91*	C	2-97	4	3	3	3	3		3.2	4.9
Hamlet **PG-13** (Col)	*242*	D	2-97	4	4	4	4	3		3.8	2.1
In Love and War **PG-13** (NL)	*115*	R D	2-97	3		2	2	2	2	2.2	12.9
Jerry Maguire **R** (TS)	*138*	D	2-97	4	4	2	3	4	4	3.5	121.3
Jingle All the Way **PG** (Fox)	*89*	C	2-97	3	2	3	2	2	3	2.5	60.4
Mars Attacks! **PG-13** (WB)	*104*	C	2-97	3	3	4	3	2	3	3.0	36.4
Marvin's Room **PG-13** (Mir)	*97*	D	2-97	3	3	4	3	3		3.3	1.6
Meet Wally Sparks **R** (TM)	*107*	C	3-97	2	2	2	2	3		2.2	3.3
Metro **R** (BV)	*117*	Ac	3-97	3	3	3	2	2	2	2.5	28.4
Michael **PG** (NL)	*105*	R C	2-97	3	2	3	4	3		2.6	83.1
The Mirror Has Two Faces **PG-13** (TS)	*126*	R C	1-97	2	2	4	2	3	3	2.6	41.0
Mother **PG-13** (Par)	*103*	C	11-96	4	4	4	4			4.0	15.0
101 Dalmatians **G** (BV)	*103*	C	2-97	3	3	3	2	2		2.6	132.7
One Fine Day **PG** (Fox)	*109*	R C	2-97	3	3	4	3	3	3	3.2	44.2
The People Vs. Larry Flynt **R** (Col)	*126*	D	2-97	3	4	4	4	3	5	3.8	18.8
Portrait of a Lady (Gra)	*142*	D	11-96	3	3	3	3	3		3.0	3.6
Preacher's Wife **PG** (BV)	*124*	RC	2-97	3	3	3	3		3	3.0	45.9
Prefontaine **PG-13** (BV)	*106*	D	3-97	3	3	3	2	2	3	3.2	
Ransom **R** (BV)	*121*	Th	1-97	3	4	4	3	4	3	3.5	132.6
The Relic **R** (Par)	*109*	ThSF	3-97	3	3	3	2		2	2.6	31.4
Ridicule **R** (Mir)	*102*	CD	8-96	4	4	4	4	3		3.8	1.5
Romeo & Juliet **PG-13** (Fox)	*120*	D	1-97	3	3	3	3	2	3	2.8	46.3
Scream **R** (Mir)	*111*	HorC	2-97	3	2	3	3	2		2.5	75.1
Secrets and Lies **R** (Oct)	*142*	D	7-96	4	4	4	4	4		4.0	6.8
Set It Off **R** (NL)	*121*	Ac D	1-97	3	3	2	3	2		2.6	35.8
Shadow Conspiracy **R** (BV)	*103*	Th	4-97	2	1	2	1	1	2	1.5	2.2
Shine (FL)	*104*	D	4-96	5	5	4	4	3	3	4.0	16.0
Some Mother's Son (SPC)	*112*	D	8-96	4	2	2	4	4		3.2	0.5
Space Jam **PG** (WB)	*88*	F C	1-97	3	3	3	3	3	3	3.0	87.9
Star Trek: First Contact **PG-13** (Par)	*110*	SF	2-97	3	4	4	4	3	3	3.3	91.0
Turbulence **R** (MGM)	*103*	Th	3-97	2	2	3	2		3	2.4	11.1
The Whole Wide World **PG** (SC)	*111*	D	11-96	4	4	4	4	4	3	3.8	0.1

** Total boxoffice, in millions, as of Feb. 11, 1997*

NATIONAL NEWS

SHERAK PROMOTED AT FOX

Tom Sherak, senior executive vice president of Fox Filmed Entertainment at 20th Century Fox, was promoted to chairman of the newly formed 20th Domestic Film Group, securing his ranking as the No. 3 executive at the successful studio. Sherak, considered instrumental in the phenomenal success of "Independence Day," will continue to oversee distribution, but will also be responsible for managing post-production and special projects. As a 13-year veteran of Fox, Sherak has been credited with cultivating strong ties with key producers and directors such as James Cameron, Dean Devlin, Roland Emmerich and, of course, George Lucas. Sherak's relationship with Lucas played a pivotal role in shepherding the revamped "Star Wars" trilogy into theatres for the 20 year anniversary, and that relationship may become even more important as Lucas comes closer to filming the as-yet studio-less new trio of "prequels." With the 20-year old "Star Wars" blasting back into theatres to the tune of almost $60 million in two weeks and showing those young, whipersnapper blockbuster wannabes how it's done, the new "Star Wars" franchise could be a decided coup for Sherak and the studio.

Sherak joined Fox in 1983 as president of domestic distribution and marketing and supervised the marketing and distribution of such films as "Home Alone," "Die Hard 2," "Aliens," "Big" and "Working Girl." He was promoted to executive vice president in 1990 and was named senior VP of Fox Filmed Entertainment at its inception in 1994. Before joining Fox, Sherak was vice president and head film buyer for General Cinema.

THE FILM FUNDANCE AT THIS YEAR'S SUNDANCE

1997 saw a subdued Sundance compared to last year's shenanigans, but the independent festival, which insiders say has become an American Cannes with snow, still presented a number of films to look for in the coming year. "Sunday," a drama about a one-day love affair, took the grand jury prize for dramatic film as well as the Waldo Salt Screenwriting award. "Girls Like Us" won the documentary grand jury prize. Morgan J. Freeman's "Hurricane" garnered three awards—the DGA's directing award (drama), the award for cinematography (drama) and a shared audience award for drama with New Line's "Love Jones"—and landed a distribution deal with MGM, which paid $2 million for domestic rights. The documentary audience award went to "Paul Monette: The Brink of Summer's End," while the documentary filmmaker's trophy and the DGA documentary directing award went to "Licensed to Kill." "In the Company of Men" won the dramatic filmmaker's trophy. Parker Posey, who appeared in three films ("The House of Yes," "SubUrbia" and "Clockwatchers") was awarded a special acting prize. Miramax picked up the dark "House of Yes" for $2 million. Trimark paid $3 million for "Box of Moonlight" and Fox Searchlight shelled out $2.5 million to pick up "Star Maps." Sony Classics acquired three films at the festival: "Dream With the Fishes," the French comedy "When the Cat's Away," and the Errol Morris documentary "Fast, Cheap & Out of Control." Gramercy picked up "Going All the Way." Goldwyn snapped up "I Love You... Don't Touch Me" and "The Last Time I Committed Suicide" was bought by Roxie. On a sidenote, Slamdance, the little festival that sprung up in the shadow of Sundance, announced it will move its festival next year away from the time and place of Sundance in order to allow for more corporate sponsorships. Noteworthy wins at Slamdance, which is becoming a renowned festival in it's own right, include "The Bible and Gun Club" which won the grand jury prize; "Driven," which was awarded a dramatic honorable mention; Michael Davis' "Eight Days a Week," which won the audience award for drama; and the documentary audience award winner, "Perfect Moment."

NEW MAG FROM NAC

The National Association of Concessionaires (NAC) announced the debut of "Concession Profession," a bi-annual magazine focusing on the food and beverage industry. The magazine will offer industry news, features on concession trends, interviews with industry leaders, practical operations applications and company profiles. "The main focus of the association has always been information and education," said NAC President David Scoco of Creative Concession Concepts. "Our plans for our publications emphasize our commitment to that mission." Two issues will be published in 1997 in May and November. The fall issue will include the NAC membership directory.

AMC BRINGS TASTE BACK TO THE POPCORN RACE

Three years after the Center For Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) rocked the theatre business with its published health survey on movie popcorn, AMC Theatres is experimenting with a return to using higher-fat coconut oil over healthier but less tasty "lighter" oils (like safflower and canola). In the chain's Kansas City, Mo. theatres, patrons will have the choice between coconut oil-popped popcorn and air-popped popcorn. CSPI immediately called the decision a bad idea and urged customers to boycott buying popcorn at all AMC theatres. But AMC says the decision to return to the higher-cholesterol oil is based on customer preference and will, at least for the time being, be limited to the Kansas City area only.

DREAMWORKS AND PLAYA: ON AGAIN, OFF AGAIN, ON AGAIN

It looks like Dreamworks, SKG and the Playa Vista developers, Maguire Thomas Partners, may be back together again. After delays in the development of the Playa Vista site due to old debts incurred in the 80s and a lack of ready investors, the Dreamworks executives had made noises about looking for other places to build their dreamy state-of-the-art studio. Maguire Thomas took the hint and quickly secured a new group of partners to bring in the money needed to push the project forward—approximately $200 million. If the deal goes through, the Pacific Capital Group, led by Beverly Hills financier Gary Winnick, would become the largest investor. DreamWorks executive Jefferey Katzenberg said he was pleased the project was moving forward, but noted that until the financing is secure nothing is a done deal.

CALLEY'S NEW DEAL: SHUFFLING EXECUTIVES AT SONY

The restructuring of Sony Pictures Entertainment continues since John Calley became president and COO in November of 1996. Calley hopes to streamline the filmmaking process and make the studio more filmmaker-friendly by cutting levels of bureaucracy. Almost all senior film executives will report directly to him, a process markedly different from the system under former chairman Alan Levine and Columbia TriStar chairman Mark Canton. Columbia Pictures president Amy Pascal, TriStar Pictures president Robert Cooper, vice-chair Lucy Fisher and freshly promoted co-chair Gareth Wigan will all report to Calley. Jeff Blake continues as president of Sony Pictures Releasing. David Saunders, head of Triumph Pictures, will report direct to Calley along with the recently re-signed Sony Pictures Classics presidents (Michael Barker, Tom Bernard and Marcie Bloom.) In other restructuring moves, Yuki Nozoe was named executive vice president and will coordinate worldwide development, and film marketing chief Bob Levin was promoted to president of worldwide marketing.

MGM MOVES FORWARD MINUS MARCUS

Just as Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer is trying to get back in the running after being pretty much dead in the water during last year's studio sale, MGM Pictures president and COO Michael Marcus announced his resignation. Marcus' exit comes just four months after United Artists president John Calley left to run Sony. Now MGM chairman Frank Mancuso finds himself without the creative team that was so much a part of revivifying the studio. Feature film production will temporarily move under United Artists president Lindsay Doran, who replaced Calley, until Mancuso finds a replacement for Marcus. On the upside, MGM recently procured a settlement with Carolco Pictures over the much-desired "Spiderman" project, giving the studio the rights to the popular web-crawler. MGM now has an option to exercise contracts that tie James Cameron to the project. Cameron has maintained a long-term interest in making a big-budget superhero movie out of Spidey's story. It's still a sticky situation, however, with Viacom and Columbia/TriStar claiming various television, video and theatrical rights that could keep poor Peter Parker off the big screen. Still, MGM now holds the strongest thread to the story, and Marvel Comics, currently in a bitter Chapter 11 bankruptcy, doesn't seem to have any objections to MGM moving forward on the project.

Boxoffice Magazine presents



MovieFone's Moviegoer Activity Report

For the Month of January 1997

MovieFone® (777-FILM®) and its sister service, MovieLink® Online, are now the single largest source of movie showtime information in the country, providing information to over 12 million moviegoers each month. The following information represents the most requested theatres and exhibitors on MovieFone.

Top 10 Exhibitors & Theatres

Most Requested Exhibitors

Rank	Exhibitor	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
1	Sony	735,283	2
2	Cineplex Odeon	701,978	3
3	United Artists	651,675	1
4	AMC	583,297	4
5	General Cinema	364,076	5
6	Century	214,440	6
7	National Amusements	160,155	7
8	Cinemark	145,358	8
9	Mann	128,098	9
10	Famous Players	122,834	10

Most Requested Theatres

Rank	Market	Theatre	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
1	NY	Sony Lincoln Square	128,653	1
2	NY	Sony Village 7	47,296	7
3	NY	CO Chelsea Cinemas	44,656	2
4	LA	AMC Century 14	42,952	3
5	BO	Sony Cheri	38,189	5
6	NY	CO Worldwide	30,994	17
7	NY	CityCin Village East	29,517	4
8	BO	Sony Copley Place	28,892	19
9	NY	CO Chelsea West	26,618	N/A
10	NY	Sony Orpheum	26,475	12

Most Requested Theatres Per Screen

Total Requests	Rank	Theatre (# screens)	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
New York	1	Sony Paris (1)	22,807	20
1,425,458	2	CO Ziegfeld (1)	15,283	32
	3	Sony New York Twin (2)	20,786	1
Los Angeles	1	Pacific Cinerama Dome (1)	23,290	11
668,876	2	Laemmle Royal (1)	10,512	13
	3	Mann Village (1)	5,748	5
Dallas	1	GCC Northpark 1 & 2 (2)	9,171	18
482,761	2	UA Cine (2)	5,117	6
	3	Granada Movie Grill (1)	2,256	14
San Francisco	1	Blm Regency (1)	14,793	5
327,894	2	Blm Alhambra (1)	3,336	4
	3	Century Presidio (1)	3,097	8
Boston	1	Sony Cheri (4)	38,189	1
276,523	2	Sony Nickelodeon (5)	16,117	3
	3	NA Allston Cinema (2)	6,140	7
Philadelphia	1	UA Sameric (4)	17,752	1
273,499	2	AMC Olde City (2)	7,863	14
	3	Cinemagic 3 at Penn (3)	9,374	2
Miami	1	Cobb Kendall (9)	15,336	2
254,607	2	AMC Cocowalk (16)	19,756	18
	3	Cobb Miami Lakes (10)	12,146	1
Chicago	1	Sony Pipers Alley (4)	19,686	23
238,641	2	Village North (1)	3,106	4
	3	Davis Art (1)	2,721	32
Phoenix	1	Hark Cine Capri (1)	8,882	1
199,260	2	Hark Christown (5)	9,069	2
	3	Century Glendale D-I (9)	12,185	3
Toronto	1	Famous Eglinton (1)	18,273	2
195,238	2	Famous Plaza (2)	5,493	7
	3	Famous Uptown (3)	7,872	1
Houston	1	CO Spectrum (9)	17,527	2
146,863	2	CO River Oaks Plaza (12)	12,366	1
	3	Landmk River Oaks (3)	2,827	3
San Diego	1	Mann Cinema 21 (1)	1,124	1
115,846	2	Landmk Cove (1)	773	6
	3	UA Horton (14)	9,854	7

Total Requests	Rank	Theatre (# screens)	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
Kansas City	1	Dksn Glenwood (4)	6,584	1
111,019	2	Tivoli at Westport (1)	1,506	23
	3	Dksn Southglen (12)	15,676	6
Seattle	1	Landmk Neptune (1)	2,054	3
98,962	2	Landmk Harvard Exit (2)	2,884	27
	3	Landmk Guild 45th (2)	2,783	2
Minneapolis	1	Landmk Uptown (1)	1,259	16
87,692	2	Mann MN Grandview (2)	1,507	11
	3	CO Knollwood (4)	2,711	4
Atlanta	1	UA Tara Cinema (4)	2,459	13
82,612	2	AMC Phipps Plaza (14)	6,495	3
	3	AMC Galleria (8)	3,448	6
Cleveland	1	GCC Ridge Park Square (8)	6,957	2
70,925	2	GCC Westgate Mall (6)	5,167	6
	3	General Southgate (3)	2,142	7
Las Vegas	1	Century Las Vegas D-I (6)	4,928	1
60,888	2	Gold Coast Twin (2)	1,633	13
	3	Century Rancho (16)	10,969	3
Denver	1	UA Continental (1)	2,303	1
58,966	2	Landmk Mayan (3)	2,727	23
	3	Mann Olde Towne (14)	6,868	30
Detroit	1	MJR Main Art (3)	1,486	9
52,319	2	Star Taylor (10)	3,881	2
	3	AMC Southland (4)	1,498	3
Sacramento	1	Century Sacramento D-I (6)	5,021	1
50,024	2	Century Cinedome (9)	7,013	2
	3	Century Complex (12)	9,019	6
Cincinnati	1	SupSav Forest Fair (8)	6,821	1
35,497	2	SupSav Cinemas (8)	5,982	2
	3	NA 275 East Cinemas (4)	1,322	9
San Antonio	1	Act III Crossroads (6)	2,829	N/A
33,221	2	Act III Fiesta (16)	5,983	N/A
	3	Act III Galaxy (14)	5,107	N/A
Tampa	1	Cobb Northdale (6)	2,321	4
31,798	2	Muvico Palm Harbor (10)	2,998	2
	3	AMC Varsity (6)	1,645	9

Top 3 Actively* Requested Theatres:

1. CO Worldwide New York, NY
2. Sony Lincoln Sq. New York, NY
3. CO Chelsea Cinemas New York, NY

*Caller specifically requested theatre

Key to Exhibitors

AMC	AMC Theatres, Inc.	CO	Cineplex Odeon Corp.	Hollywood	Hollywood Theatres
Act III	Act III Theatres	Cobb	Cobb Theatres	Landmk	Landmark Theatre Corp
Blm	Blumenfeld Theatres	Dksn	Dickinson Theatres	Laemmle	Laemmle Theatres
Carmike	Carmike Cinemas, Inc.	Famous	Famous Players	Mann MN	Mann Minneapolis
Century	Century Theatres	GCC	General Cinema Theatres	Met	Metropolitan Theatres Corp.
CinAm	CinAmerica Theatres, LP	General	General Theatres	MJR	MJR Theatre Service
CityCin	City Cinemas	Hark	Harkins Theatres	Muvico	Muvico Theatres
				Pacific	Pacific Theatres
				Regal	Regal Cinemas
				Sony	Sony Theatres
				Star	Loeks-Star Theatres
				SupSav	Super Saver Cinemas
				UA	United Artists Theatre Circuit

777-FILM

1997 OSCAR BALLOT ✔

BEST PICTURE
☆"The English Patient" (Miramax)
☆"Fargo" (Gramercy)
☆"Jerry Maguire" (TriStar)
☆"Secrets & Lies" (October)
☆"Shine" (Fine Line)

BEST ACTOR
☆Tom Cruise ("Jerry Maguire")
☆Ralph Fiennes ("The English Patient")
☆Woody Harrelson (".....Larry Flynt")
☆Geoffrey Rush ("Shine")
☆Billy Bob Thornton ("Sling Blade")

BEST ACTRESS
☆Brenda Blethyn ("Secrets & Lies")
☆Diane Keaton ("Marvin's Room")
☆Frances McDormand ("Fargo")
☆Kristin Scott Thomas ("The English Patient")
☆Emily Watson ("Breaking the Waves")

BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR
☆Cuba Gooding Jr. ("Jerry Maguire")
☆William H. Macy ("Fargo")
☆Armin Mueller-Stahl ("Shine")
☆Edward Norton ("Primal Fear")
☆James Woods ("Ghosts of Mississippi")

BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS
☆Joan Allen ("The Crucible")
☆Lauren Bacall ("The Mirror/Two Faces")
☆Juliette Binoche ("The English Patient")
☆Barbara Hershey ("Portrait of a Lady")
☆Marianne Jean-Baptiste ("Secrets & Lies")

BEST DIRECTOR
☆Anthony Minghella ("English Patient")
☆Joel Coen ("Fargo")
☆Milos Forman ("The People Vs. Larry Flynt")
☆Mike Leigh ("Secrets & Lies")
☆Scott Hicks ("Shine")

BEST SCREENPLAY
☆Ethan Coen and Joel Coen ("Fargo")
☆Cameron Crowe ("Jerry Maguire")
☆John Sayles ("Lone Star")
☆Mike Leigh ("Secrets & Lies")
☆Jan Sardi and Scott Hicks ("Shine")

BEST ADAPTED SCREENPLAY
☆Arthur Miller ("The Crucible")
☆Anthony Minghella ("English Patient")
☆Kenneth Branagh ("Hamlet")
☆Billy Bob Thornton ("Sling Blade")
☆John Hodge ("Trainspotting")

BEST MAKEUP
☆"Ghosts of Mississippi;" ☆"The Nutty Professor;" ☆"Star Trek: First Contact"

BEST FOREIGN LANGUAGE FILM
☆"A Chef in Love" (Georgia)
☆"Kolya" (Czech Republic)
☆"The Other Side of Sunday" (Norway)
☆"Prisoner of the Mountains" (Russia)
☆"Ridicule" (France)

BEST DOCUMENTARY FEATURE
☆"The Line King: The Al Hirschfeld Story"
☆"Mandela" (Island Pictures)
☆"Suzanne Farrell: Elusive Muse" (Seahorse)
☆"Tell the Truth and Run" (Never Tire)
☆"When We Were Kings" (Gramercy)

BEST ART DIRECTION
☆Bo Welch, Cheryl Carasik ("The Birdcage")
☆Stuart Craig, Stephanie McMillan ("The English Patient")
☆Brian Morris, Phillippe Turiure ("Evita")
☆Tim Harvey, "Hamlet"
☆Catherine Martin, Brigitte Broch ("Romeo & Juliet")

BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY
☆John Seale ("The English Patient")
☆Darius Khondji ("Evita")
☆Roger Deakins ("Fargo")
☆Caleb Deschanel ("Fly Away Home")
☆Chris Menges ("Michael Collins")

BEST EDITING
☆Walter Murch ("The English Patient")
☆Gerry Hambling ("Evita")
☆Roderick Jaynes ("Fargo")
☆Joe Hutshing ("Jerry Maguire")
☆Pip Karmel ("Shine")

BEST SOUND
☆"The English Patient;" ☆"Evita;" ☆"Independence Day;" ☆"The Rock;" ☆"Twister"

BEST VISUAL EFFECTS
☆"Dragonheart;" ☆"Independence Day;" ☆"Twister"

BEST COSTUME DESIGN
☆Paul Brown ("Angels and Insects")
☆Ruth Myers ("Emma")
☆Ann Roth ("The English Patient")
☆Alex Byrne ("Hamlet")
☆Janet Patterson ("The Portrait of a Lady")

BEST MUSIC (ORIGINAL SONG)
☆ "Because You Loved Me" ("Up Close and Personal")
☆ "For the First Time" ("One Fine Day")
☆ "I Finally Found Someone" ("The Mirror Has Two Faces")
☆ "That Thing You Do!"
☆""You Must Love Me" ("Evita")

EXHIBITION BRIEFINGS

LUCASFILM INTRODUCES 5-STAR RATING SYSTEM

Lucasfilm Ltd.'s THX Theatre Alignment Program (TAP) announced a new service to evaluate the moviegoing experience: a 5-star rating system. TAP assigns a rating utilizing 0-5 stars and generates a written report that evaluates the overall presentation quality of a theatre's projection and sound quality, as well as all aspects of theatre operations. Movie studios interested in this service will hire TAP on a picture-by-picture basis. The first distribution company to utilize the rating system was Twentieth Century Fox with its release of the "Star Wars." Trained reviewers are sent unannounced to anywhere from 10 to 400 theatres on a film's opening weekend. They make their appraisals in five areas: print condition, projector alignment and operation, sound system alignment and operation, theatre operations, and advertising. The theatre starts with a score of 100, with points deducted based upon the relative severity of the problems observed by TAP evaluators. TAP personnel follow up on any problems and detailed reports are provided to the distribution company, as well as to the theatre and theatre owner. This program is meant to ensure top quality presentation, therefore benefitting both the studio and the theatre, though the mystery critic/report card method might be off-putting to some exhibitors. The TAP evaluation program has in fact been in use since the mid-'80s, but THX is finding that the star system draws more attention to the reports as the qualitative measure is more instantly comprehendible.

DON'T CRY FOR SCREENS, ARGENTINA: NATIONAL AMUSEMENTS TO BUILD FIVE MULTIPLEXES

National Amusements announced an agreement with developer Maccarone to build at least five multiplexes with an aggregate of approximately 60 screens in Argentina. The plexes will anchor "Showcenters," which will include virtual reality arcades, live music venues, bowling alleys and restaurants. The first theatre, a 14-plex in Buenos Aires, will open in May.

SHOWSCAN UNVEILS ELECTROMAGNETIC MOTION BASE

Showscan Entertainment Inc. has introduced "EM4," an electromagnetic motion base, for its simulation theatre attractions. There are no hydraulic pumps, oils, or other hydraulic elements that usually complicates the construction, installation and operation of simulation attractions, according to William C. Soady, president and CEO of Showscan. "The EM4 will revolutionize the simulation business," says Soady. "There is no other motion base in the industry that has

the enhanced real life performance and wide range of motion of the EM4. The precision in motion programming that is now possible due to the EM4 will effectively change the way audiences experience simulation. It establishes a new dimension for motion performance, creating a silent, smooth and virtually lifelike experience."

REGAL BUILDS TWO 22-PLEXES

A 22-screen, 4,400-seat Regal multiplex will anchor the CityPark, an entertainment project in Lincolnshire, Ill. that will also include shopping, restaurants and a hotel. "CityPark promises to be a blockbuster in every sense of the word," says Regal senior VP of real estate Keith Thompson. "With the confluence of restaurants, shops and the added benefit of a quality hotel, we are extremely confident about this market."

Regal will also be opening a 22-plex in Austell, Ga. The 85,000-square-foot multiplex will offer stadium seating, wall-to-wall screens, Dolby surround sound, DTS, Dolby and Sony Dynamic Digital Sound.

DICKINSON EXPANDS WESTGLEN

Dickinson Theatres' WestGlen 12 in Shawnee, Kan., will undergo an extensive expansion project that will increase the facility to an 18-screen megaplex with additional THX auditoriums as well as an elaborate family entertainment center. The addition of six more theatres will increase the existing 60,000-square-foot building by 23,000 square feet. Four more acres of parking will also be added.

TIVOLI OPENS NEW FACILITY IN LAS VEGAS

Tivoli Industries Inc., a provider of lighting for aisles, steps, canopies, boxoffices, and concession stands, has opened a sales and support facility in Las Vegas, Nevada. The facility, located in the Center Point office complex near the Las Vegas strip, will offer lighting product samples, descriptive product and application literature, and design support. MaryJo Scott, previously an executive assistant with Fox Broadcasting in Beverly Hills, Calif., has been appointed manager of office operations.

ON THE MOVE

Shauna King has been appointed to Senior VP/head film buyer of **Loews Theatres.** Previously, King was VP, assistant head film buyer, U.S., for Cineplex Odeon...**Mann Theatres** has announced the promotions of five key executives. **Denise Gurin** has been promoted from VP to Senior VP of film marketing; **Alan Davy** moves up to VP of film from executive director of film; and executive director of theatre development **Dan Greismer,** executive director of theatre operations **Cynthia Cronkhite,** and executive director of concession operations **Wally Helton** all move up to VP status in their departments.

Q&A: RICHARD LINKLATER ON THE INDEPENDENT FILM SCENE

Writer/director Richard Linklater, documentor of loafing youth culture as seen in his films "Slacker," "Dazed and Confused," and "Before Sunrise," was in attendance at this year's Sundance Film Festival promoting his current film, the Sony Pictures Classics release "subUrbia" produced by Castle Rock. He stopped to speak with* Boxoffice *about the current state of so-called "independent cinema." After the success of his off-beat, no-budget 1991 film "Slacker," Linklater has been at the forefront of the indie movement as it has exploded and expanded to proportions that were unimaginable when he and a handful of others like Spike Lee, Whit Stillman, and Steven Soderbergh were just starting out in the late '80s and early '90s.



Linklater (left) directs Giovanni Ribisi in SPC's "subUrbia."

Boxoffice: How has the notion of what an independent film is changed since the days of "Slacker," "sex, lies and videotape" and "She's Gotta Have It?"

RICHARD LINKLATER: Starting in the early '80s, there was more distribution of independent films. It was more commodified, more of a business, and the films had more of a marketing angle. I think that right now there needs to be more distributors, because there are a lot more films out there. Filmmakers just have this need to make films, obviously, and audiences have the need to see them.

Boxoffice: How has the current film marketplace changed your style of filmmaking or sense of storytelling?

LINKLATER: For me it is just about making films that mean a lot to me personally. They are always pretty autobiographical—I just like subjects I am close to, and I hope there is always an audience out there who wants to see them. But it's kind of hard in the media environment we live in. The big films will always dominate the media and culture, but from the bottom up it has always more Darwinist: the best films always seem to pop out from a huge sea of films.

Boxoffice: Has Castle Rock given you the kind of freedom you've hoped for on your last two films?

LINKLATER: Yeah. They've been really supportive. Filmmakers sometimes get the wrong impression of studios. I did "Dazed and Confused" at Universal—that's my film. No one took it away from me.

Boxoffice: So is an independent filmmaker one who is constrained by budget, or is it rather a state of mind?

LINKLATER: Martin Scorsese is an independent filmmaker. Oliver Stone is very independent, as independent as it gets. And more power to them, because most people don't understand how tough it is in the studio system to make a "personal" film. I admire people who are making films that a) no one else wants to, and b) no one else could. You work from a position like, if it means something to me, hopefully, it will connect with other people and mean something to them.

Boxoffice: If "Slacker" were to be released today, in this marketplace, would have it been as successful or influential as it was six years ago?

LINKLATER: That's an interesting question, I hadn't though about that. Hmmm. It would be ignored, I think, because so many films since then have dealt with similar material, it would seen redundant. It's always good to be the first out of the blocks. "Slacker" was a weird little film that I really thought would be shown at a museum or a few festivals, and figured that it would be a really alienating film that no one would like. I had this feeling that the audience it was made for would get it, the channel-surfing, create-your-own narrative audience. On the other hand, 10 years earlier it would not have been accepted either.

BOXOFFICE: Where is independent cinema heading?

LINKLATER: There will always be a new "wave" of young filmmakers out there. I wish there was a new wave of distributors, but no one is doing that. I talk to film schools every now and then and ask the kids, "how many of you want to write and direct?" every hand goes up. I ask "how many want to be in distribution?" and not one hand goes up. I tell them, you know, 'If you're a rich kid who's going to take $400,000 from your dad and make a movie, why not take that money and start a distribution company? Ten years later you'll be selling your company for $100 million.' Most people think that there's money in physical filmmaking, but there's not. Maybe for one in a hundred, but it is certainly not a secure way to make a living. I just wish more people would get into distribution and theatres. I would if I had the bucks.—***Jon Alon Walz***

INTERNATIONAL NEWS BRIEFS

EUROVIEWS

European News Notes *by Melissa Morrison*

LEAD STORY: WUNDERBAR! GERMANY'S RECORD ATTENDANCE

BERLIN—Germany's theatrical building boom is responsible for the highest attendance in the country since reunification, the national subsidy board FFA announced. In 1996, as many as 137 million people went to the movies, a 3 percent increase in two years, and over 200 new screens have been added. The result, an FFA spokesperson said, is that cinemagoers attracted by megahits have not been turned away by sold-out auditoriums, but filtered into the new screening rooms. Some of those megahits included "Independence Day" and "Twister," as well as German productions such as "Werner II" and "Jailbirds." Domestic films, in fact, experienced an almost 7 percent increase from 1995 in market share, up to 16 percent.

Attendance was also bolstered by marketing efforts such as Columbia TriStar's "Summer Hit Cinema" promotion campaign, which upped attendance by 18 percent in the usually slow summer season. The head of Columbia's German division, Juergen Schau, said the company planned to expand its campaign this summer by doubling the number of participating distributors to a dozen. Factor in the multiplying multiplex situation 1,000 new screens estimated to be in place by the end of the century, including those by U.S. heavyweights Warner Bros. and UCI (Universal Studios/Paramount Communications) and the prospect for future attendance looks flush.

RUSSIA HOUSES

MOSCOW—The December opening of the 750-seat Udarnik cinema in Moscow is a bright spot in the Russian exhibition industry's otherwise rocky adjustment to the neglect and inefficient economics of communism. The Western-style moviehouse is the first cinema to complete a refurbishment out of $7 million of government funds earmarked for Russian cinemas. The Udarnik got $4 million for its upgrade, which included installing Dolby Stereo and building a surrounding complex of cafes and shops. The theatre has also been tailored to host film festivals, with a jury box and accommodations for press and festival guests. According to an agreement with Interfest, the state body that oversees Russian film festivals, the Udarnik will host competition screenings part of the year. Another $2.5 million will go toward fixing up the Khanzhonkov House theatre, to re-open in the spring. The remaining $.5 million will upgrade the technical equipment in other Moscow theatres.

Under another government-sponsored program, called the Russian Cinema Show, $300 million will be injected into 75 government-owned regional theatres to reinvigorate cinema-going in those parts and to restore its distribution network. Reconstruction begins mid-year. The Moscow part of the circuit will get $100 million for its upgrade, including Western sound and video equipment.

Less rosy, however, is the production end of Russian film. The movie studio Lenfilm, as part of an expected transition from public to private ownership, will hack its jobs by over half, to about 200. The Russian government can no longer afford to pay the current staff, and there isn't enough moviemaking business in post-communist times to support the 85-year-old studio's former capacity. In addition to gearing up for possible privatization, the studio will orient toward more television and technical work. Russia's largest production complexes, Gorky Film Studios and Mosfilm, are also preparing to sell stock to raise funds for their upkeep.

ADMISSIONS: IMPOSSIBLE

STOCKHOLM—The process of expanding Northern Europe's exhibition industry isn't exactly smooth skating. A proposed AMC multiplex has drawn the ire of local industry representatives for its location in a suburb of the Swedish capital. Filling the 5,000-seat cinema would require young people to hitchhike the distance between the last subway station and the theatre in the Skaerholmen/Huddingity neighborhood, one distributor complained. A rival exhibitor challenged AMC's contention that the new multiplex would rack up 3 million admissions annually, saying that all the cinemas within Stockholm proper currently attract only 4.2 million audience members. But AMC Europe president Bruno Friedman countered that the company did its market research and predicted success. No completion date has been publicly announced.

Meanwhile, in the Norwegian capital, municipal cinemas have threatened a showdown with distributors who work with Oslo's first private cinema, a proposed six-screen theatre to be built by the end of the year. The moviehouse is one of 15 private cinemas planned for the Oslo area, which are in competition with the city government's own plans for expansion, from 28 to 32 screens.

IRA INVESTMENTS

DUBLIN—The good news: Moviegoing in 1996 reached a record high in Ireland with 11.6 million ticket buyers. The bad news: Production in the Land o' Green is more a sickly yellow, which producers blame on recent changes to tax law. Exhibitors don't have much to complain about the year that was. In December, the UCI monolith opened a nine-screen, 2,500-seat flagship theatre in Dublin, which should add a few percentage points to its dominant 45-percent market share. Rival exhibitors like Ward-Anderson and Virgin are responding with plans for their own screen explosion; the former got started by spending 1996 building 20 of them. Irish filmgoers were drawn by the usual suspects: blockbusters such as "Mission: Impossible" and "ID4." But the industry got a boost with a glut of Irish-themed flicks, including the Venice-lauded, IRA-in-its-early-days "Michael Collins" and the IRA-hunger-strike drama "Some Mother's Son."

DO YOU HAVE AN EXHIBITION OR FEATURE FILM RELATED NEWS ITEM ABOUT THE EUROPEAN MARKET?
CONTACT MELISSA MORRISON IN CARE OF THE PRAGUE POST AT: NA PORICI 12, 115 30 PRAGUE 1, CZECH REPUBLIC
email: tomelis@bohem-net.cz

However, according to area producers, nobody should expect many more such films until the government restores the original requirements of its Section 35 tax breaks for film production. They claim the tax law changes caused a revenue drop of almost one-third to $88.2 million from a $129 million peak in 1995. Last year, the deduction for film investments was reduced from 100 percent to 80 percent, with a ceiling of $12.6 million built-in. Incentives for lower-budget movies, and for filming in the October-to-January off-season were added, but filmmakers say they haven't seen any results yet. Maybe they're jumping the gun: Films and filmmakers who have or will set up shop in Ireland include Jim Sheridan, Neil Jordan, Pierce Brosnan, and Roger Corman, as well as the Sony production "The Devil's Own" starring Harrison Ford and Brad Pitt as—what a surprise—an IRA gunman.

AMERICAN INVASIONS

LONDON—Some recent European innovations have taken their inspiration from North American collaborations. In Italy, several Italian directors, producers, and actors have formed Moviement, a talent agency patterned on the United Artists model to coordinate talent around specific productions. In Germany, distributor Concorde/Castle Rock-Turner plans a classics division that will deal primarily with independent productions and contain a separate marketing department, American-style. Print releases will be a modest 50 to 100 in counter to Concorde's increasingly big-time releases, such as "12 Monkeys." And in a more direct collaboration, Britain's BBC plans for two co-productions with Canada's Scala Productions, a first for the two companies. The films are "The Church of Alan Darcy" and "Divorcing Jack."

And U.S.-based UCI is growing. As part of its aggressive expansion plans, the Universal Studios/Paramount Co.-controlled company is adding Portugal, Italy, Greece, and Poland to its exhibiting countries, which currently include the United Kingdom, Ireland, Germany, Spain and Austria, as well as Japan. The company has allotted $360 million to the effort, which will eventually include South America and Asia, and plans to take joint-venture partners in some locations.

Q&A: ADRIANA BADILA ON REDEVELOPING ROMANIAN FILM

Adriana Badila is the 28-year-old production manager of Domino Film Ltd., one of the upstart production companies trying to encourage a healthy private industry in what is still Europe's Wild East. Badila and her counterparts are essentially on their own in this endeavor: Romania is a straggler among former East bloc nations in the conversion to a robust government and economy. Education, health, welfare and government-corruption crises have pushed culture to the bottom of the country's priority list. The strategy employed by 6-year-old Domino is to have two faces: an advertising division for reliable revenues that keep it afloat, and a film division to partake in the slow redevelopment of Romania's movie industry.

BOXOFFICE: How do you build your business from what is essentially scratch?

ADRIANA BADILA: We have to count on our own facilities. So we are buying equipment and building our own base, because we cannot count on the old equipment owned by the studio—which is still state-owned—and there are not foreign investors coming in to re-technologize it.

BOXOFFICE: What kind of foreign investment is the Romanian film industry getting from the West to upgrade its facilities?

BADILA: The balance is like this: It's cheaper than Hungary or the Czech Republic, but it's not as secure because investments in Romania are not yet guaranteed. So it's hard for someone to invest millions and millions of dollars when tomorrow they might have nothing. But I think that now, after the elections and with a new government and new president in place, things are going to change, and in five years' time we can have a better basis for films.

The balance is like this: It's cheaper than Hungary or the Czech Republic, but it's not as secure, because investments in Romania are not yet guaranteed.

BOXOFFICE: What potential does television have as a source of money for films?

BADILA: The good news about Romania is that the private television stations are doing very well. I'm sure in something like one year they will come to invest in film. Now they are not investing at all in films made in Romania because they just want to do their projects.

BOXOFFICE: How are cinemas adjusting to the changes in Romania?

BADILA: They are state owned. The distribution companies are state owned and the cinemas are owned by the distribution companies. There's no way to negotiate with them when you are selling a film. They have a fixed rate that is 70 to 85 percent of the revenues. This is the, let's say, funniest thing about it. [Western distributors] have set up offices in Bucharest. But at this point they haven't done more than bring the American films to the Romanian market. They are not making money out of it—it's just a step into the market.

BOXOFFICE: How successful have co-productions been in bringing much-needed funds to the domestic industry?

BADILA: Last year there were something like four or five [co-productions], mainly with France. It's absolutely necessary for us, not only for financing the film, but also for selling the film. Because even though we have the product, we are still not in the network. We don't know the distributors, we don't know how the market is going, we don't know how to deal with sales agents, distributors, exhibitors—well, we know in theory because we read a lot and we know what's going on in Europe, but it's hard to deal.

What we at Domino are doing now is looking to set up with a long-term partner, a foreign company, to work together and to learn from their experience, and to get into the European market. The most likely partners are Germany, France or America.

BOXOFFICE: You're not even 30. Is youth typical of the new private producers in Romania?

BADILA: Yes. What is also typical of Romanian private production companies is that they are owned by directors of photography. [Domino's two co-owners are cinematographers.] Maybe it's because they are the most technical people in the film crew.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS BRIEFS

NORTHERN EXPOSURE

Canadian News Notes *by Shlomo Schwartzberg*

LEAD STORY: PRODUCTION REVENUES AT AN ALL-TIME HIGH

Montreal and Toronto had stellar production years in 1996, but it was American movies and television shows shooting in Canada's two largest cities that fueled the boom.

The Toronto Film and Television Office announced that 146 productions brought in a record C$506.8 million (US$385.8 million) into city coffers. But funding cutbacks to the Ontario Film Development Corporation meant that U.S. features picked up the slack from declining numbers of Canadian features shot in Ontario.

Compared to 1995, when 29 Canadian features and six American ones were filmed in Toronto, 1996 saw only 23 Canadian films while 11 U.S. productions were made there. Translated financially, American dollars spent on overall production went up to C$215 million (US$163.7 million) from C$132 million (US$100.5 million) while Canadian numbers fell to $C258.7 million (US$197 million) from C$335 million (US$268.8 million) spent the previous year.

Meanwhile, Montreal also saw a record year for production, bringing in C$298 million (US$226.9 million) in all, up from C$259 million (US$197.2 million) the year before. Much of that came from big American productions filming in the city, an upsurge from years past: among recent films shot in Montreal were "Mother Night" with Nick Nolte, who will be back with the Paul Schrader film "Affliction," shooting there later this year. The Montreal Film and Television Commission estimates that foreign production, including French language pics, will hit C$100 million (US$76.1 million) in 1997.

"SENSING" GREAT THINGS FROM JEREMY PODESWA

Canadian films as diverse as Peter Wellington's yuppie comedy-drama "Joe's So Mean To Josephine" and Lynne Stopkewich's April release "Kissed," about a necrophiliac, were among the Canadian films unveiled at the recent Sundance Film Festival. But it may be Jeremy Podeswa who will make the most impact internationally.

Podeswa's "The Five Senses" was chosen to be workshopped for Sundance's well-respected Screenwriter's Lab, the only Canadian screenplay to be so honored and one of only two non-American selections among the 12 screenplays chosen.

The screenplay, which is slated for production this summer with Podeswa directing, tells five linked stories about love and fate, each based on one of the human senses. It marks the Torontonian's continuing involvement with Sundance—his first film, "Eclipse," a loose remake of Max Ophul's "La Ronde," was featured at Sundance in 1995.

"It was great. [I had] an amazing group of advisors, including Alison Anders, Alice Arlen, Frank Pierson and Armistad Mauphin," says Podeswa about the experience. "I think it's a pretty huge seal of approval for the project." Since the Lab is so "highly competitive," says Podeswa, "The Five Senses" has already aroused interest from Columbia Pictures, Fox Searchlight, New Line and others. "There's a lot of heat around the project," he says, adding that "The Five Senses" is also liable to be a pick for Sundance 1998. "The Sundance Institute likes to have a continuing relationship with the people they help out. [This year's festival hit, "The Eye of God," was a Lab project.] They're available for consulting and financial advice. They're very helpful to their people and that's a really, really good thing."

Podeswa is also co-writing (with Diane Flacks) "Minus Time," an adaptation of Catherine Bush's much praised novel of the same name, which details a woman's relationship with her celebrated astronaut mother. Both "Minus Time" and "The Five Senses" will be produced by Camelia Frieberg. (Frieberg's latest movie, Atom Egoyan's "The Sweet Hereafter," is a likely 1997 Cannes entry.)

CANADA OUT"SHINE"S U.S. BOXOFFICE PERFORMANCE ON THREE MAJOR FILMS

The top non-Hollywood films at the Canadian boxoffice this past fall were Alliance releases, most notably "The English Patient" and "Shine," both of which did proportionately better in Canada than in the U.S. "The English Patient," which is based on the book by Toronto author Michael Ondaajte, had grossed C$4.5 million (US$3.43 million) in Canada at press time and showed on 110 screens —high for an art film. "Shine's" numbers to date are C$1.5 million (US$1.14 million). Also doing well for Alliance: Mike Leigh's "Secrets and Lies," which has pulled in C$800,000 (US$609,000) from only four screens. All three films, "The English Patient," "Shine" and "Secret and Lies," are doing better in Canada than in the U.S., above the roughly 10 percent of the North American gross that Canada usually accounts for at the boxoffice.

In other Alliance news, the company announced that it has signed a co-production deal with BBC Films. Five films, budgeted for between C$4 million (US$3.1 million) and C$5 million (US$3.8 million) are set to be produced in the first year of the agreement. Alliance also recently opened up a London office.

MALOFILM OUGHTTA BE IN PICTURES

Montreal-based Malofilm has singed a two-year output deal with In Pictures Ltd., the New York-based distributor of Nick Broomfield's "Heidi Fleiss: Hollywood Madam." Broomfield's latest, "Fetishes," and Peter Bratt's "Follow Me Home," will be part of the slate of In Pictures that Malofilm will be distributing.

Malofilm also picked up Canadian rights to Mina Shum's second movie "Drive." Shum's debut, "Double Happiness," was a success for Malofilm in 1995.

ON THE MOVE

Roger Harris has moved up to the top spot at **Famous Players**, replacing American-born Joe Peixoto, who has returned to the U.S. Harris' previous title at Famous Players, Canada's second largest theatre chain, was vice president of marketing.

Cineplex Odeon has announced that **Michael Kennedy** has been promoted to senior vice president, film—Canada. Kennedy was formerly vice president, film and development—Canada. And **Phil May** has joined the company as film buyer for Cineplex. He was previously branch manger for Paramount Pictures in Western Canada.

DO YOU HAVE AN EXHIBITION-RELATED NEWS ITEM ABOUT THE CANADIAN MARKET? CONTACT SHLOMO SCHWARTZBERG IN CARE OF OUR CANADIAN NEWS BUREAU AT: 416-638-6402

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BOXOFFICE

	January	February	March	APRIL (Current)
Buena Vista (818) 567-5000 (212) 593-8900	**Metro**, 1/17, Dra, R, 117 min., Dolby SR, SR-D, SDDS, Anamorphic. Eddie Murphy, Carmen Ejogo, Michael Rapaport. Dir: Thomas Carter. **Prefontaine**, 1/24 ltd, Dra, PG-13, 106 min, Dolby SR, SR-D, Flat. Jared Leto, Amy Locane,Ed O'Neill. Dir: Steve James **The Shadow Conspiracy**, 1/31, Dra, R, 103 min., Dolby SR, SR-D, Anamorphic. Charlie Sheen, Linda Hamilton. Dir: George P. Cosmatos.	**That Dam Cat**, 2/14, Com, PG, 89 min., Dolby SR, SR-D, Flat. Christina Ricci, Doug E. Doug, Dyan Cannon. Dir: Robert Spiers.	**Jungle2Jungle**, 3/14, Com, PG, 105 min., Dolby SR, SR-D, SDDS, Flat. Tim Allen, Martin Short, Lolita Davidovitch, David Dgden Stiers, JoBeth Williams. Dir. John Pasquin.	**The Sixth Man**, 4/4, Com, PG13. Marlon Wayans, Kadeem Hardison, David Paymer. Dir: Randall Miller. **Romy and Michelle's High School Reunion** 4/18, Com. Mira Sorvino, Lisa Kudrow, Janean Garofalo, Elaine Hendrix. Dir: David Mirkin. **Grosse Pointe Blank**, Com, R, 106 min, Dolby SR, SR-D, SDDS. John Cusack, Minnie Driver, Dan Aykroyd, Joan Cusack.Dir: George Armitage
Columbia (310) 280-8000 (212) 833-8500	**People Vs. Larry Flynt**, 1/10 exp, Dra, R, 130 min. Dolby A, SR, SDDS, Anamorphic. Woody Harrelson, Courtney Love, Edward Norton. Dir. Milos Forman.	**Absolute Power**, 2/14,Thr, R, 120 min., Dolby A &SR, SDDS. Anamorphic. Gene Hackman, Scott Glenn, Judy Davis. Dir/Star: Clint Eastwood **Fools Rush In**, 2/14, Rom/Com, PG-13, 106 min., Dolby A, SR, SDDS, Flat. Matthew Perry, Salma Hayek. Dir: Andy Tennant **Booty Call**, 2/26, Com, R, 77 min., DTS, SDDS, Flat. Jamie Foxx, Vivica Fox. Dir. Jeff Pollack.	**The Devil's Own**, 3/26, Sus/Thr, R, Dolby A & SR, SDDS, Anamorphic. Harrison Ford, Brad Pitt, Margaret Colin, Treat Williams, Ruben Blades. Dir: Alan J. Pakula	**Double Team** (formerly The Colony), 4/4, Act, SDDS, Jean-Claude VanDamme, Dennis Rodman, Mickey Rourke. Dir: Tsui Hark. **Anaconda**, 4/18, Adv, Dolby A, SR, SDDS. Jon Voight, Jennifer Lopez, Ice Cube, Eric Stoltz, Kari Wuhrer. Dir: Luis Llosa.
MGM/UA (310) 449-3000 (212) 708-0300	**Turbulence**, 1/31, Act/Dra, R, 103 min., DTS. Ray Liotta, Lauren Holly, Hector Elizondo. Dir. Robert Butler.	**Touch**, 2/14, Dra. Tom Arnold, Bridget Fonda, Christopher Walken, Gina Gershon, Janeane Garofalo. Dir: Paul Schrader.	**Hoodlum**(formerly Hoods), 3/28, Dra, R Laurence Fishburne, Tim Roth, Andy Garcia, Vanessa Williams.Dir: Bill Duke.	
Miramax (212) 941-3800 (213) 845-4200	**Citizen Ruth**, 12/13 ltd, 1/10 exp, Com, R, Dolby SR, Flat, 102 min. Laura Dern, Swoosie Kurtz. Dir: Alexander Payne **Albino Alligator**, 12/13 ltd, 1/17 exp, Dra, R, Scope, 96 min. Dir: Kevin Spacey **The Substance of Fire**, 12/6 ltd, 1/10 exp, Dra, R, Dolby SR, Flat, 101 min. Sarah Jessica Parker. Dir. Daniel Sullivan. **Kolya**.1/24 NY, LA, Dra, R, 111 min., Dolby A, Flat. Zdenek Szerak. Dir. Jan Szerak	**Cosi**, Com, 2/21NY, LA, 100 min. Toni Collette, Barry Otto, Ben Mendlesohn, Rachel Griffiths, Pamela Rabe. Dir Mark Joffe. **Fist of Legend**, 2/28, Act/Adv. Jet Li. Dir. Gordon Chan.	**Rhyme & Reason**, 3/7, Doc. Features Ice-T, Salt N Peppa. Dir: Peter Spirer. **Wide Awake**, 3/14, Dra, PG. Dana Delany, Denis Leary. Dir: M. Night Shyamalan. **Mimic**, 3/19, SF, Mira Sorvino, Josh Brolin, Charles Dutton. Dir: Guillermo del Toro. **Chasing Amy**, 3/28 NY, LA, April exp., Rom/Com, 105 min. Ben Affleck, Joey Lauren Adams.Dir: Kevin Smith.	**Sonatine**, 4/4 NY, LA. Dra. Dir/Star: Takeshi Kitano **Brassed Off**, 4/25 NY LA, Dra, 107 min, Dolb SR, Flat. Pete Postlethwaite, Tara Fitzgerald, Ewan McGregor. Dir. Mark Herman. **Nightwatch** (remake), Dra. Nick Nolte, Ewan McGregor, Patricia Arquette, Josh Brolin. Dir: Ole Bornedal.
New Line (310) 854-5811 (212) 649-4900	**Jackie Chan's First Strike** 1/10, Act, PG-13, 83 min. SR, SR-D, SDDS, Anamporphic. Jackie Chan, Jackson Lou, Chen Chun Wu, Bill Tung. Dir. Stanley Tong	**Dangerous Ground**, 2/12, Act/Dra., R, SR, SDDS, Flat. Elizabeth Hurley, Ice Cube, Ving Rhames. Dir: Darrell James Roodt	**Love Jones**, 3/14, Rom/Com, R. SR, SR-D, SDDS, Flat. Larenz Tate, Nia Long. Dir. Theodore Witcher **B.A.P.s**, 3/28, Com, R. SR, SR-D, SDDS, Flat. Halle Berry, Martin Landau, Ian Richardson, Natalie Desselle. Dir. Robert Townsend.	
Paramount (213) 956-5000 (212) 373-7000	**The Relic**, 1/17, Thr, R, 109 min. Penelope Ann Miller, Tom Sizemore, Linda Hunt. Dir. Peter Hyams.	**Beautician and the Beast**, 2/7, Com, PG, 109 min. Fran Drescher, Timothy Dalton, Michael Learner, Phyllis Newman. Dir. Ken Kwapis.	**Howard Stern's Private Parts**, 3/7, Com, R Howard Stern, Robin Duivers, Fred Norris, Mary McCormack. Dir: Betty Thomas. **The Saint**, 3/14, Act/Adv. Val Kilmer, Elisabeth Shue. Dir: Phillip Noyce. **The Godfather** (1972 reissue), 3/21 ltd., Dra, R. Marlon Brando, James Caan, Al Pacino, Robert DuVall. Dir: Francis Ford Coppola	**Breakdown**, 4/11, R. Kurt Russell, Kathleen Quinlin, J.T. Walsh. Dir: Jonathan Mostow. **'Til There Was You**, 4/25, Rom/Com. Jeanne Tripplehorn, Dylan McDermott, Sara Jessica Parker, Jennifer Aniston. Dir: Scott Winant.
TriStar (310) 280-8000 (212) 833-8500	**Beverly Hills Ninja**, 1/17, Com, PG-13, 90 mins., Flat, Dolby A & SR, SDDS. Chris Farley, Nicolette Sheridan. Dir: Dennis Dugan.	**The Pest**, 2/7, Com, PG-13, 88 min., Dolby A, SR, SDDS, Flat. John Leguizamo, Jeffery Jones, Edoardo Ballerini. Dir: Paul Miller **Donnie Brasco**, 2/28, Dra, 122min, Dolby A, SR, SDDS, Flat. Johnny Depp, Al Pacino, Anne Heche, Michael Madsen. Dir: Mike Newell.		
20th Century Fox (310) 369-1000 (212) 556-2400	**Star Wars Special Edition** (1977 reissue), 1/31, SF, PG, ~125 min. Dolby SR & SRD, SDDS, DTS, Anamorphic. Harrison Ford, Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher, Alec Guiness, Peter Cushing. Dir. George Lucas.	**The Empire Strikes Back Special Edition** (1980 reissue), 2/21, SF, PG, ~127 min. Dobly SR & SRD, SDDS, DTS, Anamorphic. Harrison Ford, Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher, Billy Dee Williams. Dir: Irvin Kershner. **Inventing the Abbots**, 2/28, Dra, R, ~105 min. Dolby SR, SDDS, Anamorphic. Liv Tyler, Joaquin Phoenix, Billy Crudup, Jennifer Connelly Dir: Pat O'Conner.	**Return of the Jedi Special Edition** (1983 reissue), 3/7, SF, PG, Dobly SR & SRD, SDDS, DTS, Anamorphic. Harrison Ford, Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher, Billy Dee Williams. Dir: Richard Marquand **Turbo: A Power Rangers Adventure**, 3/26, Adv, Dolby SR, Flat. Jason David Frank, Steve Cardenas, Catherine Sutherland. Dir: David Winning	**Picture Perfect**, 4/4, Rom/Com, ~110 min. Dolby SR, Flat. Jennifer Aniston, Kevin Bacon, Olympia Dukakis, Jay Mohr, Illeana Douglas. Dir. Glenn Gordon Caron **Volcano**, Act/Adv, Dolby SR, SRD, SDDS, DTS, Flat. Tommy Lee Jones, Anne Heche, Gaby Hoffmann, Don Cheadle, John Corbett. Dir: Mick Jackson.
Universal (818) 777-1000 (212) 759-7500	**Fierce Creatures**, 1/24, Com, PG-13, 98 min, Anamorphic, Dolby SR, DTS. Kevin Kline, Jamie Lee Curtis, John Cleese, Michael Palin. Dir: Robert Young	**Dante's Peak**, 2/7, Act/Adv, PG-13, Dolby SR, DTS. Pierce Brosnan, Linda Hamilton. Dir. Roger Donaldson	**Liar Liar**, 3/21, Com, Dolby SR, DTS. Jim Carrey, Maura Tierney, Cary Elwes, John Lovitz, Swoosie Kurtz, Jennifer Tilly. Dir. Tom Shadyac.	**That Old Feeling**, 4/4, Com, Dolby SR, DTS. Bette Midler, Dennis Fanna, Danny Nucci. Dir: Carl Reiner. **McHale's Navy**, Com, Dolby SR, DTS. Tom Arnold, David Alan Grier, Dean Stockwell, Tim Curry. Dir: Bryan Spicer. **Reach the Rock**, Dra/Com. Alessandro Nivola, William Sadler, Bruce Norris, Brooke Langton. Dir: Bill Ryan.
Warner Bros. (818) 954-6000 (212) 484-8000		**Vegas Vacation**, 2/14, Com, PG, 91 min. Chevy Chase, Beverly D'Angelo, Randy Quaid. Dir: Stephen Kessler. **Rosewood**, 2/21 wide, Dra, R, 139 min. Jon Voight, Ving Rhames, Michael Rooker, Ester Rolle. Dir: John Singleton	**Leo Tolstoy's Anna Karenina** 3/7 ltd, Dra, 105 min. Sophie Marceau, Mia Kirschner. Dir: Bernard Rose. **Selena** 3/21, Dra. Jennifer Lopez, Edward James Olmos. Dir: Gregory Nava. **Cats Don't Dance**, 3/28, Ani, G, 69 min. Voices: Scott Bakula, Kathy Najimy. Dir: Mark Dindal. **187**, Dra. Samuel L. Jackson, John Heard, Kelly Rowan. Dir: Kevin Reynolds.	**Murder at 1600**, 4/11, Thr, 106 min. Wesley Snipes, Diane Lane, David Benzali, Dennis Miller. Dir: Dwight H. Little. **Addicted to Love**, 4/18, Rom/Com. Meg Ryan, Matthew Broderick, Kelly Preston. Dir: Griffin Dunne. **L.A. Confidential**, 4/25, Dra. Kevin Spacey, Kim Basinger, Danny DeVito, Russell Crowe, James Cromwell. Dir: Curtis Hanson

FEATURE CHART — APRIL 1997

May	June	Forthcoming	
Nothing to Lose, 5/23, Com. Martin Lawrence, Tim Robbins, John C. McGinley, Giancarlo Esposito, Kelly Preston. Dir. Steve Oedekerk	**ConAir**, 6/6, Act/Adv, Scope. Nicolas Cage, John Malkovich, John Cusack, Steve Buscemi, Ving Rhames, Colm Meaney Dir. Simon West. **Hercules**, 6/27, Ani. Voices: James Woods, Danny DeVito, Tate Donovan. Dirs: Ron Clements, John Musker.	**George of the Jungle**, July, Live Act. Brendan Fraser, Leslie Mann. Dir: Sam Weisman. **Gone Fishin'**, Aug, Com, PG. Joe Pesci, Danny Glover. Dir: Christopher Cain. **Deep Rising**, Act/Thr. Treat Williams. Dir. Stephen Sommers. **In Pursuit of Honor** (formerly G.I. Jane, Navy Cross), Act. Demi Moore, Viggo Mortensen. Dir: Ridley Scott. **Playing God**, Dra. Timothy Hutton. Dir. Andy Wilson. **Rocket Man** (formerly Space Cadet), Harland Williams. **The Absentminded Professor** (aka Flubber), Com. Robin Williams. **An Alan Smithee Film** (working title), Com. Sylvester Stallone, Whoopie Goldberg, Jackie Chan. **A Thousand Acres** Dra. Jessica Lange, Michelle Pfeiffer, Jennifer Jason Leigh. Dir: Jocelyn Moorhouse. **Kundun**, Dra Dir. Martin Scorsese. **Ishmael**, Dra Dir. Jon Turteltaub. **The Little Mermaind** (reissue), Ani. **Firelight**, Dra Dir. William Nicholson.	**Buena Vista** (818) 567-5000 (212) 593-8900
The Fifth Element, 5/9, SF. Bruce Willis, Gary Oldman, Ian Holm, Milla Jovovich. Dir: Luc Besson		**Men in Black**, 7/2, SF, Dolby A, SR, SDDS. Tommy Lee Jones, Will Smith, Linda Fiorentino, Rip Torn. Dir: Barry Sonnenfeld. **Air Force One** (formerly AFD), 7/25, Act, SDDS. Harrison Ford, Gary Oldman, Glenn Close. Dir: Wolfgang Peterson. **Excess Baggage**, Aug, Act/Adv, Dolby A, SR, SDDS. Alicia Silverstone, Benicio del Toro, Christopher Walken. Dir: Marco Brambilla. **Buddy**, Fall, Com. Rene Russo, Robbie Coltrane, Paul Reubens. Dir: Caroline Thompson. **Gattaca** (formerly The Eighth Day), Fall, SF. Ethan Hawke, Uma Thurman, Jude Law. Dir: Andrew Niccol. **Apt Pupil**, Dra. Ian McKellen, Brad Renfro, Kevin Pollack, Joe Morton. Dir: Bryan Singer.	**Columbia** (310) 280-8000 (212) 833-8500
Warriors of Virtue, 5/2, Act/Adv, PG, DTS. Angus MacFadyen, Mario Yedidia, Marley Shelton, Chao-Li Chi. Dir. Ronny Yu.		**All Along the Watchtower**, Dra. **All the Pretty Horses**, Dra Dir: Mike Nichols. **Bond 18** X-mas. Pierce Brosnan, Michelle Khan (Yeoh). **The Day After Tomorrow**, Sus. **The Fantasticks**, Mus/Com, PG, 108 min. Joel Grey, Joe McIntyre. Dir. Michael Ritchie. **Fireworks**, Dra. Dir. Mark Rydell. **Killer's Kiss**, Act/Thr. Linda Fiorentino. **Kiss Me Deadly**, Thr. Dir. Michael Mann. **Sixteen Pleasures**. Dir: Michael Apted. **Supernova**, SF/Thr. Dir: Joe Nimziki. **To Brave Every Danger**, Dra. **Wild Card** Dir. Robert Altman. **Hurricane**, Dra, Fall. Brendan Sexton III. Dir: Morgan J. Freeman. **The Fortune Cookie**, Com. Bette Midler, Candice Bergen. Dir: John Amiel. **The Man In The Iron Mask**, Adv. Leonardo DiCaprio, John Malkovich, Gabriel Byrne. Dir. Randall Wallace.	**MGM/UA** (310) 449-3000 (212) 708-0300
Children of the Revolution, 5/1, Com, 102 min. Judy Davis, Geoffrey Rush. Dir: Peter Duncan. **Operation Condor** (Hong Kong), 5/2, Act/Adv. Carol Cheng, Ikeda Shoko. Dir/Star: Jackie Chan. **Temptress Moon**, 5/9, Dra, R. Gong Li, Leslie Cheung. Dir: Chen Kaige. **Shall We Dance** (Japan), 5/16, Com, PG. Koji Yasuyo, Tamiyo Kusakari. Dir: Masayuki Suo	**Mouth to Mouth** (Spain), 6/6, Com, R, Dolby SRD, Scope, 110 min. Javier Bardem, Maria Barranco. Dir: Manuel Gomez Pereira. **Love Serenade**, 6/20. Miranda Otto. Dir: Shirley Barrett. **Talk of Angels**, 6/27, Dra, PG-13, 97 min., Dolby SR. Polly Walker, Vincent Perez. Dir: Nick Hamm.	**Wings of a Dove**, 7/11, Dra. Helena Bonham Carter, Linus Roache. Dir: Ian Softley. **B. Monkey**, 7/18, Dra. Jared Harris, Rupert Everett. Dir: Michael Radford. **Copland**, 8/1, Dra. Sylvester Stallone, Robert DeNiro. Dir: James Mangold. **An American Werewolf in Paris**, 8/29, Hor/Com. Julie Delpy, Tom Everett Scott. Dir. Anthony Waller. **She's DeLovely**, 9/12, Dra. Sean Penn, Robin Wright, John Travolta, Gena Rowlands. Dir: Nick Cassavetes. **Dogwater**, Rom/Com. David Schwimmer, Lara Flynn Boyle. Dir: David Schwimmer. **A Midsummer's Night Dream**. Alex Jennings, Barry Lynch. Dir. Adrian Noble. **Sarajevo**, Dra. Woody Harrelson, Marisa Tomei. Dir: Michael Winterbottom. **Wishful Thinking**, Fall. Jennifer Beals, James LeGros. **The House of Yes**, Dra/Com. Parker Posey.	**Miramax** (212) 941-3800 (213) 845-4200
Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery, 5/2, Com. Mike Meyers, Elizabeth Hurley, Mimi Rogers, Michael York. Dir: Jay Roach. **Boogie Nights**, 5/23 ltd, 6/13 wide, Com/Dra. Mark Wahlberg, Julianne Moore. Dir: Paul Thomas Anderson.		**Money Talks**, 7/18, Act/Com. Charlie Sheen, Chris Tucker, Heather Locklear. Dir. Brett Ratner. **Mortal Kombat II: Annihilation**, 8/1, Act. **Spawn**, 8/22, SF. Michael Jai White, John Leguizamo. Dir. Mark Dippe. **Trial and Error**, 8/29, Com, PG-13. Michael Richards, Jeff Daniels. Dir: Jonathan Lynn. **One Night** (formerly One Night Stand), 9/26, Dra. Flat. Wesley Snipes, Nastassija Kinski. Dir. Mike Figgis. **Most Wanted** (formerly America's Most Wanted), 10/3, Act/Com. Keenan Ivory Wayans. Dir. David Hogan. **Woo**, 11/7, Rom/Com. Jada Pinkett. Dir: Daisy Von Scherler Mayer. **Dark City**, 9/12, Thr. William Hurt. Dir: Alex Proyas. **Overnight Delivery**. Jason Bloom. **Wag the Dog**, '98. Dustin Hoffman, Robert DeNiro. Dir: Barry Levinson. **Lost in Space**, '98. William Hurt, Gary Oldman. Dir: Stephen Hopkins. **The Women**. Summer '98, Com. Julia Roberts, Meg Ryan.	**New Line** (310) 854-5811 (212) 649-4900
The Flood, 5/2, Act. Christian Slater, Morgan Freeman, Minnie Driver, Randy Quaid. Dir: Mikael Salomon.	**In and Out**, 6/13, Com. Kevin Kline, Tom Selleck, Joan Cusack, Debbie Reynolds. Dir: Frank Oz.	**Titanic**, 7/2, Rom/Adv. Bill Paxton, Kate Winslet, Leonardo DiCaprio. Dir. James Cameron. **Face Off**, 7/2, Act. John Travolta, Nicolas Cage. Dir: John Woo. **The Truman Show**, 8/8, Dra. Jim Carrey, Dennis Hopper. Dir: Peter Weir. **Event Horizen**, 8/22. Laurence Fishburne, Kathleen Quinlin. Dir: Paul Anderson. **The Magic Hour** (tentative title), 9/19. Paul Newman, Susan Sarandon. Dir. Robert Benton. **Going West in America**, Fall, Thr. Dennis Quaid, Danny Glover. Dir. Jeb Stuart. **Kiss the Girls**, Fall, Sus. Morgan Freeman, Ashley Judd. Dir: Gary Fleder. **Night Falls on Manhattan**, Fall, Dra. Andy Garcia, Richard Dreyfuss. Dir: Sidney Lumet. **Fairy Tale: A True Story** (formerly Illumination), Dra. Peter O'Toole. Dir: Charles Sturridge. **Prince Valiant**, Act/Adv. Stephen Moyer. Dir. Anthony Hickox. **Rainmaker**, Dra. Laurence Fishburne, Claire Danes, Mickey Rourke. Dir. Francis Ford Coppola.	**Paramount** (213) 956-5000 (212) 373-7000
	My Best Friend's Wedding, 6/27. Rom/Com. Julia Roberts, Dermot Mulroney, Cameron Diaz. Dir. P.J. Hogan.	**Desperate Measures**, 8/8, Act. Michael Keaton, Andy Garcia. Dir: Barbet Schroeder. **Seven Years in Tibet**, 10/10, Dra. Brad Pitt. Dir. Jean-Jacques Annaud. **Starship Troopers**, 11/7, SF, SDDS. Neil Patrick Harris, Denise Richards. Dir: Paul Verhoeven. **Kilronen**, Thr, SDDS. Jonathan Schaech, Jessica Lange, Gwyneth Paltrow. Dir: Jonathan Darby. **Old Friends**, Dra. Jack Nicholson, Helen Hunt, Greg Kinnear. Dir: James Brooks. **Peter Pan**, Adv. Dir: John Hughes. **Stinkers**, Com. B.D. Wong, Bronson Pinchot. Dir: Barnet Kellman. **Killing Time**, Thr. Kendra Torgan, Craig, Fairbrass. Dir: Bharat Nalun. **The Mark of Zorro**, Act/Adv. Antonio Banderas, Anthony Hopkins, Catherine Jones. Dir: Martin Campbell.	**TriStar** (310) 280-8000 (212) 833-8500
Out to Sea, 5/30, Com. Dolby SR, SDDS, Flat. Walter Matthau, Jack Lemmon, Brent Spiner, Dyan Cannon. Dir: Martha Coolidge		**Speed II: Cruise Control**, 7/2, Act. Sandra Bullock, Jason Patric, Willem Dafoe. Dir: Jan De Bont. **Home Alone 3**, 7/11, Alex D. Linz, Olek Krupa, Rya Kihlstedt. Dir: Raja Gosnell. **Alien Resurrection**, 8/1. Sigourney Weaver, Winona Ryder. Dir: Jean-Pierre Jeunet. **Firestorm**, Oct, Act./Adv. Howie Long, Suzy Amis, Scott Glen. Dir.: Dean Semler. **Anastasia**. 11/21, Ani. Dirs. Don Bluth, Gary Goldman. **Bookworm**, Fall, Act./Thr. Anthony Hopkins, Alec Baldwin. Dir: Lee Tamahori. **Doctor Dolittle**, Com. Eddie Murphy. Dir. Betty Thomas. **Great Expectations**, Fall, Dra. Robert De Niro, Gwyneth Paltrow, Ethan Hawke. Dir. Alfonso Cuaron. **A Life Less Ordinary**. Dra. Cameron Diaz, Holly Hunter. Dir. Danny Boyle. **Soul Food**. Dra. Vanessa Williams, Mehki Phifer. Dir: George Tillman, Jr. **Untitled Bulworth**. Halle Berry, Paul Sorvino. Dir/Star: Warren Beatty.	**20th Century Fo** (310) 369-1000 (212) 556-2400
The Lost World, 5/23, Adv, Dolby SR, DTS. Jeff Goldblum, Julianne Moore, Vince Vaughn, Pete Postlethwaite, Arliss Howard, Richard Schiff, Peter Stormare, Vanessa Lee Chester. Dir: Steven Spielberg.		**Leave it to Beaver**, 8/1, Com. Janine Turner, Christopher McDonald. Dir. Andy Cadiff. **Kull the Conqueror**, 8/29, Adv. Kevin Sorbo, Tia Carrere. Dir: John Nicolella. **The Fairy Godmother** (formerly A Simple Wish), Com. Mara Wilson, Martin Short, Kathleen Turner, Robert Pastorelli. Dir: Michael Ritchie. **Untitled Jackal Project**. Thr. Bruce Willis, Richard Gere, Sidney Portier. Dir. Michael Canton-Jones. **Virus**. Thr. Jamie Lee Curtis, Donald Sutherland. Dir: John Bruno. **Primary Colors**, Dra. John Travolta. Dir: Mike Nichols. **Meet Joe Black**, Rom/Dra. Brad Pitt. Dir. Martin Brest.	**Universal** (818) 777-1000 (212) 759-7500
Father's Day. 5/9, Com. Robin Williams, Billy Crystal, Natassja Kinski, Julia Louis-Dreytuss. Dir: Ivan Reitman.	**Batman and Robin**, 6/20, Act/Adv. George Clooney, Chris O'Donnell, Alicia Silverstone, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Uma Thurman. Dir: Joel Schumacher	**Contact**, 7/11, Thr. Jodie Foster, Matthew McConaughey. Dir. Robert Zemeckis. **Conspiracy Theory**, 7/25, Thr. Mel Gibson, Julia Roberts. Dir. Richard Donner. **Edwards and Hunt**. July, Com. Chris Farley. Dir: Christopher Guest. **Wild America**, July, Adv, PG. Jonathan Taylor Thomas. Dir: Bill Dear. **Free Willy 3**, 8/1, Fam/Adv. Jason James Richter. Dir. Sam Pillsbury. **Devil's Advocate**, Aug. Al Pacino. Dir: Taylor Hackford. **Steel**, Aug, Act/Adv, Shaquille O'Neal. Dir: Kenneth Johnson. **Mad City**. Dra. John Travolta, Dustin Hoffman. Dir: Constantin Costa-Gravas. **Home Fries**, Com. Drew Barrymore, Gary Busey. Dir: Dean Parisot. **Incognito**. Thr, Jason Patric. Dir: John Badham. **Watch That Man**, 7/97. Bill Murray. Dir: Jon Amiel. **Fire Down Below**, Act. Steven Segal. **Pre**, Dra. Billy Crudup. Dir: Robert Towne. **Fallen**. Dra. Denzel Washington, John Goodman. Dir: Embeth Davidtz.	**Warner Bros.** (818) 954-6000 (212) 484-8000

BOXOFFICE Independent Feature Chart APRIL1997

MARCH

Artificial Eye
212-255-1922

Mon Homme *(France)*, Com/Dra, 98 min. Anouk Grinberg, Gerard Lanvin. Dir: Bertrand Blier. 3/7 NY

Artistic License
212-265-9119

Sleepover, Dra, 88 min. Michael Albanese, Karl Giant. Dir: John Sullivan. 3/10 NY

Arrow
212-258-2200

Madame Butterfly *(Italy)*, Mus, 129 min. Richard Troxell. Dir: Frederic Mitterrand. 3/1 LA

East West Film Partners
212-594-3334

Good Luck, 98 min, Gregory Hines, Vincent D'Onofrio. Dir: Richard LaBrie. 3/7 ltd, 3/27 exp

Fine Line
212-649-4800

The Quiet Room, Dra, PG, 93 min. Chloe Ferguson, Celine O'Leary. Dir: Rolf de Heer. 3/21NY, 4/18exp.
Crash, Dra, NC-17, 100 min. Holly Hunter, James Spader, Dir: David Cronenberg. 3/21

First Look
310-855-1199

The Designated Mourner. Dra/Com. Mike Nichols, Miranda Richardson. Dir: David Hare.

First Run
212-243-0600

The Watermelon Woman, Com, 85 min. Guinevere Turner. Act/Dir: Cheyrl Dunye.

Fox Searchlight
310-369-4402

The Van, Com. Colm Meaney, Donal O'Kelly. Dir: Stephen Frears. 3/14
Love and Other Catastrophes *(Australia)*, Com, 79 min. Frances O'Connor, Alice Garner. Dir: Emma Kate Croghan. 3/28

Gramercy
310-777-1960

Commandments, Dra. Courteney Cox, Aidan Quinn, Anthony LaPaglia. Dir: Daniel Taplitz.

Legacy
213-467-3700

Cadillac Ranch, Dra. Suzy Amis. 3/14 ltd

Live
818-778-3174

Gentlemen Don't Eat Poets, Dra, R, 98 min. Sting, Theresa Russell. Dir: John Paul Davidson.
Dead Men Can't Dance, Act/Dra, 101 min. Michael Biehn. Dir: Steven Anderson. 3/7 ltd, 3/21exp

Northern Arts
413-268-9301

Hearts and Minds, Thr, R, 105 min. Danny Keogh, Patrick Shai. Dir: Ralph Ziman. 3/14
Gray's Anatomy, Com, NR, 80 min. Spalding Gray. Dir: Steven Soderbergh. 3/19

October
212-539-4000

Female Perversions, Dra, R, 119 min. Tilda Swinton, Amy Madigan, Karen Sillas. Dir: Susan Streitfeld. 3/28 NY, LA

Orion Pictures
310-282-0550

City of Industry, Dra. Timothy Hutton, Harvey Keitel. Dir: John Irvin. 3/7

Phaedra Cinema
310-319-5346

Sudden Manhattan, Rom/Com, 85 min. Louise Lasser. Dir/Star: Adrienne Shelly. 3/7
Without Air, Dra, 88 min. Lauri Crook. Dir: Neil Abramson.

Seventh Art
213-845-1455

Salut Cousin *(French Algeria)*, Com, 95 min. Gad Elmaleh, Mess Hattou. Dir: Merzak Allouache.

Strand
310-395-5002

Boys Life 2, *(shorts compilation)*, Com/Dra, 90 min. Dir: Four directors. 3/7

Tara Releasing
415-454-5838

The Sadness of Sex, Com, NR, 86 min. Dir: Rupert Wainwright. 3/14

Trimark
310-314-3040

Kama Sutra, Dra, 114 min. Sarita Choudhury. Dir: Mira Nair. 3/7 exp
Underworld, Thr. Denis Leary, Joe Mantegna. Dir: Roger Christian.

Cinema Village Features
212-431-5119

Fetishes, Doc. Dir: Nick Broomfield.

APRIL

CFP
212-995-9662

Hollow Reed, Dra, 106 min. Martin Donovan, Ian Hart. Dir: Angela Pope. 4/18

Fine Line
Pink Flamingos, (1972 reissue), Divine. Dir: John Waters. 4/11
Roseanna's Grave, Com, PG-13, 99 min. Jean Reno, Mercedes Ruehl. Dir: Paul Weiland. 4/18
All Over Me, Dra, R, 90 min. Alison Folland. Dir: Alex Sichel. 4/25

First Look
A Brother's Kiss, Dra, Nick Chinlund, Michael Raynor, John Leguizamo. Dir: Seth Zvi Rosenfeld.
This is the Sea, Rom/Dra. Richard Harris, Gabriel Byrne. Dir: Mary McGuckian.

Fox Searchlight
Paradise Road, Dra. Glenn Close, Frances McDormand, Julianna Marguiles. Dir: Bruce Beresford. 4/25

Goldwyn
310-284-9273

Kissed, Dra, 80 min. Molly Parker, Peter Outerbridge. Dir: Lynne Stopkewich. 4/11

Gramercy
Keys to Tulsa, Thr. Eric Stoltz, James Spader. Dir: Leslie Grief. 4/11 ltd

Live
The Winner, Thr. Rebecca de Mornay, Vincent D'Onofrio. Dir: Alex Cox.

New Yorker Films
212-247-6110

Flamenco, Doc, 100 min. Dir: Carlos Saura. 4/4

Northern Arts
Schizopolis, Com, 99 min. Steven Soderbergh, Betsy Brantley. Dir: Steven Soderbergh. 4/11

October
Traveller, Crime/Dra. Bill Paxton, Mark Wahlberg, Julianna Marguilies. Dir: Jack Green.

Orion Pictures
Eight Heads in a Duffle Bag, Com/Dra, R. Joe Pesci, Carol Kane. Dir: Tom Schulman. 4/25

Phaedra Cinema
The Next Step, Dra, 90 min. Rick Negron. Dir: Christian Faber

Rhino Films
310-474-4778

Plump Fiction, Com, 85 min. Julie Brown, Sandra Bernhard. Dir: Bob Koherr.

Shadow Distribution
207-872-5111

Mondo *(French)*, Dra, 87 min. Philippe Petit. Dir: Tony Gatliff

Sony Classics
212-833-8851

Broken English, Dra, 91 min. Rade Serbedzija, Sashka Vujcic Dir: Gregor Nicholas.
The Myth of Fingerprints, Dra. Noah Wyle, Julianne Moore, Roy Schneider. Dir: B. Freundlich.

Strand
Late Bloomers, Rom/Dra, 104 min. Connie Nelson, Lisa Peterson. Dir: Julia and Gretchen Dyer.

Theafilm
213-368-1778

A Chorus of Disapproval *(1989 UK reissue)*, Com. Jeremy Irons, Anthony Hopkins. Dir: Michael Wimer.

Trimark
Warrior of Waverly Street, SF. Dir: Manny Coto. Spring
Nothing Personal, Dra, R. John Lynch. Dir: Thaddeus O'Sullivan.
Ripe, Dra. Dir: Mo Ogrodnik.

Triumph
310-280-8059

Bliss, Rom/Dra. Terence Stamp, Craig Sheffer, Sheryl Lee. Dir: Lance Young. 4/4
The Assignment *(formerly Jackal)*. Act. Aidan Quinn, Ben Kingsley, Donald Sutherland. Dir: Christian Duguay. 4/25

Zeitgeist
212-274-1989

Irma Vep *(France)*, Com, NR, 98 min. Maggie Cheung. Dir: Olivier Assayas.

MAY

Artificial Eye
Happiness *(France, Le Bonheur Dans Lepres)*, Com, 102 min. Michel Serrault, Eddy Mitchell. Dir: Etienne Chatiliez. 5/16 NY

CFP
Guantanamera, Com, NR, 124 min. Dirs: Thomas Gutierrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabio Rey. 5/16

Fine Line
Letters of Love *(Japan, formerly Love Letters)*, Dra, 116 min. Dir: Shunji Iwai. 5/2 NY, 5/23 LA
Gummo. Dra. Chloe Sevigny, Max Perlich, Nick Sutton. Dir: Harmony Korine. 5/16
Love! Valor! Compassion! Dra, 115 min. Jason Alexander, John Glover. Dir: Joe Mantello. 5/16

First Run
Brothers in Trouble, Dra, 102 min. Om Puri. Dir: Udayan Prasad. 5/14

Fox Searchlight
Intimate Relations, Dra, 102 min. Julie Walters, Rupert Graves. Dir: Philip Goodhew. 5/9 ltd.

Goldwyn
Paperback Romance *(formerly Lucky Break)*, Rom/Com. Anthony LaPaglia. Dir: Ben Lewin.
Rough Magic, Rom/Adv, 104 min. Bridget Fonda, Russell Crowe. Dir: Clare Peploe.

New Yorker Films
La Promesse, Dra, NR, 93 min. Dirs: Jean-Pierre Gardenne, Luc Gardenne. 5/16 NY

BOXOFFICE Independent Feature Chart APRIL 1997

Milestone Film & Video
212-865-7449

Woman in the Dunes *(Japan, 1964 reissue)*, 72 min. Dir: Hiroshi Teshigahara.
Antonio Gaudi *(Japan, 1985 rerelease)*, Dir: Hiroshi Teshigahara

Strand
Contempt *(1963 reissue)*, Dra/Com, 103 min. Brigitte Bardot. Dir: Jean-Luc Godard.
Timothy Leary's Dead, Doc, 80 min. Dir: Paul Davids.

Trimark
Sprung, Com, Tisha Campbell, Joe Torry. Dir/Star: Rusty Cundieff. 5/2

Triumph
Truth or Consequences, Sus, Kevin Pollack. Dir/Star: Kiefer Sutherland. 5/2
Masterminds *(formerly Smart Alec)*, Act/Com. Patrick Stewart, Vincent Kartheiser, Brenda Fricker. Dir: Roger Christian. 5/30

JUNE

CFP
The Pillow Book, Dra, 126 min. Vivian Wu, Ewan McGregor. Dir: Peter Greenaway. 6/6

Fine Line
Winter Guest, Dra. Emma Thompson, Phylidda Law. Dir: Alan Rickman. 6/18

First Look
Different For Girls, Rom/Com, 97 min. Rupert Graves, Steven Mackintosh. Dir: Richard Spence.

Kino Intl.
212-629-6880

M *(1931 German re-issue)*, Dra. Peter Lorre. Dir: Fritz Lang. 6/27

New Yorker Films
Deep Crimson, Dra, NR, 114 min. Dir: Arturo Ripstein. 6/20
Gabbeh, Dra, 75 min. Abbas Sayahi, Hossein Moharami. Dir: Mohsen Makhmalbas

Orion Classics
310-282-0550

Ulee's Gold, Dra, 113 min. Peter Fonda, Patricia Richardson. Dir: Victor Nunez.

Roxie Releasing
415-431-3611

The Last Time I Commited Suicide, Dra, 92 min. Thomas Jane, Keanu Reeves. Dir: Stephen Kay

Strand
The Tit and the Moon, Com, 92 min. Dir: Bigas Lunas.
La Sentinelle. *(France)*, Thr, 144 min. Emmanuel Salinger. Dir: Arnaud Desplechin.

JULY

Gramercy
Twin Town, Com/Thr. Rhys Ifans, Llyr Evans. Dir: Kevin Allen.

First Look
Slaves to the Underground, Dra, 92 min. Marisa Ryan, Jason Bortz. Dir: Kristine Peterson.

FORTHCOMING

Arrow
Breathing Room, Rom/Com, 90 min. Dan Futterman. Dir: John Sherman. 11/8

Cabin Fever
203-622-3449

The Elevator, Com. Martin Landau, Martin Sheen.
The Secret Agent Club, Act. Hulk Hogan, Barry Bostwick.
Skeletons, Hor. Dir: Ken Russell.

CFP
Bandwagon, Com/Mus, NR, 103 min. Kevin Corrigna, Lee Holmes. Dir: John Schultz. Sept

Cinema Parallel
To Have (Or Not), Dra, NR, 93 min. Dir. Laetitia Masson.
Talking To Strangers (reissue). 8/2

Dove
310-786-1600

Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, Com/SF, 92 min. Douglas Adams. Dir: Neil Davies.
Inside the Goldmine, Thr, 92 min. Josh Evans, Alan Marshall, Alicia Tully Jensen. Dir: Josh Evans.

Dreamworks SKG
818-733-7000

El Dorado: City of Gold, Ani. Dir: Will Finn.
Mousehunt, Com/Ani. Nathan Lane, Lee Evans. Dir: Gore Virbinsky. 11/21
The Peacemaker, Act/Adv. George Clooney, Nicole Kidman. Dir: Mimi Leder. Sept.
The Prince of Egypt, Ani. Dirs: Simon Wells, Steve Hicker and Brenda Chapman.
Amistad, (formerly Mutiny) Dra, Matthew McConaughey. Dir: Steven Spielberg.
Saving Private Ryan, Dra. Tom Hanks. Dir: Steven Spielberg.
Blue Vision, Dir: Neil Jordan.
Deep Impact. Dir: Mimi Leder

Filmopolis
310-914-1776

In a Strange City. Winston Chao, Kuei-mai Yang. Dir: Chi Yin.

Fine Line
nowhere, James Duval, Traci Lords. Dir: Gregg Araki. 8/22
Head Above Water, Dra/Com, PG-13, 92 min. Harvey Keitel, Cameron Diaz. Dir: Jim Wilson.
The Tears of Julian Po. Christian Slater, Robin Tunney. Dir: Alan Wade.
Girl Talk, Dra/Com. Randi Ingerman, Paget Brewster. Dir/Star: Troy Beyer.

First Look
Mrs. Dalloway, Dra. Vanessa Redgrave, Rupert Graves. Dir: Marleen Gorris. Fall
The Apprentice.

First Run
Hamsun. Max Von Sydow. Dir: Jan Troell
Six O'Clock News. Dir: Ross McElwee.
Project Grizzly. Dir: Peter Lynch.

Fox Searchlight
Ice Storm, Dra. Kevin Kline, Joan Allen, Sigourney Weaver, Christina Ricci. Dir: Ang Lee. Fall.
Cousin Bette, Dra. Jessica Lange, Elisabeth Shue, Bob Hoskins. Dir: Des McAnuff. Fall.
The Full Monte, Com, 90 min. Robert Carlisle. Dir: Peter Cattaneo. Aug
Oscar & Lucinda. Ralph Fiennes. Dir: Gillian Armstrong.
Polish Wedding. Claire Danes, Gabriel Byrne, Lena Olin. Dir: Theresa Connelly
Star Maps, Dra, 90 min. Douglas Spain. Dir: Miguel Arteta.

Goldwyn
Napolean, Ani, G, 82 min. Voices: Adam Wylie, Bronson Pinchot. Dir: Mario Andreacchio. Sum
The Big Red. Jonathan Schaech, Rod Taylor. Dir: Stephan Elliott.
I Love You... Don't Touch Me, Com, 86 min. Marla Schaffel. Dir: Julie Davis.

Gramercy
How To Be a Player, Com. Bill Belamy. Dir: Lionel Martin. Aug
The Matchmaker, Com. Jeanene Garafalo. Dir: Mark Joffe. Sept
Dr. Bean, Com. Rowan Atkinson.
The Big Lebowski. Jeff Bridges, John Goodman, Steve Buscemi. Dirs: Joel and Ethan Coen. Nov

Kit Parker
800-538-5838

Day For Night *(1973 French reissue)*, Dra, PG, 120 min. Dir: Francois Truffaut.
Death in Venice *(1971 Italian reissue)*, Dra, PG, 130 min. Dirk Bogarde. Dir: Luchino Visconti.

Live
No Way Home, Dra. Tim Roth. Dir: Buddy Gioviazzo. Sept
Critical Care, Dra/Thr. James Spader, Albert Brooks. Dir: Sydney Lumet. Oct
Boys Night Out, Thr. Christopher Walken, Sean Patrick Flannery. Dir: Peter O'Fallow. Nov
Wishmaster, Hor. Dir: Robert Kurtzman. Sept

Movieworld Ent.
510-244-5590

The Killing Kind, Dra. Kirk Harris.
The Lost Woman, SF, Jennifer Rubin.

New Yorker Films
Forever Mozart, Dra, NR, 84 min. Madeleine Assas. Dir: Jean-Luc Godard.

October
Kicked in the Head. Linda Fiorentino, Michael Rappaport, Lili Taylor. Dir: Matthew Harrison
Career Girls, Dra. Katrin Cartlidge. Dir: Mike Lee.

Orion Classics
This World, Then the Fireworks, Dra. Billy Zane, Gina Gershon. Dir: Michael Oblowitz. Sum
Storefront Hitchcock, Doc. Dir: Jonathan Demme.

Orion Pictures
Gang Related, Dra, R. Tupac Shakur, Jim Belushi. Dir: Jim Kous. 9/10
The Locusts, Dra. Kate Capshaw, Ashley Judd. Dir: John Patrick Kelley. Sept
Independence, Dra. Dean Cain, Drew Barrymore. Dir: Tamra Davis. Fall
Music From Another Room, Com. Brenda Blethyn, Jennifer Tilly. Dir: Charles Peters

Rhino Films
Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas, Dra. Johnny Depp. Dir: Alex Cox.

Shadow Distribution
La Petite Apocalypse *(French)*, Com/Dra, 110 min. Pierre Arditi. Dir: Costa-Gavras.

Sony Classics
Call Me Victor *(France)*, Com, PG, 100 min. Jeanne Moreau. Dir: Guy Jacques.
Dream With the Fishes, Dra, 96 min. David Arquette. Dir: Finn Taylor
Fast, Cheap & Out of Control, Doc, 79 min. Dir: Errol Morris.
When the Cat's Away *(France)*, Dra/Com, 95 min. Garance Clavel. Dir: Cedric Kapisch

Strand
Nights of Cabiria *(1957 Italian reissue)*, Dra, 110 min. Giulietta Masina. Dir: Federico Fellini. Aug
Self-Made Hero (France). Fall
Full Speed, Dra. Dir: Gael Murel.

Tara Releasing
Mushrooms *(Australia)*, Com, 93 min. Dir: Alan Madden.

Trimark
Eve's Bayou, Dra. Samuel L. Jackson, Lynn Whitfield. Dir: Kasi Lemmons. Fall
Chairman of the Board, Com. Carrot Top. Fall
Box of Moonlight, Dra, 107 min. John Turturro. Dir: Tom DiCillo.
Prarie Fire. Natasha Henstridge.

THE BOXOFFICE HOME RELEASE CHART

BOXOFFICE

APRIL 1997

HOME VIDEO RELEASE DATE	TITLE	BOXOFFICE GROSS	SCREENS	THEATRICAL RELEASE	THEATRICAL/VIDEO DISTRIBUTOR
April 8	Extreme Measures	$17,300,000	2,298	September 27	Columbia/Columbia TriStar
April 8	Lone Star	$12,300,000	189	June 21	Sony Classics
April 8	Romeo + Juliet	$46,100,000+	1,276	November 1	Fox
April 15	The Associate	$12,400,000	1,781	October 25	Hollywood/Buena Vista
April 15	Emma	$22,000,000	585	August 2	Miramax/Buena Vista
April 15	Looking for Richard	$1,300,000	81	October 11	Fox
April 15	Secrets and Lies	$6,400,000+	145	November 8	October
April 22	Rich Man's Wife	$8,500,000	1009	September 13	Hollywood/Buena Vista
April 22	Set It Off	$35,600,000+	1,016	November 6	New Line
April 22	To Gillian on Her 37th Birthday	$4,100,000	5	October 18	Triumph
April 29	The Preacher's Wife	$45,600,000+	2,048	December 13	Hollywood/Buena Vista
May 20	Stephen King's Thinner	$15,000,000+	2,009	October 25	Paramount
May	Bad Moon	$1,100,000	825	November 1	Warner Bros.
May	Big Night	$11,800,000+	366	September 20	MGM/UA
May	Get On the Bus	$5,700,000	1,207	October 16	Columbia/Columbia TriStar
May	Larger Than Life	[illegible]	[illegible]	November 1	MGM/UA
May	Mars Attacks!	$36,400,000+	1,955	December 13	Warner Bros.
May	Michael Collins	$10,900,000	878	October 11	Warner Bros.
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	November 15	TriStar/Columbia TriStar

May	Bad Moon	$1,100,000	825	November 1	Warner Bros.
May	Big Night	$11,800,000+	366	September 20	MGM/UA
May	Get On the Bus	$5,700,000	1,207	October 16	Columbia/Columbia TriStar
May	Larger Than Life				
May	Mars Attacks!	$36,400,000+	1,955	December 13	Warner Bros.
May	Michael Collins	$10,900,000	878	October 11	Warner Bros.
May	The Mirror Has Two Faces	$40,800,000	2,489	November 15	TriStar/Columbia TriStar
May	Ransom	$132,400,000+	2,768	November 8	Touchstone/Buena Vista
May	Sleepers	$53,300,000	2,080	October 18	Warner Bros.
May	Swingers	$4,400,000+	164	October 18	Buena Vista/Miramax
June	101 Dalmatians	$132,200,000+	2,901	November 27	Walt Disney/Buena Vista
June	Beavis & Butthead Do America	$62,000,000+	2,417	December 20	Paramount
June	The Crucible	$7,100,000+	344	November 27	Fox
June	The English Patient	$39,200,000+	683	November 15	Miramax/Buena Vista
June	Jingle All the Way	$60,100,000+	2,404	November 22	Fox
June	Michael	$80,300,000+	2,141	December 25	New Line
June	My Fellow Americans	$21,400,000+	1,915	December 20	Warner Bros.
June	Ridicule	$1,600,000+	74	November 27	Miramax/Buena Vista
June	Scream	$70,400,000+	1,994	December 20	Miramax/Buena Vista
June	Shine	$14,500,000+	314	November 22	Fine Line/New Line
June	Star Trek: First Contact	$91,000,000+	2,812	November 22	Paramount
July	Daylight	$32,300,000+	2,189	December 6	Universal/MCA
July	The Evening Star	$12,500,000	1,268	December 25	Paramount
July	Jerry Maguire	$116,600,000+	2,531	December 13	TriStar/Columbia TriStar
July	Mother	$12,500,000+	621	December 25	Paramount
July	One Fine Day	$43,600,000+	1,975	December 20	Fox
July	The People vs. Larry Flynt	$17,800,000+	1,233	December 25	Fox
August	Turbulence	$10,700,000+	2,094	January 10	MGM/UA

Compiled by BOXOFFICE MAGAZINE. Numbers for ***Boxoffice Gross*** represent total domestic boxoffice grosses to the nearest $100,000; + signs indicate that films remain in theatrical release. Number of ***Screens*** indicates the maximum number of screens in widest, simultaneous release. Entries in the ***Theatrical/Video Distributor*** column list two names when the video releasing company is different from (or releases through a subsidiary different from) the theatrical distributor. Exact day-and-date specific entries for ***Home Video Release*** are confirmed; in all other cases, the month indicated for a release is forecast by the editors of BOXOFFICE. BOXOFFICE is not liable for errors or omissions in the chart.

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The Big Picture

It's interesting to see how a successful movie franchise evolves. The Bond series, for example, began as a serious (if glamorized) treatise on the deadly perils of the Cold War spy game, but has re-invented itself repeatedly as everything from self-spoofing comedy (during the late Connery era and most of the Roger Moore period) to back-to-basics action flick (the George Lazenby-starring "On Her Majesty's Secret Service" and "License to Kill," the second Timothy Dalton Bond). Four films into Warner's incredibly successful "Batman" franchise, a similar process may be at work.

When Tim Burton helped put together the first "Batman" feature back in 1989, the impulse was clearly to return a character whose heroic stature had been amusingly compromised by a campy, '60s-era TV series back to his comic book roots. The Batman origin myth, as scripted by Bill Finger and drawn by Bob Kane, was presented in all its brutal pulp glory: young Bruce Wayne witnesses his parents' murder and becomes a vigilante dedicated to stamping out evil by whatever means necessary.



The Joker, which many audience members remembered in terms of Cesar Romero's giddy TV rendering, became a mass murderer in Burton's hands; it's probable that few who decried the 1989 "Batman's" violence realized that the "Joker Death" poison which Jack Nicholson used to leave his victims dead but smiling was an actual comic book invention of Finger's and Kane's, dating all the way back to 1940.

Burton's commitment to keeping Batman the dark loner of his original comic book incarnation was evidenced by his decision, despite reported studio pressure, to keep Robin the Boy Wonder out of the second "Batman" feature, "Batman Returns." Though a massive hit like its predecessor, "Batman Returns" was considered a disappointment by industry watchers; Burton's idiosyncratic sense of humor, his love of the grotesque, and his preoccupation with the hero as loner left some a bit unsure how to react to the film.

The trace elements of Burton's contribution to the franchise were still apparent in "Batman Forever" (which Burton co-produced), Joel Schumacher's first turn in the "Batman" director's chair. As played by Val Kilmer, the Batman character was still a functional schizophrenic, tormented by childhood trauma, though for the first time the character seemed to be searching for a way out. The villains (Tommy Lee Jones as Two-Face, Jim Carrey as the Riddler) were still grotesque, though edging closer to the spirit of the '60s TV show in the emphasis on the comedic aspects of their personalities. The gothic art direction of the Burton "Batmans" was still present, but rendered in a cleaner, less brooding fashion. In many ways, "Batman Forever" may be looked back on as a transitional film in the series.

The biggest difference, though, between "Batman Forever" and the first two "Batman" features was that the latest "Batman" actually resolved Batman's identity crisis. Co-producer Burton and director Schumacher determinedly refused to condescend to the built-in "Batman" audience; they took the characterization from the first two films seriously, building into "Batman Forever" a dynamic by which the Batman character, thanks in part to his long-delayed friendship with Dick Grayson/Robin the Boy Wonder, is able to accept his past and move toward his future as a unified being. He will continue to fight crime, "not because I have to but because I choose to"—a key turning point for Batman as depicted by the Warner franchise.

Now that he's firmly in control of the film series, it will be interesting to see what Schumacher does with it. An underrated and much more audience-friendly director than Burton, there are some indications that Schumacher not only doesn't share Burton's aversion to the '60s-era TV Batman, he may even prefer that more entertaining, less brooding model. The decision to include Batgirl in the upcoming "Batman and Robin," for example, harkens back to the TV series; although there was a short-lived Bat Girl in the Batman comics of the '50s (and a Bat Woman, who was her mentor/companion), the '60s version played by actress Yvonne Craig spelled her name as a single word and was a solo act invented for TV who appeared in the comics only later. Schumacher's villains also display an affinity for the TV Batman: Arnold Schwarzenegger as Mr. Freeze is playing a Bat-nemesis that appeared only on the TV series (the master-criminal he was based on was called Mr. Zero in the comics). And it's hard to believe that it's a coincedence the TV Mr. Freeze was originally played by the equally Germanic, equally accented director-turned-actor Otto Preminger. Meanwhile, the Batman character, already more conventionally heroic after the previous film, may even be ready at last to loosen up and have a good time.

Will Schumacher take the franchise in a new direction? Will the same audiences who seem to crave movies based on TV series from the '60s love it if and when he does? It's a pretty safe bet they will. But to stay on the safe side, perhaps it would be best to tune in tomorrow, same Bat-time, same Bat-channel to find out what happens next.—***Ray Greene***

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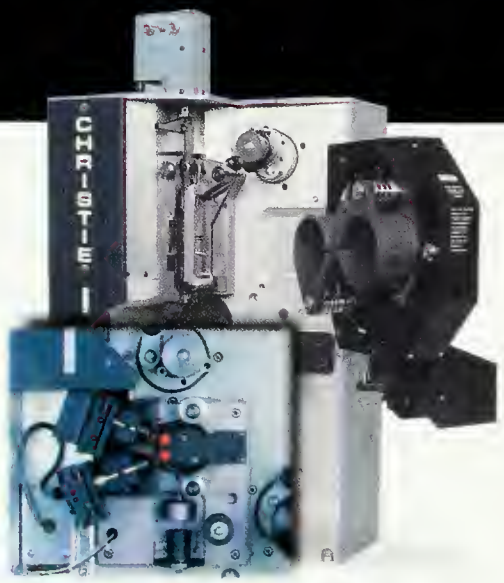
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BOXOFFICE
MAY, 1997 VOL. 133 NO. 5

UNQUOTE: *I want to write movie scripts, but I like directing above all. All I know for sure is I've gone too far to back out now.* —**STEVEN SPIELBERG** ***at age 17***

SPECIAL REPORT: SHOWCANADA '97

Our annual salute to the Canadian market celebrates exhibition in the Great White North! PLUS: Get ready for ShowCanada '97 with our special introductory contents. SHOWCANADA: May 6 - 10, 1997. Chateau Laurier, Ottawa, Ontario.

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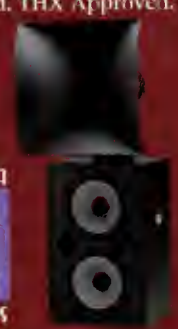
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SHOWEST WRAP-UP

As ever, **ShoWest '97** was the place to be for the exhibition community during the first week of March, 1997. The sheer spectacle of the studio-sponsored dining events (which reportedly priced out at over $2 million in some instances), the amazing array of star-power marshalled to pitch upcoming product, and the glimpses of such eagerly anticipated titles as "Batman and Robin," "Titanic" and "Men in Black" were event highpoints, with ShoWest presenting exhibition with that rare opportunity to form early impressions about entire slates of product. The final night awards event, simulcast live over **Turner Network Television**, struck most in attendance as more entertaining (and even better TV) than ever before.

Among the many important and informative networking opportunities at this year's ShoWest was an annual chance for a face-to-face talk with **MPAA president Jack Valenti** and **NATO president Bill Kartozian**. These industry giants preceded Valenti's annual ShoWest address with a detailed analysis of the **1996 NATO/MPAA survey statistics** which Valenti presented to the convention.

As reported in our March BAROMETER issue, 1996 saw a **record boxoffice take** of over $5.9 billion, with **the final "admissions sold" tally** coming in at 1.34 billion. The '96 audience breakdown included interesting stats when analyzed by age and ethnicity. The **largest block of tickets** (502.8 million) was sold to moviegoers between the ages of 21 to 39. But the **fastest growing sector of the market** (on a ticket-by-ticket basis) was again, as in 1995, the over-40 audience—a fact Kartozian and Valenti attributed to the strong tradition of moviegoing as a social activity which members of the "baby boom" generation have carried over into middle age. Over-40 admissions accounted for 409 million tickets in 1996—a 12.5 percent increase. Twelve- to 20-year-olds also were up dramatically, racking up some 347.8 million trips to the moviehouse for a 25 percent rise over that group's 1995 attendance figures.

By **ethnic classification**, the increasing significance of the Hispanic market gathered strength in 1996. **White audience members** still accounted for the largest portion of admissions, with 70 percent of tickets sold. But **Hispanics** accounted for 13 percent of the overall tally, a slight rise compared to the third-ranked **African-American community**, which has remained at or near 11 percent of the tally for the last several years. **All other ethnic groups combined** made up the remaining 6 percent of tickets sold.

The **average price of a domestic movie ticket** rose a very modest 1.5 percent from 1995's $4.34 to $4.41 in 1996. NATO president Kartozian noted the increase was less than the U.S. rate of inflation before adding that he was concerned that the return on investment for exhibitors—particularly those involved in massive re-screening and building efforts—has reached a point where it is decreasing relative to the rise in the cost of doing business. The NATO president hinted that the issue of audience concerns over ticket prices has been more than addressed over the past few years: "I think we have come to the point where people no longer view [moviegoing as overly expensive]," he said, adding that "we need to begin stressing the value" of moviegoing as opposed to price. What this change of emphasis may portend for ticket prices in the future remains an open question.

Valenti was reluctant to criticize the continuing inflationary spiral which MPAA member product appears to be caught up in; asked directly if he thought rising costs were a problem, Valenti said that costs could afford to rise until the movie industry started losing money. But there was a pervasive sense among many ShoWest attendees that controlling **production and marketing costs** would have to become a major studio priority in the near future. While self-described "pathological optimist" Valenti may not have shared in such dark mutterings, he did present the numbers which could be used to back them up: In 1996, there were 216 MPAA titles released in North America, four more films than in 1995. The **average negative cost for MPAA member titles** was $39.8 million, a jump of 9.5 percent, while **per-title marketing costs** hit $19.8 million, also up 9.5 percent. Where in 1995 the average studio feature cost $54.1 million to make and promote, in 1996 that same film cost $59.7 million. Such figures are even more startling when one looks back to the beginning of the decade, when MPAA member titles cost $50 million to bring to the screen. What this means is not only that marketing and production costs have risen by 20 percent in the past seven years, but that *more than half the increase* occurred in 1996, the most recent year surveyed.

NATO/MPAA NUMBERS, '96

DOMESTIC GROSS: $5.912 BILLION

ADMISSIONS: 1.34 BILLION

AVERAGE TICKET PRICE: $4.41

COMBINED AVERAGE PRODUCTION AND MARKETING COST FOR MPAA MEMBER FEATURE FILM: $59.7 MILLION

In a characteristically memorable turn of phrase, Valenti referred to the costs issue as "a grouchy, grungy rhino, hunkered down in the middle of the road." It's probable many on the supply side of the movie industry would not only agree with him, they might have a rather vivid description for which part of their anatomy the horn on Valenti's rhino has lodged itself in.

And that was the ShoWest that was.

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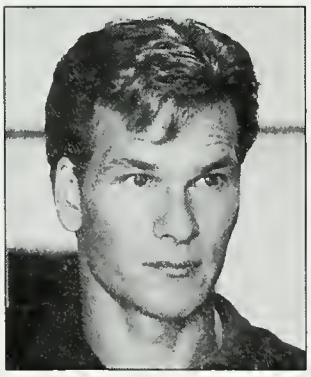
EDWARD NORTON

All "American"



MADONNA

"Tina" Turn



PATRICK SWAYZE

"Killer" Role

"AMERICAN HISTORY X" A young man (Edward Norton, "The People vs. Larry Flynt") tries to overcome his violent, racist tendencies and help his brother (Edward Furlong, "Before and After") do the same in this drama. Fairuza Balk ("The Craft") plays his girlfriend. Tony Kaye directs from a script by David McKenna. (New Line)

UNTITLED TINA MODOTTI BIOPIC Having finally established herself as a legitimate thespian in "Evita," Madonna has signed to star in this biopic of Italian-born Tina Modotti, who emigrated to the U.S. in 1913 and initially pursued a career as a silent film actress in Hollywood. During the '30s, Modotti was renowned in Mexico and Europe as a photographer and political activist. She died under mysterious circumstances at age 45 in 1942. Gabriel Byrne ("Smilla's Sense of Snow") will play Vittorio Vidale, one of Modotti's lovers. (Distribution is to be set)

"AVON LADIES OF THE AMAZON" "First Wives Club" trio Bette Midler, Goldie Hawn and Diane Keaton are in talks to reteam in this comedy about three women who get stranded in the amazon. (UA)

"HOPE FLOATS" Sandra Bullock ("In Love and War") will star in this drama as a mother who, after a difficult divorce, goes back to her family home with her young daughter. Forest Whitaker ("Waiting to Exhale") directs. (Fox)

"ONE FREE MURDER" Sylvester Stallone ("CopLand") will play a mobster loosely based on Michael Franzese, who was imprisoned in 1966 for bank robbery but claimed he was framed. New York Post columnist Jack Newfield wrote articles asserting that the evidence against Franzese was shaky. Franzese was eventually freed from jail, and out of gratitude told Newfield he had "one free murder" coming to him. Newfield will co-write the script. (Universal)

"I AM LEGEND" Arnold Schwarzenegger ("Eraser") is considering a starring role in this adaption of Richard Matheson's cult novel, which was adapted twice before as 1964's "The Last Man On Earth" and 1971's "The Omega Man." Schwarzenegger would play one of the last healthy survivors of a bacterial plague. (Warner)

"PATCH ADAMS" Robin Williams ("Jack") will star for director Tom Shadyac ("The Nutty Professor") in this true story about a man who runs a free medical clinic in Virginia. Steve Oedekerk ("Ace Ventura: When Nature Calls") wrote the script. (Universal)

"DUETS" Real-life romantic duet Brad Pitt ("The Devil's Own") and Gwyneth Paltrow ("Emma") will star in this comedy which centers around the karaoke bar phenomenon. Bruce Paltrow (Gwyneth's father) will helm. (Columbia)

"ISHMAEL" Mel Gibson is attached to star in this film as an anthropologist in Africa who takes extreme measures to protect gorillas from poachers and ends up in an insane asylum. Jon Turteltaub ("Phenomenon") directs. (Buena Vista)

"SAVIOR" This true story of a French-American mercenary who rescues a baby orphaned in a war will star Dennis Quaid ("Dragonheart"), Nastassja Kinski ("Father's Day"), and "Breaking the Waves'" Stellan Skarsgard and Jean-Marc Barr. The film, an Oliver Stone-Janet Yang Ixtlan production, will be directed by Peter Antonijevic. (Distribution is to be set)

"SPHERE" This adaptation of Michael Crichton's sci-fi novel about a team sent under water to examine a mysterious spacecraft and its even more mysterious contents will star Dustin Hoffman ("American Buffalo"), Sharon Stone ("Diabolique"), Samuel L. Jackson ("A Time To Kill") and Queen Latifah ("Set It Off"). Barry Levinson ("Sleepers") will direct. (Warner)

"PLEASANTVILLE" In this comedy, two teenage siblings ("Ice Storm's" Tobey Maguire and "Fear's" Reese Witherspoon) find themselves trapped in the world of a wholesome "Leave It to Beaver"-esque '50s sitcom family. Jeff Daniels ("101 Dalmatians"), Joan Allen ("The Crucible") and William H. Macy ("Fargo") also star for first-time director Gary Ross, who also wrote the screenplay. Ross is a two-time Academy Award nominee for scripting "Big" and "Dave." (New Line)

"THE WATER BOY" Adam Sandler ("Happy Gilmore") will co-script and star in this comedy about an inept waterboy who's discovered to have an innate talent for football. (Buena Vista)

"LETTERS FROM A KILLER" Patrick Swayze ("To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything, Julie Newmar") stars in this thriller about a prison inmate on Death Row who has been exchanging love letters with four different women, each thinking herself his only amour. When he's unexpectedly released from jail, he finds he may not have eluded his death sentence after all when one of the women becomes violent. David Carson ("Star Trek Generations") will direct. (Distribution is to be set)

"THE BIG LEBOWSKI" Next up for the Coen Bros., the filmmaking siblings who brought us "Fargo," is this black comedy about a man named Dude Lebowski who is confronted by gangsters demanding repayment of a loan. Lebowski thinks it's a case of mistaken identity, but soon finds himself entangled in a kidnapping plot. Jeff Bridges ("The Mirror Has Two Faces"), "Barton Fink's" John Goodman and John Turturro, and "Fargo's" Steve Buscemi and Peter Stormare star. (Gramercy)

"THE POSTMAN" Larenz Tate ("Dead Presidents") and newcomer Olivia Williams have joined Kevin Costner ("Tin Cup") in this sci-fi film in which a postman risks his life to continue delivering mail after an apocalyptic disaster. (Warner)

"HELLCAB" John Cusack ("Grosse Pointe Blank"), Laurie Metcalf ("Dear God"), Julianne Moore ("Lost World") and Gillian Anderson (TV's "The X Files") have signed on to "Hellcab," an adaptation of the play of the same name, which is about a day in the life of a cab driver during the mayhem of the Christmas holiday. Paul Dillon will re-create the role he originated onstage as the cabbie. (Distribution is to be set)

ET CETERA: Uma Thurman and Ralph Fiennes are in talks to star in Warner's bigscreen adaption of the '60s action adventure TV show **"The Avengers"**...Drew Barrymore has signed on to take the title role in Fox's **"Cinderella"**...Edward Burns will star opposite Tom Hanks in DreamWorks' **"Saving Private Ryan"**...Vincent D'Onofrio and Skeet Ulrich have joined Matthew McConaughey and Ethan Hawke in Fox's Richard Linklater-directed **"Newton Boys,"** the true story of four bank-robbing brothers. Juliana Margulies has also signed on, and will play McConaughey's love interest.


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Cover

A Portrait of the



Artist as a Young Man

An EXCLUSIVE Look at "FIRELIGHT," the Lost Feature Film Debut of STEVEN SPIELBERG *by Joseph McBride*



One of the great pleasures of recent times here at **BOXOFFICE** *has been our opportunity to publish articles under the byline of Joseph McBride. Joe McBride is something of a legend in the annals of movie scholarship: his book-length studies of everyone from Orson Welles to Frank Capra to John Ford to Howard Hawks set new standards for both criticism and biography.*

With **"Steven Spielberg: A Biography,"** *Joe has set his sights on a contemporary legend, and come through with characteristically flying colors. Unlike virtually every other biographer who has attempted to chart the almost unbelievably successful career of our most eminent director-producer, Joe has grounded his epic study in extensive first-hand research, and wedded that research to a comprehensive re-examination of Spielberg's career which, it already seems certain, will form the basis for a fresh evaluation of Spielberg the artist, as well as Spielberg the man. Such prestigious publications as Kirkus Reviews have already pronounced McBride's "Spielberg" the definitive work on its subject—a verdict with which we heartily agree.*

We couldn't let Joe's achievement pass unnoticed in these pages, but at the same time, owing to Joe's professional relationship with **BOXOFFICE**, *we were a bit uncomfortable with the concept of using our reviews pages to ladle the superlatives on McBride's "Spielberg" which it nevertheless so richly deserves. Fortunately, publication of "Steven Spielberg: A Biography" has been timed to coincide with the release of Spielberg's eagerly-anticipated "Jurassic Park" sequel "The Lost World," making the ideal solution this article-length excerpt about a "lost" project of a different sort: Spielberg's first feature length effort, completed when he was just 17 years old, a sort of first draft version of "Close Encounters" entitled "Firelight." Among the many signs of future greatness which Joe has unearthed was one particular detail we felt* **BOXOFFICE** *readers would enjoy: to get his movie screened, Spielberg had to take on the role of theatrical exhibitor, which explains in part his uncanny kinship with with both audiences and exhibitors all over the world.*

And so, for your reading pleasure, by special arrangement with Simon and Schuster, **BOXOFFICE MAGAZINE** *proudly presents this teaser-trailer for an epic production by Joseph McBride: "Steven Spielberg: A Biography." From all of us here, congratulations, Joe, on a job well done.*

***—Ray Greene, Editor-in-Chief,* BOXOFFICE**

A searchlight swept the night sky of downtown Phoenix as a limousine pulled up under the theatre marquee. The director and his stars stepped out, bedazzled by the glare of strobes and exploding flashbulbs. Inside, a packed house awaited the world premiere of a science-fiction epic from American Artist Productions. For the next two hours and 15 minutes, the audience watched enrapt at the spectacle of mysterious colored lights emerging from the heavens to abduct humans for an extraterrestrial zoo. At the night's end, the boxoffice take from that screening at the Phoenix Little Theatre, at seventy-five cents a head, was enough to put the movie into profit.

The date was March 24, 1964. The movie was "Firelight." Its production cost was under $600, and it was the first feature-length film written and directed by a high school junior named Steven Spielberg. After becoming a professional filmmaker, Spielberg publicly disparaged "Firelight" as "one of the five worst films ever made anywhere." But his extraordinary promise was obvious to everyone who attended the Phoenix premiere of the 8mm production. "'Firelight' is just as good, although this may be construed as criticism, as some of the science-fiction movies seen by the late-late television viewers," wrote *Arizona Journal* reviewer Larry Jarrett. "The plot, the action, the basic material of the movie, is sound and not as far out as some of Hollywood's *fantasies-de-science*."



"People in Phoenix still speak in awestruck tones of how Spielberg talked his way into shooting scenes for 'Firelight' at Baptist Hospital and Sky Harbor Airport."

Allen Daviau, the cinematographer who has shot such Spielberg films as "E.T.—The Extraterrestrial," "The Color Purple," and "Empire of the Sun," was shown "Firelight" by Spielberg in the late 1960s. "It's what you expect with a kid's film, the acting and so on, but oh, God! Some of it was so audacious," Daviau says. "The effects were what was really amazing—that's what his heart was in. What he did with crumpled aluminum foil and bits of Jello on a kitchen table was pretty amazing."

The stimulus for "Firelight" was an unidentified flying object Spielberg did *not* see when he was growing up in Phoenix. Fascinated by heavenly lights ever since the night in 1957 when he and his father saw a meteor shower in the desert, Steve, like virtually every American boy growing up in the '50s, was intrigued by reports of flying saucers and other UFO's. He longed for the real thing—the chance to see a UFO with his own eyes. So he was devastated when he missed a Boy Scout outing, "the only overnight I missed the entire year. Wouldn't you know," and his fellow Scouts came back and told him how, at midnight in the desert, they all saw "something they couldn't explain...a blood-red orb rising up behind some sagebrush, shooting off into space. I felt so left out not being there." Patrol leader Bill Hoffman says, "One overnight Spielberg was absent out in the desert. I don't recall who did it, but the story was told to Spielberg that someone had seen a flying saucer. Spielberg was very interested. It wasn't true at all. As far as I can tell, it was a complete fabrication."

14-year-old Eagle Scout in-the-making Steve Spielberg making 8mm magic in a rare 1961 still by Richard Y. Hoffman, Jr.



LEAN ON ME: *Spielberg's taste for "Lawrence of Arabia"-type set-ups is apparent in this rare still from the making of "Escape to Nowhere" (1959-1962), a WWII-themed epic.* **(BARRY SOLLENBERGER)**

Steve's 67-page, fully dialogued screenplay for "Firelight" was completed in early 1963, near the end of his sophomore year at Arcadia High School. He spent about six months shooting the film, from June through December of that year, with collaborators recruited from his fellow actors and crew members in "Guys and Dolls" and other school plays. Postproduction, including post-synchronization of dialogue and recording of a musical score, continued until the March premiere. "I used the high school band to score [the] movie," Spielberg recalled. "I played clarinet and wrote a score on my clarinet and then had my mother [who played piano] transpose it to her key. We made sheet music, the band recorded it, and I had my first original soundtrack."

Spielberg had been making amateur films since he was 10 years old; his mother proudly called him "Cecil B. DeSpielberg." "Firelight" was his first film with trained actors and a carefully detailed screenplay, and he had not yet developed into much of an actor's director. But his innate narrative sense, his precocious flair for visual storytelling, and his already evident ability to orchestrate complex movement and character interaction (as outlined in the script) made "Firelight" a gripping, well-constructed (if overlong) yarn about a small group of scientists investigating mysterious red, white, and blue balls of moving light coming from the Arizona sky to abduct people, animals, and objects.

"Close Encounters of the Third Kind," Spielberg's 1977 sci-fi masterpiece, "was actually a remake of 'Firelight,'" says Jean Weber Brill, a Spielberg classmate who did the makeup for "Firelight." "There were scenes in 'Close Encounters' that were almost direct copies from 'Firelight,' such as the lights appearing on the highway and the scene when the little boy looks out the door at the bright light. The storyline of 'Close Encounters' was very similar, but obviously rewritten and more sophisticated."

"Firelight" introduces the themes of supernatural intruders, suburban alienation and escape, broken families and abducted children, scientific adventure, and spiritual renewal that would become familiar in Spielberg's mature work. But unlike "Close Encounters," which radically departed from sci-fi movie tradition to depict its extraterrestrials as benign rather than menacing, "Firelight" derives in large part from the mood of anxiety and paranoia that characterized the genre in the 1950s, when Spielberg became hooked on sci-fi. "It was a Cold War movie," says cast member Clark (Lucky) Lohr. "They talk about it being his [first] version of 'Close Encounters,' and it *was*, in a sense—a sky movie, about sky gods—but the 'cinematic vision' of 'Firelight' owed more to horror movies about aliens dusting humans."

> ***"What he did with crumpled aluminum foil and bits of Jello on a kitchen table was pretty amazing."***
>
> ***—Allen Daviau, cinematographer, "E.T."***

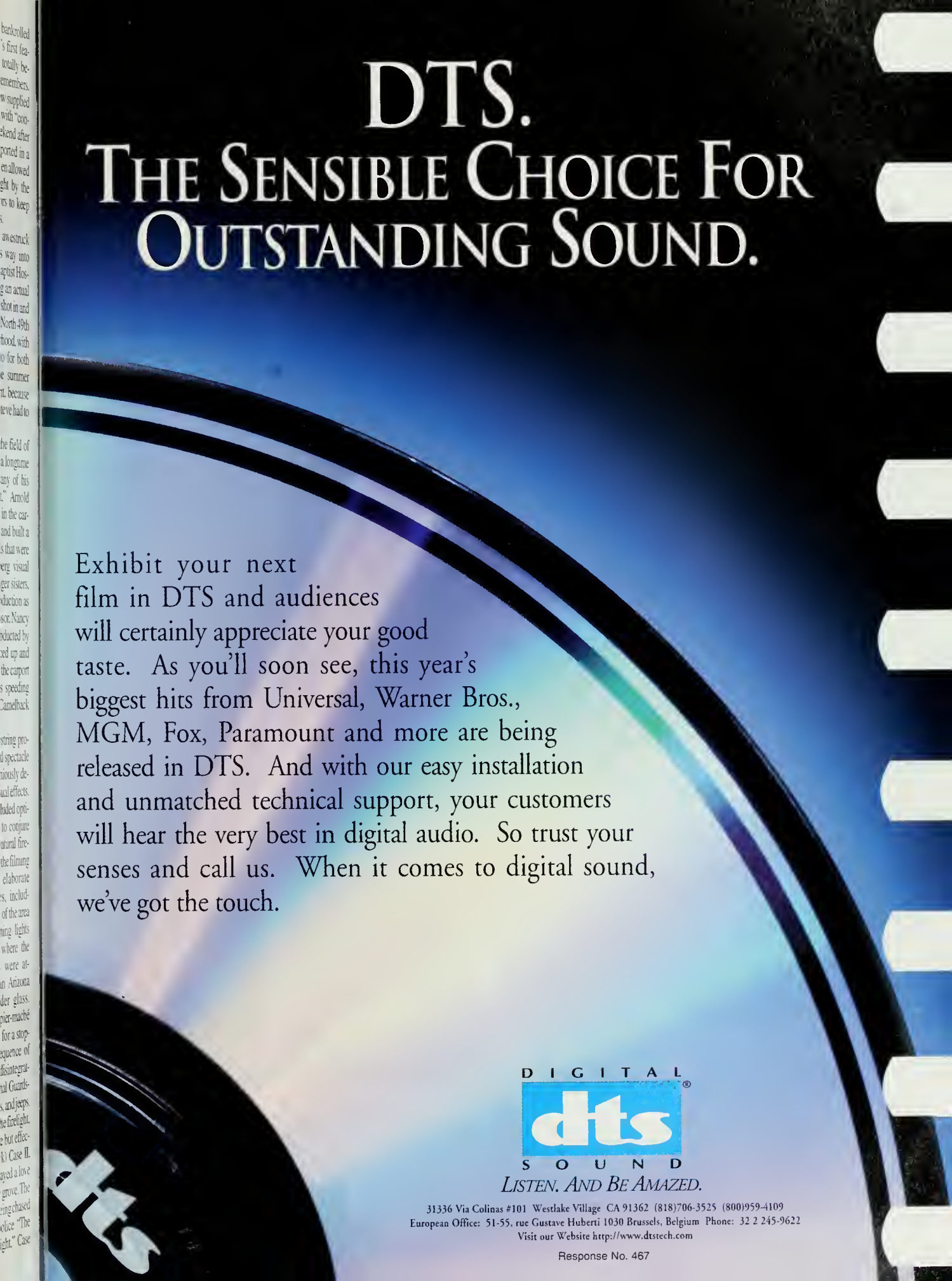
Arnold and Leah Spielberg bankrolled the production of their son's first feature. "Steve's parents were totally behind the film," Jean Weber Brill remembers. Leah not only kept the cast and crew supplied with snacks, but cheerfully put up with "constant commotion at her home" weekend after weekend, the *Arizona Republic* reported in a feature about the production. She even allowed Steve to set up a flashing red light by the carport door to signal the neighbors to keep quiet while filming was in progress.

People in Phoenix still speak in awestruck tones of how Spielberg talked his way into shooting scenes for "Firelight" at Baptist Hospital and Sky Harbor Airport, using an actual jet plane. But much of the film was shot in and around the Spielberg home at 3443 North 49th Street in the city's Arcadia neighborhood, with the family carport used as a studio for both interior and "exterior" shots. The summer shooting mostly took place at night, because of the heat. After school resumed, Steve had to film mostly on weekends.

Arnold Spielberg, a pioneer in the field of computer engineering and himself a longtime amateur filmmaker, helped on many of his son's early films. For "Firelight," Arnold rigged the lights for scenes filmed in the carport, helped design miniature sets, and built a dolly for the elaborate tracking shots that were already a hallmark of the Spielberg visual style. Steve enlisted his three younger sisters, Anne, Sue, and Nancy, into the production as well. Anne served as a script supervisor, Nancy played the key role of a little girl abducted by aliens, and all three of them bounced up and down on the hood of the jeep inside the carport to make the jeep look like it was speeding through the desert night around Camelback Mountain.

Steve and Arnold gave the shoestring production the illusion of a Hollywood spectacle with ingeniously designed visual effects. These included optical tricks to conjure up supernatural firelights and the filming of some elaborate miniatures, including a map of the area with flashing lights to show where the firelights were attacking, an Arizona town under glass, and a papier-maché mountain for a stop-motion sequence of firelight disintegrating National Guardsmen, tanks, and jeeps.

For the visual effects involving the firelight, Steve employed a variety of simple but effective techniques. Charles G. (Chuck) Case II, now a federal judge in Phoenix, played a love scene with Dede Pisani in an orange grove. The scene ends with the young couple being chased by a firelight and Case calling the police. "The firelight was just a red gel on a light," Case


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recalls. "It descended from the trees, and the illusion was effective. In the film it really looked like something strange was happening."

Arnold Spielberg explains how Steve showed "the firelight picking up Nancy. She was crawling along the ground. He had her crawl from here to a tree, and he timed it in his head, backed up the film, then re-exposed the same thing, but with a firelight coming right down to where Nancy was. In order to get this effect of a whirling piece of flame, of energy, he took two glass plates and a red gel and put Vaseline between the plates. Sue or Anne would take the plates and pull them back and forth, and that would make the jelly wiggle and move, and then he'd film through it. If you imagine a bunch of clouds in fast motion whirling around, that was his effect of firelight. And it came out! It looked like it took her and she disappeared."

"I was intrigued by the contraptions [Steve] dreamed up," says cast and crew member Warner Marshall. "The one I remember most vividly was a scene in his parents' carport. Somebody was sitting on the hood bouncing the jeep, and he had pullies with a couple of white Christmas lights—a clothesline of lights would move past the jeep so it would look like the jeep was driving in the country passing a house. He had floodlights shining down on the jeep to make it look like moonlight. He had a big piece of cardboard with triangular holes in it that would pass in front of the light to make shadows. He conceived all that! It made a heck of an impression on me when I was 15 years old—this guy really knew what he was doing. But he didn't exude an *air* of a guy who knew exactly where he was going and what he was doing. He was humble and kind of quiet."

Perhaps the most remarkable visual effect was Steve's use of a series of quick lap dissolves in showing the attack of the firelight on a UFO expert played by Lucky Lohr. "He collapsed on the floor and we filmed him disintegrating," makeup artist Jean Weber Brill recalls. "We filmed the scene in the Spielbergs' front room. Steve had the camera on a tripod and we filmed about eight frames at a time, then we would change the setup and the makeup and film another eight frames. We did that all day long."

"They had red and brown makeup and wet Kleenex on my face," Lohr remembers. "I had a cold at the time, so I was shivering. I thought I was being a real trouper. At the end of the scene, Steve pulled out a plastic skull, moved me out, set the skull down, and shot a couple of frames of the skull." Spielberg redid that scene at the end of "Raiders of the Lost Ark," when the blazing light from the Ark of the Covenant hits a Nazi and disintegrates him right down to his skull.

Throughout the protracted making of "Firelight," even when the two actors originally cast in the lead roles (Carol Stromme and Andy Owen) quit after the first two weeks of shooting, Spielberg did not become discouraged. He recast those parts with Beth Weber and Bob Robyn and reshot the opening scenes in December. "I remember the energy level starting to flag, people starting to wonder, 'Gee, do I want to spend my *entire* Saturday doing this?,'" says Warner Marshall. "*He* was having a great time. He'd say, 'I want to get this one last thing. Would you mind staying?' He was extremely gracious. He created an atmosphere where everybody had an affectionate respect for him."

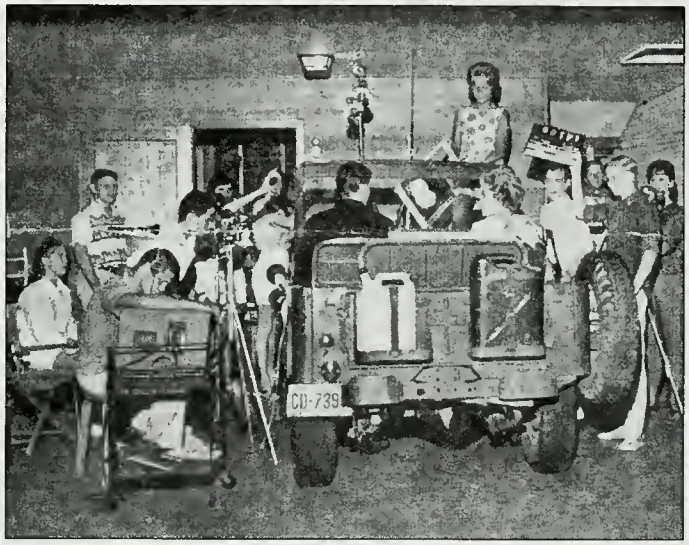
"It was a huge undertaking," marvels Spielberg's classmate Rick Cook, who now writes science-fiction novels. "He wrote a professional-looking script, he had to be the production manager, he had to scare up props, he had to convince actors to be in it—although that wasn't too hard—he had to juggle everything. He was the damnedest promoter. He knew how to get things out of people, and he did it without being pushy or obnoxious. He was not a braggart, he was not one who would talk about what he was going to do. He just did it. He knew what he wanted, he was young and kind of attractive, and it was a matter of enthusiasm and dedication being contagious."

Betty Weber, whose daughters Beth and Jean worked on "Firelight," was a volunteer stage manager at the nonprofit Phoenix Little Theatre. She cajoled the theatre's board members into donating their facilities for the premiere. She also barraged the local newspapers and radio stations with announcements about the young filmmaker, arranged for photo spreads in the Republic, and made sure the title of "Firelight" was displayed on billboards at businesses all over town.

Leading lady Beth Weber typed and mimeographed the programs distributed to the opening-night audience. The limousine that brought Steve and his actors to the theatre was supplied and driven by a cast member's father who owned a local brewery. The searchlight was borrowed from a nearby shopping center. Arnold Spielberg helped Steve play the complicated soundtrack for the movie, and Leah Spielberg climbed a ladder to put the title of her son's first feature on the marquee. As she did so she was thinking, "This is a nice hobby."

That triumphant evening in March 1964 marked a coming of age for Steve Spielberg. His debut as a feature filmmaker was also his farewell to his boyhood years in Arizona. The day after the premiere, he and his family moved to California. Before leaving, Spielberg told a local reporter that making movies "grows on you. You can't shake it...I want to write movie scripts, but I like directing above all. All I know for sure is I've gone too far to back out now."





"FIRE" STARTER: (LEFT:) *Spielberg directing "Firelight," as seen in a contemporaneous newspaper account. That's Arnold Spielberg at right.* **(RIGHT:)** *Filming in his parents' carport, in Leah Spielberg's jeep.* **(PHOENIX NEWSPAPERS, INC.).**

"I want to write movie scripts, but I like directing above all. All I know for sure is I've gone too far to back out now."
—Steven Spielberg at 17

Adapted by the author from Joseph McBride's "Steven Spielberg: A Biography," published by Simon & Schuster. Photos pgs. 11-14 are from the book, courtesy Simon & Schuster.

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"BAT" OUT OF HELL

Joel Schumacher returns to helm another Bat-legend with Warner Bros. "Batman & Robin"

By Wade Major

If anyone in Hollywood has cause to live the "auteur" cliche, it's Joel Schumacher. Beginning with "Falling Down" in 1993 and continuing to the present with "Batman Forever," "The Client," "A Time to Kill" and the forthcoming "Batman & Robin," Schumacher owns one of the strongest track records of any director currently working, earning him a well-deserved Director of the Year award at this year's ShoWest. Yet the one-time costume designer for such Woody Allen classics as "Sleeper" and "Interiors" in conversation remains gracious and self-effacing.

"There are a lot of directors who try very hard to be good people," Schumacher says. "I just think they don't get as much attention as a flashy prima donna who gives everybody a hard time and makes trouble. I believe that, if you don't strive very hard to set a good example, you have no defense for privilege.... I also believe that if you're a person of privilege, and you don't strive to set a good example, perhaps that privilege will be given to somebody else."

Schumacher's perspective could be born of his hard-fought and often troubled path to success. Struggle began early for the boy whose father died when he was only four, leaving his mother alone to fend for the two of them. The poor Queens neighborhood in which they lived, however, was more encouraging than not. Thanks to the support of friends and neighbors, Schumacher never despaired, eventually manifesting an aptitude for design that led to his acceptance into New York's prestigious Parsons School of Design.

But the promising talent wasn't yet out of the woods, having to live through a nearly disastrous bout with drugs and substance abuse in the late '60s. Schumacher cleaned up his act and set his sights on Hollywood, determined to become a director. For the next 15 years, Schumacher rose in the ranks from costumer to screenwriter ("Car Wash," "The Wiz") to, finally, director ("The Incredible Shrinking Woman," "D.C. Cab"). With his third film, the 1985 hit "St. Elmo's Fire," Hollywood began to take real notice.

What's remarkable about this 57-year-old is, though over a quarter-century removed, he remains the bright-eyed dreamer from Queens in a town where passionless pessimism seems preferred. "I feel, a lot of times, like I'm a football player and the football is the movie. And on that field, with all those people running interference to me—studio executives, managers, agents, publicists, critics, journalists—I'm just trying to get the ball past the goal line and into the stands to the audience. Sometimes it's very pleasant, sometimes it's an obstacle course."

Schumacher's concern for moviegoers' experience is often credited with reinvigorating Warner Bros.' Batman franchise, which showed signs of stalling after 1992's fast-opening, fast-falling "Batman Returns." "A lot of people seemed unhappy with 'Batman Returns,'" he says. "I felt that we were the new team saying to people, 'We know you've been burned. But take a chance on us. We're going to give you a really enjoyable Batman movie.' None of us had any idea it would be as successful [$184 mil. domestic] as it was. And none of us knew we'd be making another one."

And yet, two years later, "another one" is on its way with the June 20 release of "Batman & Robin," which Schumacher describes as "the most fun I've ever had making a movie. We came in two weeks under schedule. Everyone was so professional. No one was ever late, everyone knew their lines, people came in ready to work and were passionate and committed and had wonderful ideas.

"It was exciting to go to work every day. I could actually make the movie. I didn't have to be doing the job for certain actors and actresses that their parents haven't done. I'm there to make a movie, not to play games, and not to be the warden, disciplinarian, psychiatrist, drug abuse counselor or love doctor."

His much-publicized troubles with Val Kilmer on "Batman Forever" behind him, Schumacher feels confident that the franchise has finally found its groove with George Clooney ("One Fine Day") assuming the caped crusader's cowl. "I think George is the best Batman of all," Schumacher says. "He's brought a humanity to the role that I

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don't think has ever been there before. Michael [Keaton] did an excellent job, and Val did an excellent job, but George is the best because we've moved away from the self-involved, brooding, 'my parents are dead' narcissism of that earlier Batman. George is 35 years old. If we had a friend who was 35 and they were still obsessing all the time on their parents' death, we'd say, 'You have to get a grip and get on with it. This happened when you were eight!'"





ABOVE: Otto Preminger as Mr. Freeze in the "Batman" TV show. RIGHT: Arnold Schwarzenegger as Mr. Freeze in "Batman & Robin."

Though politely mum on "Batman & Robin" plot details, Schumacher drops clues as to what audiences can expect, particularly with regard to the introduction of Batgirl ("Clueless'" Alicia Silverstone). In a change from the DC Comics original and the popular '60s TV show, Batgirl's identity is not that of Commissioner Gordon's daughter Barbara. "She's now a ward of Alfred the butler," Schumacher says. "It was important in our story [scripted by Akiva Goldsman] for her to be a part of Alfred's life. And Alfred is going through a serious personal drama. His scenes with George are very touching. They're each other's only family, if you think about it.

"So George has this surrogate father to take care of, a young partner in his 20s and suddenly a brand-new person living in the house who's a female teenager. As with all of us, this becomes a time in his life to serve others, not to obsess on himself."

Still, Schumacher knows that the real fun in the Batman films lies with the villains. With Arnold Schwarzenegger as Mr. Freeze, his first bad-guy role since 1984's "The Terminator," expectations are understandably high. "The problem with the Batman villains is that only one person can play them," Schumacher says. "Harvey Two-Face was basically an Al Capone type of person. He has thugs and machine guns. The Riddler was a brilliant mind and a game player, not as much a physical person. But Mr. Freeze is a phenomenal force because he's a brilliant mind and also a superior physical specimen. So I knew I wanted to have a big action star play Mr. Freeze."

For fans of the ABC series, Schwarzenegger's casting would seem to echo that of film director Otto Preminger, whose gloriously campy portrayal of the villain forever in their minds married the character with a thick Germanic accent. "I may have been thinking of Preminger deep inside," admits Schumacher, who notes that Preminger was just one of four actors during the show's run to play Mr. Freeze (called Mr. Zero in the comic books). "People remember Preminger because he was the most frightening. But, whether or not the Otto Preminger thing was in my mind, I think I would have gone for Arnold. We had been looking for a way to work together for several years, and he's been kind enough to offer me several projects. But it was just never right. When I knew I was going to do Mr. Freeze, I knew he'd be perfect. I call it 'The Terminator Meets the Refrigerator.'"

As with the last two Batman films, Mr. Freeze won't be alone in his evil quest, joined this time out by Uma Thurman's Poison Ivy, a seductress who kills with a kiss. "There were many beautiful and talented actresses who wanted to play that role, but to me Uma Thurman is Poison Ivy. To find a six-foot-tall ravishing beauty with that body and those legs and that face—that's like Garbo or Dietrich, who's that brilliant an actress and that funny at the same time. That's a tall order for a 25-year-old. And she delivers."

If nothing else, "Batman & Robin" promises a cavalcade of stars and characters eclectic and colorful enough to please even the most demanding Bat-fan. Still, the proliferation of star roles in the Batman films has raised certain concerns, chiefly the cost of paying so many big salaries and the challenge of giving them all their due screen time. But Schumacher sees these as the least of his worries.

"The great thing about the Batman movies is that they cost less than they appear to," he says. "People take cuts in salaries because they get it made up in merchandising, things like that. And we had over a year to plan this movie.

"A lot of these big-budget movies go into production when they're not ready," he adds. "Or there's a terrible rush in post-production and money is just thrown at the movie. That's how budgets run out of control."

On the issue of ballooning casts, Schumacher defers to his record with ensembles. "All my movies are ensembles. The first two movies I wrote, "Sparkle" and "Car Wash," were ensembles. "D.C. Cab" was an ensemble. So were "St. Elmo's Fire," "The Lost Boys" and "Flatliners." "A Time to Kill" is a huge ensemble. "Dying Young" was not an ensemble, and I wasn't the best director for that. I think life is an ensemble. It all just depends on whose viewpoint you're looking at."

In the end, Schumacher's greatest challenge has less to do with juggling characters than juggling audience expectations. "The good news is that the Batman audience is a huge audience. The bad news is it's a very varied audience." So how does Schumacher, who in March agreed to direct the fifth Batman movie, satisfy so many different expectations? "I go right to the comic books—I get hundreds of them when I'm preparing these things. There's nothing better for color, framing, action or fun. They're just spectacular." Opening his filofax, Schumacher reads from a list of the DC Comics artists who most inspire him: "Alex Ross, Scott Hampton, Simon Bisley, Dave McKean, Tim Sale and, of course, the great Frank Miller."

A self-professed "pop culture sponge," Schumacher says his reverence for the work of comics artists simply underscores his own philosophy regarding the precarious balancing act between commerce and art. "You have to walk a very thin tightrope," he says. "A lot of films that pass for so-called 'art' are just pretentious and self-indulgent. If you fall into the commercial side, you're just making fodder. The tension is to try to marry them so that you're making something accessible that people want to see and enjoy but artistic enough so you can sleep with yourself at night."

"Batman & Robin." Starring George Clooney, Chris O'Donnell, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Uma Thurman and Alicia Silverstone. Directed by Joel Schumacher. Written by Akiva Goldsman. Produced by Peter Macgregor-Scott. A Warner Bros. release. Action/adventure. Opens June 20.

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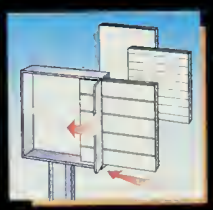
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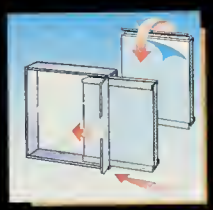
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"AIR" POWER

After A Career Teamed With The Late Don Simpson, Producer Jerry Bruckheimer Flies Solo With The Buena Vista Actioner "Con Air"

By Lea Russo

When it came to making movies, producer Jerry Bruckheimer and his longtime partner and friend, the late Don Simpson, had the Midas touch. Their last four films—"The Rock," "Dangerous Minds," "Crimson Tide" and "Bad Boys"—were pure boxoffice gold, in total generating $376.1 million domestically. Back in the 1980s, they achieved resounding success, producing such era-defining flicks as "Flashdance," "Top Gun" and "Beverly Hills Cop."

Yet, despite fame, fortune and a long line of hit films, the duo were no stranger to hard times. From lawsuits and bad press to Simpson's highly publicized drug addiction and 1996 death, the team faced the worst of what Hollywood and life had to offer.

"Well, there's the good news and the bad news," Bruckheimer says. "The problem is that, when you reach a modicum of success and the press starts to write about you, there are always people with their sniper rifles ready to take you down, and you become in their sights. That's what happens to all of us, even those who have just a moment in the limelight. There are people who want to tear you down. You have to be prepared for that."

Indeed, countless articles portrayed Simpson as a flashy, vain, excessive man who had drug problems, an eating disorder, and "pathological" female relationships. Considered the more stable partner, Bruckheimer (aside from being described as dour) fared somewhat better in the public arena. But such past reportage seems much less troublesome to Bruckheimer than to the coverage of Simpson's death.

"It was the inaccuracy in a lot of the reporting," the producer says, referring to the events surrounding Simpson's passing. "People don't check. They believe the heresy and innuendos, rather than actually checking what went down." When asked to cite specific examples, Bruckheimer says, "I can't get into it."

"I put hockey teams together when I was a kid. I could always get people motivated and team them up.... Being a producer is no different than being a manager of a ballteam."

Born and raised in Detroit, Bruckheimer grew up with a fascination for film, spending many afternoons in Motor City catching a matinee. (He says he still prefers to see a film in a movie theatre rather than in the privacy of his own home or on the Hollywood screening circuit.) By age 14, Bruckheimer was already an award-winning photographer, but he says he wanted to get into a longer format.

"I was always an organizer," the producer explains in his friendly but reserved manner. "I put hockey teams together when I was a kid. I could always get people motivated and team them up and organize them. Being a producer is no different than being a manager of a ballteam. You get a talented coach who's like a director, and a lot of talented players—your actors, your cast, your crew and designers—and you put them all together and make sure they get along. Then you get the best out of them."

After receiving a bachelor's degree from the University of Arizona, Bruckheimer began working in the mailroom of an advertising agency; from there, he moved on to producing commercials and theatrical features. By the time he met Simpson in 1979, Bruckheimer had already made "American Gigolo," "Cat People," "Thief," "Young Doctors in Love" and "Farewell, My Lovely."

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"I make movies I want to see," Bruckheimer explains. "That's always been the case with me. If the subject matter, or the story or the characters, doesn't interest me, and I wouldn't pay my money to go see it, then I usually don't make it. In fact, I don't make it, period."

In the early '80s, his instincts paid off, when he and Simpson teamed for the first time on "Flashdance," a 1983 release that changed the face of fashion and sent industry interest in the marketing potential of soundtracks skyrocketing. "It was all by accident," Bruckheimer says, laughing. "[The clothing and music] weren't designed. What's interesting is that you think we're so smart. We were way behind the eight ball. As an example, the record company shipped only 60,000 albums to the entire country. They were gone within one hour of the picture opening. Nobody had the foresight to see that that was going to be a success—including us."



Producer partner Don Simpson (left) with Bruckheimer on the set of Columbia's "Bad Boys."

"Beverly Hills Cop" and "Top Gun" soon followed, catapulting Simpson and Bruckheimer into superstardom. Their future looked even brighter when they signed a huge deal with Paramount, but the agreement was terminated a short time later, after the 1990 release of "Days of Thunder." Those troubles "didn't stall our career," Bruckheimer says. "We stalled our career. We were having problems, especially my partner was having problems, with the management at Paramount. We were at odds, and they were spreading rumors that the picture wasn't successful, when it was. It became very tough, because they were feeding the press things from inside the company, based on their feuds with us. We parted company right after that. It took us a while to regenerate our development. That's your life blood, your real estate. Once we moved studios, a lot of the projects we had got stalled."

Simpson and he took their talents crosstown. "When we came to Disney," Bruckheimer says, "they were making a different type of movie than we had developed. They were making soft comedies, but the kind of pictures we were good at and understood they weren't making. But a lot of those comedies stopped making money for them, and we were lucky enough to have 'Crimson Tide' ready."

By 1995, the duo had reclaimed their status as top producers. Then tragedy struck. That August, Dr. Stephen W. Ammerman was found dead of a drug overdose at Simpson's Bel Air estate. Rumors of coverups and of Simpson's own problems spread fast and far through Hollywood.

Four months later, Bruckheimer and Simpson announced they were ending their 13-year partnership. "Don had other plans for his own life and was pulling more and more away from the business," says Bruckheimer. "He wanted to do other things. He wanted to direct and be an actor. Unfortunately, he didn't get a chance." On January 19, 1996, Simpson died of heart failure that was caused by an overdose of cocaine and prescription drugs.

Asked if the breakup fueled Simpson's decline, Bruckheimer replies, "Did it have an impact? Of course it had an impact. Did it cause his decline? No. Don was doing what he was going to do whether I stayed with him or left him. The day before he passed away, he had a meeting with agents Jim Wiatt and Jake Bloom, who represented him, and all he could talk about was how excited he was about starting his new company. You know, I think he was getting rejuvenated."



As a parolee doing battle with villains, Nicolas Cage escapes an explosion in Buena Vista's June actioner "Con Air."

Whatever people—or the press—think or say about Jerry Bruckheimer, no one can accuse him of being disloyal. In life and death, he stuck by Simpson, regardless of the controversy. "We were very close friends," Bruckheimer says, sadness obvious in his voice. "We grew up in this town together, and he was a roommate of mine for many years. Real true friends are hard to come by."

Though he misses working with his former partner, Bruckheimer is excited about his latest feat, "Con Air." Starring "The Rock's" Nicolas Cage with John Malkovich and John Cusack, the story follows paroled convict Cameron Poe (Cage) as he hitches a flight home on a prisoner transport plane. When the jet is hijacked by a sinister criminal (Malkovich), Poe must team with a U.S. Marshal (Cusack) to survive to see his family again.

"I wanted to make a movie that was really an odyssey," says the producer. "All [Cage's character] wants to do is to go home to his wife and child, and he's caught in this horrendous situation. To me, it's like classic Greek tragedy in literature, and I love that."

While Bruckheimer was overseeing production of "The Rock," he began developing "Con Air." "I told Nick [Cage] the idea, because we were having such a great experience working together. And he said, 'When the script comes in, why don't you let me read it?' When the script came in and I was sort of pleased with it—it still needed more work—Nick persuaded me to show it to him. I did, and he said, 'Look, I'd love to do it.' And that's how it all started."

Bruckheimer also attached commercial/music video director Simon West, who will make his feature debut helming "Con Air." Given that he also hired newcomer actress Monica Potter (who plays Poe's wife) for the same film, it seems that Bruckheimer, even now that he's flying solo, isn't afraid to take risks. But, he insists, "I don't take a chance. They're talented. I am lucky to be exposed to them."

Yet the fates decided to deal Bruckheimer one more blow when the worst kind of disaster touched the set of "Con Air." "What happened is we were building a plane, and in the shop where they were building it the plane fell on one of the workmen," Bruckheimer says. "Unfortunately, it killed him."

After shutting down production, Bruckheimer flew the crew member's family out to California to visit, by way of memorial, the place where the man had died. "We tried to make it as comfortable as possible," Bruckheimer says. "It's very painful for everybody involved. You try to console everybody as best you can.

"There's not much else you can do to deal with a tragedy," Bruckheimer says. He speaks like a man who knows.

"Con Air." Starring Nicolas Cage, John Malkovich and John Cusack. Directed by Simon West. Written by Scott Rosenberg. Produced by Jerry Bruckheimer. A Buena Vista release. Action. Opens June 6.


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PICTURE THIS:





A GALAXY OF WINNERS: (TOP LEFT:) ShoWest '97's International Achievement Awardee Will Smith celebrates his big "DAY" with his own personal 1997 Marquee award. (TOP RIGHT:) DTS's Stacey Williamson displays the business card for Magda Moore of C. A. Moore Theatres. Moore won our BOXOFFICE-ShoWest Day 3 grand prize: a complete DTS sound system. Now do you wish you stopped by our booth?



SHOWEST® 1997





(ABOVE:) Winona Ryder, ShoWest's Actress of the Year. And to think, her folks ran a moviehouse! (CENTER RIGHT:) BOXOFFICE's Linda Andrade and ShoWest's Herb Burton at the Trade Show. (Right) William J. Stembler (second from right) of Georgia Theatre Co. & family visit QSC for their Day 1 prize: a QSC MX 1500a Amplifier.

AT SHOWEST 1997





(ABOVE:) ShoWest's Daniel Wheatcroft, looking very presidential indeed. (ABOVE RIGHT:) More news from the winner's circle: SMART DEVICES, INCORPORATED's new president Vincent P. Luciani helps Meghan Fitzgerald draw for our Day 2 prize. James Woodin, a district supervisor for Edwards Theatres took home SMART's new CITI-TELL DIGITAL MESSAGE SERVER. Some guys have all the luck!

SHOWEST®
1997





(ABOVE:) Elizabeth Hurley's Marquee Award couldn't stand the strain (the torch broke), but the lady herself was the picture of British poise as ShoWest's Supporting Actress of the Year. (LEFT:) The most photogenic members of Team BOXOFFICE. Honest. BOXOFFICE Editorial and Advertising Assistant Linda Andrade and National Advertising Director Bob Vale.

"PATIENT" is a VIRTUE

Were the studios overthrown by the mavericks at Oscar '97, or did they walk off the field of battle? *by Ray Greene*

Oscar 1997: a triumph of the independent filmmaking vision? Well, yes and no. In what eventually came to seem almost like a graduation ceremony for certain prominent figures on the indie filmmaking scene, such longtime mavericks as Joel and Ethan Coen (who won the Best Original Screenplay Oscar for the script to their mordant Minnesota murder mystery "Fargo") and Miramax Films (which financed and distributed "The English Patient") were finally given their due by the great big Hollywood machine. Meanwhile, "Sling Blade" writer-director-producer Billy Bob Thornton's win for the Best Screenplay Adapted From Another Source represented the triumph of a true industry outsider. The 41-year-old Thornton's fairytale rise after years of frustration as both actor and filmmaker added a touch of poignancy to Oscar '97, and his dry, southern wit, obvious passion for filmmaking and open delight in grabbing an Oscar statuette was a marked contrast to Oscar's last Cinderella kid, Quentin Tarantino, who didn't even bother to meet the backstage press when he won his scripting Oscar two years back.

Best Actor Geoffrey Rush ("Shine") and Best Actress Frances McDormand ("Fargo") were also popular favorites at Oscar '97—fine actors in offbeat roles that were difficult to pigeonhole and easy to appreciate. But despite the fact that many of the most prominent trophies went to filmmakers and actors outside of the mainstream, the belle of the 69th Annual Oscar ball was "The English Patient," a film which, though a Miramax project and therefore bearing the imprimatur of the most successful "niche" marketing force in movie history, demonstrates just how difficult it has become to apply the adjective "independent" in anything like a useful fashion these days.

With a reported budget of about $33 million, "Patient" was hardly a hand-to-mouth production like its poor relations, "Sling Blade" and "Shine." Packaged as a Fox project and then dumped on the eve of production—either because producer Saul Zaentz couldn't secure proper financing (according to Fox) or because Fox wanted a more bankable female lead (according to Zaentz)—"Patient" came to the world of "indie" film with all the signs of its studio gestation period still intact: lavish period detail, eye-filling cinematography of vast and at times densely-populated landscapes, an epic sweep reminiscent of (if not directly derived from) the work of "Lawrence of Arabia"-era David Lean.



BEST OF THE BEST: *Director Anthony Minghella and producer Saul Zaentz cradle their respective Oscars for "The English Patient." The gold bust is Zaentz's Irving Thalberg trophy, for lifetime achievement as a producer. (Photo courtesy of AMPAS. All rights reserved.)*

And the Miramax money train which "English Patient" rode all the way to glory didn't stop at the end of post-production. Sensing after the early reviews that "Patient" had a chance to grab a Best Picture Academy Award, Miramax spent a reported $20 to $30 million in additional funds to bring the film to mainstream audiences, a strategy that paid off handsomely, with "Patient" grossing over $60 million in the U.S. alone as of Oscar night.

Like many of the decisions made by Miramax toppers Bob and Harvey Weinstein during their amazing recent careers, betting the farm on "The English Patient" proved both a gutsy move and a wise one. If the backstage reaction to "Patient's" nine Oscar wins from members of the international press was any

indication, it's likely the film will be an even bigger hit abroad than it is in the U.S. But it does nothing to diminish Miramax's smarts or its achievement to point out that it's doubtful Miramax could have lavished such financial largesse on a single project if it weren't for the fact that Miramax is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Walt Disney Co., whose pockets are as deep as it gets.

As the Weinsteins themselves have pointed out in recent interviews, Miramax isn't the only "indie" film company with a great big corporate safety net spread out beneath its feet as it walks that precarious film-finance tightrope wire. Despite the fact that it is clearly a fully-articulated and characteristically quirky Coen Brothers project, "Fargo" was financed and marketed by Gramercy, which is a subsidiary of the enormous Dutch media conglomerate Polygram. "Shine" distributor Fine Line, meanwhile, was part of Ted Turner's media empire (subsequently absorbed by Time Warner) when it acquired "Shine," the film which netted previously unknown Australian actor Rush his Best Actor trophy. It should be pointed out, however, that as an acquisition title, "Shine" was produced outside the Fine Line/Turner corporate fold. "Sling Blade," the other newsmaking "indie" of Oscar '97, was likewise produced by a tiny, New York-based production house called The Shooting Gallery before Miramax acquired and then promoted the heck out of it.



ACTING UP: *Best Actor Geoffrey Rush and Best Actress Frances McDormand. Their awards showed that the Academy was willing to reward risky or idiosyncratic performances. (AMPAS)*

In fact, despite the "indies are in" and "Sundance West" comments that were written about Oscar '97 in virtually every major media outlet covering the world of film, "The English Patient" was in most ways a far more conservative choice than some of the studio titles (like "The Silence of the Lambs," "Unforgiven" or even "Forrest Gump") which have received the Best Picture nod in the past ten years. Very British, very novelistic, very lush and very long, "Patient" had the patina of quality and class to which Oscar has always aspired stamped large across its every frame. The only real surprise is that "Patient" *wasn't* a studio title, since it embodied more of Hollywood's traditional ideas about what constitutes filmic excellence than perhaps any other Oscar winner of the 1990s.

The truth about Oscar 1997 was that the studios were under-represented in both the nomination and awards process in great part because, when it comes to making movies that are even somewhat in the vein of "art for art's sake," they have largely left the field of battle. With the somewhat ironic exception of "The English Patient's" original home studio, 20th Century Fox (which was rightly peeved over the lack of Academy attention directed at its superb adaptation of Arthur Miller's "The Crucible"), it's hard to find so much as a handful of studio features made in 1996 that even *aspired* to the kind of thematic sophistication the Academy Awards are supposed to be all about. This is perhaps an inevitable outcome of the focusing of so much production capital on popcorn spectacles like the upcoming "Titanic" or "Mars Attacks!" In the very money driven environment of contemporary Hollywood, the successful blockbuster has replaced the Oscar as the ultimate status symbol.

If the 1996 production cycle was the "Cinderella" year for American mavericks, then the studios might do well to keep an eye on this year's Oscar clock. When midnight comes in the "Cinderella" myth, somebody is always reduced to rags. This year, anyone paying attention could have justifiably told the majors to ask not for whom the bell tolled. It tolled for them.

AND THE WINNERS WERE:

BEST PICTURE: "The English Patient" (Miramax)

DIRECTOR: Anthony Minghella, "The English Patient"

ACTOR: Geoffrey Rush, "Shine" (Fine Line)

ACTRESS: Frances McDormand, "Fargo," (Gramercy)

SUPPORTING ACTOR: Cuba Gooding, Jr., "Jerry Maguire" (TriStar)

SUPPORTING ACTRESS: Juliette Binoche, "The English Patient"

FOREIGN FILM: "Kolya" (Czech Republic)

ORIGINAL SCRIPT: Joel and Ethan Coen, "Fargo"

ADAPTED SCRIPT: Billy Bob Thornton, "Sling Blade" (Miramax)

ART DIRECTION: "The English Patient," art direction: Stuart Craig; set decoration: Stephanie McMillan

CINEMATOGRAPHY: John Seale, "The English Patient"

COSTUME DESIGN: Ann Roth, "The English Patient"

DOCUMENTARY FEATURE: "When We Were Kings," prod.: Leon Gast, David Sonenberg (Gramercy)

DOCUMENTARY SHORT: "Breathing Lessons: The Life and Work of Mark O'Brien," Jessica Yu, producer

EDITING: Walter Murch, "The English Patient"

MAKEUP: Rick Baker, David Leroy Anderson, "The Nutty Professor" (Universal)

SCORE (musical/com.): Rachel Portman, "Emma" (Miramax)

SCORE (drama): Gabriel Yared, "The English Patient"

SONG: "You Must Love Me" (from "Evita"), music: Andrew Lloyd Webber; lyrics: Tim Rice (Buena Vista)

ANIMATED SHORT: "Quest," Tyron Montgomery and Thomas Stellmach, producers

LIVE ACTION SHORT: "Dear Diary," David Frankel and Barry Jossen, producers (DreamWorks)

SOUND: "The English Patient," Walter Murch, Mark Berger, David Parker and Chris Newman

SOUND EFFECTS EDITING: Bruce Stambler, "The Ghost and the Darkness" (Paramount)

VISUAL EFFECTS: "Independence Day," Volker Engel, Douglas Smith, Clay Pinney and Joseph Viskocil (20th Century Fox)

JUNE TRAILERS

No hilarity, just celerity: Summer's big titles mean big business, and fast

Even before cinema's giant summer season arrived, the pressure of too many huge titles and too few post-production days to hit one's release mark caused a casualty: Paramount moved "The Flood" from May 2 to fall or perhaps 1998. But that's not slowing down other potential blockbusters, which in June begin not only to arrive, but to arrive with speed, too.

Aptly, "Speed 2" (see photo) and "Con Air" lead off the month explosively on June 6, with not all the big bangs occurring onscreen; many are happening behind the scenes, with Fox and Buena Vista battling for screens and audiences. The scenario is made all the more contentious because both films share the action genre.



Compared to that fracas, the rest of June's slate looks downright gentlemanly in its composition—in the sense that the other majors have respectfully avoided Warner Bros.' "Batman & Robin" June 20 opening. Even on the following weekend, the two studio competitors (Buena Vista's "Hercules" and TriStar's "My Best Friend's Wedding") take only indirect aim at the Caped Crusader, going after the family and the date-night demos, respectively.

But, come July, it's a return to first-weekend contretemps, when "Men In Black" and "Titanic" launch 7/2. All in all, it's a season for setting the rudder amidships and sailing full speed ahead.

JUNE 6

Con Air

Oscar winner Nicolas Cage ("The Rock") stars in this Touchstone action/drama as Cameron Poe, a parolee heading home to his family. Hitching a ride on a flight carrying convicts to a maximum security facility, he becomes embroiled in a midair hijacking thanks to criminal mastermind Cyrus "The Virus" Grissom (John Malkovich). On the ground, U.S. Marshal Vince Larkin ("Grosse Point Blank's" John Cusack) teams with Poe to stop the savage killers before Larkin's superiors blow the aircraft and all its passengers from the sky. Music video director Simon West makes his feature debut; Scott Rosenberg ("Things to Do in Denver When You're Dead") scripts; Jerry Bruckheimer produces. *See our Sneak Preview in this issue.* (Buena Vista, 6/6)

Exploitips: *Buena Vista didn't flinch when Fox moved "Speed 2" to "Con Air's" 6/6 date, perhaps in the belief it had the stronger hand. Indeed, the credits here are pure testosterone, perfect for selling an actioner, and the same weekend last year worked wonders for Cage/Bruckheimer's "The Rock." Still, while "Speed 2" is down Keanu Reeves, "Con Air" is down Sean Connery, diluting the strength of both entries. Exhibitors booking "Con Air" should emphasize the Cage/Bruckheimer (and date) heritage.*

Speed 2: Cruise Control

Director/producer Jan De Bont returns for this "Speed" sequel, which trades in a runaway bus for an oceangoing vessel. The spunky Annie (Sandra Bullock, reprising her role) and her new boyfriend Alex ("Sleepers'" Jason Patric, taking over for Keanu Reeves) decide to take a leisurely cruise in the Caribbean. But all leisure evaporates when a criminal mastermind ("The English Patient's" Willem Dafoe) commandeers the ship and heads them full speed toward doom. Temeura Morrison ("Barb Wire"), Brian McCardie ("Rob Roy") and Glenn Plummer (who returns as record executive Maurice) co-star. Randall McCormick, Jeff Nathanson, Kevin Peterka and Greg Chabot script; Steve Perry also produces. (Fox, 6/6)

Exploitips: *Fox bumped this title up from 7/2, when it would have faced Paramount's "Titanic" (which Fox Intl. wants to open big stateside, given that it controls foreign) and Columbia's "Men In Black." It's still a brave move, in that "Speed 2" now makes a direct demographic collision with Buena Vista's "Con Air," which though not a sequel has "Remember 'The Rock'" written all over it. Also, "Speed" was a Keanu Reeves vehicle; in his absence, "Speed 2" is a Bullock vehicle. Still, though male stars usually sell actioners, the Bullock name is the strongest element here; Fox (and exhibitors) need hope she will draw the distaff demo to plug any male-support leakage.*

Buddy

Based on a true story, this comedy/drama tells the tale of an eccentric socialite, Gertrude Lintz ("Tin Cup's" Rene Russo), who nurses an infant gorilla to health and then raises the creature as her child. Robbie Coltrane and Irma P. Hall co-star. Caroline Thompson ("Black Beauty") directs and scripts; Steve Nicolaides and Fred Fuchs produce; among the executive producers of this first film from Jim Henson Pictures (a co-production with American Zoetrope) is Francis Coppola. (Columbia, 6/6)

Exploitips: *ShoWest response to the "Buddy" clip at the Sony event was split; some thought it looked like cute family fare, while others were reminded of such monkey mistakes as "Dunston Checks In" and "Ed." In a savvy move, Sony saw an opening for young-demo fare in early June and moved "Buddy" from fall. The creative credits are all high-pro—just as they were with Thompson's "Black Beauty," a children's movie of adult despair that had little boxoffice kick. Given the older-leaning competition, and given its ape, "Buddy" must be sold to single-digit youngsters, so its key sell is the Henson imprimatur.*

Mouth to Mouth

This Spanish-language screwball comedy follows the misadventures of Victor ("Jamon Jamon's" Javier Bardem), a struggling actor in Madrid who takes a temporary job at a phone sex service. He is quickly sidetracked by a sexy client, Amanda ("A Walk in the Clouds'" Aitana Sanchez-Gijon), involving him in a complex plot with Amanda's husband, also a client. Maria Barranco and Josep Maria Flotats co-star. Manuel Gomez Pereira directs, and he scripts with Joaquin Oristrell, Juan Luis Iborra and Naomi Wise; Benitez, Oristrell and Pereira produce. (Miramax, 6/6)

Exploitips: *"Mouth to Mouth" was originally slated by Miramax for release on 6/21—in 1996. An early fall date was also scrubbed. Yet playing up the Bardem and Sanchez-Gijon credits should*

draw the experienced art-house crowd and perhaps some crossover mainstreamers in a light-on-specialized weekend.

The Pillow Book

Controversial filmmaker Peter Greenaway ("The Cook, the Thief, the Wife and Her Lover") brings his unique vision to another unique drama: A young Japanese woman, Nagiko Kiohara (Vivian Wu), has developed a penchant for writing on flesh because her loving father (Hideko Yoshido) used to write traditional birthday messages on her face as a girl. Nagiko exits her abusive arranged marriage to seek a man who will continue the birthday tradition. "Trainspotting's" Ewan McGregor co-stars. The film mixes Japanese, Mandarin, Cantonese and English languages. Greenaway directs and scripts; Kees Kasander produces. (CFP, 6/6)

Exploitips: *Our Cannes reviewer (July '96 issue) gave "The Pillow Book" three stars, saying Greenaway was "as stunning and inscrutable as ever.... Each voluptuous, sometimes shocking image" seems self-contained, but that eventually leads to a feeling of "disjointedness." The Greenaway and McGregor names will draw art-house audiences, and so will emphasizing the film's sensual theme.*

JUNE 13

In and Out

In this comedy, "Fierce Creatures'" Kevin Kline stars as Howard Brackett, a popular high school English teacher whose life is turned upside down when his heterosexuality is called into question on national TV. Joan Cusack, Matt Dillon, Debbie Reynolds, the late Wilford Brimley, Bob Newhart and Tom Selleck co-star. Frank Oz ("The Indian in the Cupboard") directs; Paul Rudnick ("Jeffrey", "Addams Family Values") scripts; Scott Rudin ("The First Wives Club") produces. (Paramount, 6/13)

Exploitips: *As "Speed 2" and "Con Air" continue to duke it out, mainstream audiences looking for a lighter alternative have only "In and Out" to turn to. Though Oz's works have had on-and-off success, he's backed here by a good comic cast; exhibitors should play up the good-times genre and highlight the talent, including the resurgent Reynolds ("Mother") to pull the mature demo.*

Boogie Nights

Set in the heyday of the adult-film world, this dark comedy follows a group of filmmakers hoping to revamp the XXX industry. Mark Wahlberg ("Traveller"), Julianne Moore ("The Lost World"), Burt Reynolds ("Striptease"), Don Cheadle ("Devil in a Blue Dress"), William H. Macy ("Fargo"), Heather Graham ("Drugstore Cowboy") and John C. Reilly ("Hard Eight") star. Sophomore helmer Paul Thomas Anderson (also "Hard Eight") directs, scripts and produces. (New Line, 6/13 wide after 5/23 ltd)

Exploitips: *Mainstream audiences looking for less action than "Con Air," less whitebread than "In and Out" and less art than "Ulee's Gold" could find "Boogie Nights" diverting. As it did for "The People vs. Larry Flynt," the XXX setting will draw this extra attention, but the cast talents are also salable.*



Batman & Robin

"One Fine Day's" George Clooney takes his turn at "bat" fighting against evil in Gotham City. This time out, Batman and Robin ("The Chamber's" Chris O'Donnell) team with Batgirl ("Clueless'" Alicia Silverstone) to thwart the sinister doings of Mr. Freeze (Arnold Schwarzenegger) and seductress Poison Ivy ("Beautiful Girls'" Uma Thurman). The fourth film in the "Batman" series co-stars John Glover ("Love! Valour! Compassion!) and Elle Macpherson ("If Lucy Fell"). Joel Schumacher, who helmed #3 and will do #5, directs; Akiva Goldsman ("Batman Forever") scripts; Peter Macgregor-Scott produces. *See our Sneak Preview in this issue.* (Warner, 6/20)

Exploitips: *The two-week battle between "Speed 2" and "Con Air" ends 6/20 when the Caped Crusader drops in. "Batman Forever" pulled $184 mil. in 1995, and expectations are for more of the same with the additions of Arnold, Alicia and Uma. As June's second-half slate indicates, even competing studios believe "Batman & Robin" will dominate the mainstream market straight through to 7/2, when "Men In Black" and "Titanic" launch.*

Ulee's Gold

Peter Fonda stars as Florida beekeeper Ulee Jackson, a reluctant family patriarch called to arms by his incarcerated son Jimmy (Tom Wood). Ulee must rescue his recovering drug addict daughter-in-law, Helen (Christine Dunford), with the help of his granddaughters and a local nurse (Patricia Richardson of TV's "Home Improvement"). Vanessa Zima and Jessie Biel co-star. Victor Nunez ("Ruby in Paradise" directs and scripts, and he produces with Peter Saraf and Sam Gowan. (Orion Classics, 6/13 NY/LA, exp 6/20 & 6/27)

Exploitips: *In a handsome four-star review (April '97 issue), our Sundance critic cited Nunez's "sensitive, delicate portrait" and Fonda's performance of "quiet yet sustained intensity." But the film is "painstakingly slow...before it becomes truly absorbing," making this pure art-house fare. Nunez's "Ruby in Paradise" credit will draw younger specialized auds, and the Fonda name could draw the more mature crowd.*

Squeeze

This urban thriller examines the psychological pressures of urban street life on three boys "squeezed" between the influences of a youth worker and of a gang leader. Tyrone Burton, Eddie Cutanda and Phuong Van Duong star (and inspired the story). First-timer Robert Patton-Spruill directs and scripts; Ari Newman, Garen Topalian, Stephanie Danan and Patricia Moreno produce. (Miramax, 6/13)

Exploitips: *Miramax picked this up at last year's L.A. Independent Film Fest, and the film's grittiness makes "Squeeze" effective counterprogramming its opening weekend against the softer "Ulee's Gold" for specialized auds who like their fare grittier.*

JUNE 20

Love Serenade

This Camera d'Or winner at Cannes tells the story of unwedded twentysomething sisters who feel life is passing them by in their tiny Down Under town. When the ex-drivetime king of big-city Brisbane radio arrives to run the local station, the sisters engage in a comically contentious battle to win his affections. Miranda Otto, Rebecca Frith and George Shevtsov star. Shirley Barrett directs and scripts; Jan Chapman (Oscar winner for "The Piano") produces. (Miramax, 6/20 NY/LA)

Exploitips: *Men and their dates will be at "Batman & Robin"; women (especially the more literate) will opt for "Love Serenade." To draw mainstream distaff attention and emphasize the comic angle, exhibitors might use this catchline: "A comedy about two sisters who'll do anything to join the first wives—or any wives—club."*

Dream With the Fishes

David Arquette ("Scream") stars as Terry, a young suicidal man who crosses paths with a dying, thrill-seeking stranger, Nick (Brad Hunt). Terry teams with Nick to help him

fulfill several unusual fantasies in one last adventurous road trip. Kathryn Erbe, Cathy Moriarty and Allyce Beasley co-star. Screenwriter Finn Taylor ("Pontiac Moon") makes his directing debut; Johnny Wow and Mitchell Stein produce. (Sony Classics, 6/20)

Exploitips: *Specialized male moviegoers not drawn to "Batman & Robin" or "Love Serenade" could look toward "Dream With the Fishes," so accentuate the road trip and bonding elements likely to draw that demo.*

When the Cat's Away

In this French comedy, an unhappy young woman searches for her lost cat; along the way, she meets a host of diverse characters, and suddenly her life is filled with adventure, intrigue and romance. Garance Clavel, Sinedine Soualem and Renee Le Calm star. Cedric Klapisch directs and scripts; Aissa Djabri, Farid Lahoussa and Manuel Munz produce for Vertigo/France 2. (Sony Classics, 6/20)

Exploitips: *As "Love Serenade" draws distaff, and "Dream With the Fishes" draws males, "When the Cat's Away" is for the foreign-language crowd. Our Sundance reviewer (Feb. '97 issue) gave the film a four-star review, calling it "charming without being cloying" and citing its "deft combination of comedy and social awareness."*

Deep Crimson

In this dramatic horror film, an aging mother named Coral (Regina Orozco) with insatiable desires answers a lonely-hearts ad and meets a handsome philanderer named Nicolas (Daniel Gimenez Cacho). For his love, Coral abandons her life, her children and her home to help him find women to seduce and rob—but then their dealings turn deadly. Arturo Ripstein ("The Queen of the Night") directs this Mexican/French/Spanish co-production; Paz Alicia Garciadiego scripts; Miguel Necoechea and Paolo Barbachano produce. (New Yorker, 6/20)

Exploitips: *To pull the likely art-house auds, try this catchline: "In the tradition of 'Nosferatu' and 'Cronos' comes 'Deep Crimson'."*

JUNE 27

Hercules

Disney's 35th full-length animated feature is an epic comedy/adventure from writer/directors John Musker and Ron Clements (the makers of "Aladdin" and "The Little Mermaid") about the legendary half-man/half-god son of Zeus. Raised on Earth, Herc sets out to prove himself a hero so he can return to his Mount Olympus home. But Hades, god of the Underworld, sees Zeus' son as an obstacle to his plans to rule the universe and arranges a number of calamities for him. Danny DeVito, Tate Donovan, Susan Egan, Matt Frewer, Bobcat Goldthwait, Paul Shaffer, Rip Torn, James Woods and Charlton Heston provide the voices; Musker and Clements produce with Alice Dewey ("The Lion King"). (Disney, 6/27)

Exploitips: *"The Hunchback of Notre Dame" was considered a boxoffice disappointment, though it cleared the $100 mil. mark (if by just $100,000). What exhibitors want, of course, is another $300 mil. performer like "The Lion King," however unlikely that is. "Hercules" has the audience plus of having an attractive male hero, which "Hunchback" and "Pocahontas" ($141.5 mil.) lacked. Expect a full-court press by Disney to gain theatres and then to pull patrons to those theatres; the film's 6/27 positioning, given the older-drawing competition, is a hospitable clime, setting it up for the long July 4 weekend and the rest of the summer to play to families.*

My Best Friend's Wedding

In this romantic comedy, best friends Julianne (Julia Roberts) and Michael ("Kansas City's" Dermot Mulroney) plan to marry each other at age 28 if they haven't found that someone special. Just as Julianne is expecting the inevitable, Michael instead pops the question to beautiful 'n' bubbly Kimmy ("She's the One's" Cameron Diaz), and Julianne finds herself on the wrong side of a romantic triangle. Rupert Everett ("Cemetery Man") and Philip Bosco ("Milk Money") co-star. Aussie P.J. Hogan ("Muriel's Wedding") directs; Ronald Bass ("The Joy Luck Club") scripts, and he produces with Jerry Zucker ("A Walk in the Clouds"). (TriStar, 6/27)

Exploitips: *Roberts' fans don't want her in gloomies like "Michael Collins" or "Mary Reilly"; they want her in sunnies like "Pretty Woman," and the trailer for this rom/com seemed to leave exhibitors smiling at ShoWest. Although the narrative is similar to "If Lucy Fell," which fell at the boxoffice for TriStar, the studio thinks the tale will work with star power. And that's the sell: Roberts, smiling.*

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Response No. 6

Talk of Angels

A sort of gender-bender variant on Ken Loach's "Land and Freedom," this PG-13 drama tells the story of a young Irish woman who arrives in Spain on the eve of the country's civil war. Polly Walker ("For Roseanna"), Vincent Perez ("The Crow: City of Angels"), Frances McDormand ("Fargo") and Franco Nero star. Nick Hamm directs; Ann Guedes and Frank McGuinness script; Patrick Cassavetti produces. (Miramax, 6/27)

Exploitips: *On one hand, this has elements that could make it one of the month's stronger art-house releases; on the other hand, "Talk of Angels" has long sat on Miramax's clogged to-come slate. (It was first slated for last August and then this April.) Best bets are the date-night college crowd and the usual specialized suspects (the educated 40+ demo).*

Gabbeh

As an old woman washes her gabbeh (a patterned Persian carpet) in a river, a young woman named Gabbeh (Shaghayegh Djodat) tells her life story. The delicate fable of true love is interwoven with a documentary-like look at nomadic life in this Iranian-language drama. Abbas Sayah and Hossein Moharami co-star. Mohsen Makhmalbaf directs and scripts; Khalil Daroudtchi and Khalil Mahmoudl produce. (New Yorker, 6/27)

Exploitips: *"The White Balloon," also an Iranian production, performed well (in select-site terms) for October Films in early '96. Citing "Gabbeh" as "in the tradition of 'The White Balloon'" would target that specialized demo.*

M

In this reissue of Fritz Lang's 1931 German melodrama, Peter Lorre stars as a psychotic child murderer brought to justice by Berlin's organized criminal element. Otto Wernicke, Ellen Widmann, Inge Landgut and Gustav Grundgens co-star. Thea Von Harbou, Paul Falkenberg, Adolf Jansen and Karl Vash script the Nero Film production. (Kino, 6/27)

Exploitips: *Perhaps due to the mainstreaming of today's art-house films, reissues of classics like "The Garden of the Finzi-Continis" and "Belle de Jour" have drawn decent specialized numbers. So exhibitors should highlight the 1931 date and the Lang imprimatur to give this event status at the art house.*

JUNE UNDATED

Different for Girls

In this romantic comedy, when childhood best friends Paul and Karl meet 20 years later, Paul doesn't recognize his old pal—because Karl has become Kim. The slovenly Paul is attracted to the proper Kim until he learns her true identity; then he decides to wreck Kim's life. "Different for Girls" received the Montreal fest's Grand Prix of the Americas award for best film. Rupert Graves ("Intimate Relations"), Steven Mackintosh ("London Kills Me") and Saskia Reeves ("Butterfly Kiss") star. Richard Spence directs; Tony Marchant scripts; John Chapman produces. (First Look, June)

Exploitips: *The gender-bender storyline isn't new, but it continues to draw. Underscoring the Montreal win will help differentiate the film from its art-house competitors.*

The Tit and the Moon

In this Spanish-language comedy, Tete (Biel Duran) is a Catalonian boy who has a sibling problem: He feels neglected when mom breastfeeds his newborn brother. After seeing the naked breast of a French ballerina ("Becoming Collette's" Mathilda May), he becomes fixated on that female body part. Gerard Damon co-stars. Bigas Luna ("Jamon Jamon") directs, and he scripts with Cuca Canals; A.V. Gomez produces. (Strand, June)

Exploitips: *Our Telluride reviewer (Nov. '95 issue) gave the latest Luna 2 1/2 stars, saying "The Tit and the Moon" is "like two European movies that don't mesh": Although Luna's usual lusty Spaniards are entertaining, two key French characters are heavy-handedly cerebral. Still, Luna's fans (however limited in numbers stateside) are likely to forgive the latter as long as he provides the former.*

Midaq Alley

Based on the Egyptian novel by Nobel winner Naguib Mahfouz, this Mexican drama ranges from 1940s Cairo to modern downtown Mexico City as it blends the stories of three characters: middle-aged family man Rutilio (Ernesto Gomez Cruz), who experiences first-time homosexual feelings that lead to domestic disaster; beautiful Alma ("Fools Rush In's" Salma Hayek), whose paramour goes to America to make money to marry her; and spinster landlady Susanita (Margarita

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Response No. 197

LATE MOVIE MOVES INTO MAY ...

COLOR OF A BRISK AND LEAPING DAY

In this end-of-WWII drama, a young man with a passion for trains pursues his dream to save the Yosemite Valley Railroad. Meanwhile, he carries on an incestuous relationship with his younger sister and develops a homoerotic relationship with another man. Peter Alexander, Jeri Arredondo, Henry Gibson and Michael Stipe star. Christopher Munch directs and scripts; Andrea Sperling ("nowhere") produces. (Artistic License, 5/2 NY)

Exploitips: *Our Sundance reviewer (April '95 issue) gave this just 1 1/2 stars, saying: "beautiful but languid, this expansive travelogue and heavy historical story would have fared better as a coffee table book." But the film's Sundance prize (for cinematography) will draw attention, as will Munch's previous "The Hours and Time" credit. Co-star Stipe is the lead singer of rock band R.E.M.*

NOWHERE

Dark ("The Doom Generation's" James Duval) is infatuated with the end of the world and bisexual Mel ("The Craft's" Rachel True), who carries on with Dark and girlfriend Lucifer (Kathleen Robertson). Chiara Mastroianni ("Three Lives and Only One Death") and Debi Mazar co-star. Gregg Araki directs and scripts; he produces with Andrea Sperling and France's Why Not Prods. (Fine Line, 5/9)

Exploitips: *Advanced from 8/22, this manic and melancholic film touts itself as a supersaturated "Beverly Hills, 90210" on acid and features cameo appearances by John Ritter, Beverly D'Angelo, Shannen Doherty and Traci Lords. Like all of Araki's canon, "nowhere" won't play anywhere close to mainstream tastes; expect strongest support from gay moviegoers.*

TWIN TOWN

In Swansea, South Wales, a roofing contractor (William Thomas) tries to avoid paying compensation to his worker Fatty (Huw Ceredig) injured on the job. But Fatty's wicked twin sons (Rhys Ifans and LLyr Evans) are ready for revenge in this black comedy. Debut director Kevin Allen also co-scripts with Paul Durden; Peter McAleese produces; Andrew MacDonald and Danny Boyle (the "Shallow Grave" and "Trainspotting" duo) executive produce. (Gramercy, 5/9 NY/LA)

Exploitips: *Our Berlin fest critic gives "Twin Town" 2 1/2 stars, saying watching the movie "is a bit like savoring a bad smell"—the plotline is ordinary, the humor is blunt and sick, and the characters are "lewd, rude, duplicitous...," yet the acting and filmmaking have energy and the film "speaks a universal language about human small-mindedness and resilience." Especially after "Trainspotting," the most obvious sells are MacDonald and Boyle.*

UNDERWORLD

This noir thriller follows an ex-con (Denis Leary) with a twisted sense of vengeance who starts a vendetta against those who mob-hit his father. Joe Mantegna, Annabella Sciorra, Abe Vigoda and former XXX actress Traci Lords co-star. Roger Christian (who won a set-decoration Oscar for "Star Wars") directs; Larry Bishop ("Mad Dog Time") scripts; Robert Vince and William Vince produce. (Legacy, 5/9 ltd)

Exploitips: *"Underworld" had been on the slate of the increasingly hesitant Trimark. Our Ft. Lauderdale fest critic in a one-star review (April 1997 issue) called this a "derivative devil" worshipping "at the 'Pulp Fiction' altar." But that testosterone content is the most marketable element, along with the "many scantily clad females and strippers" for the male demo.*

PLAYING GOD

A famous L.A. surgeon ("Kalifornia's" David Duchovny) loses his medical license after performing an operation while on amphetamines. Hired by a ruthless criminal ("Beautiful Girls'" Timothy Hutton), he becomes a "gunshot doctor" and is attracted to the criminal's moll ("Hackers'" Angelina Jolie); the doctor then faces a choice of destiny. Andy Wilson directs; Mark Haskell Smith scripts; Marc Abraham and Laura Bickford produce for Touchstone. (Buena Vista, 5/16)

Exploitips: *Though not a clash of the titans, "Playing God"—which Buena Vista had slated for this fall—now goes drama-vs.-drama against Paramount's "Night Falls on Manhattan," itself once slated for fall (but '96). Paramount has the bigger film star in Andy Garcia, but Buena Vista can tout Duchovny's popularity from his turn on TV's "The X-Files."*

NIGHT FALLS ON MANHATTAN

A cop-turned-DA (Andy Garcia) faces personal and professional betrayal when he learns a cover-up might involve those closest to him. Richard Dreyfuss and Lena Olin co-star for writer/director Sidney Lumet; Thom Mount and Josh Kramer produce for Spelling. (Paramount, 5/16)

Exploitips: *At the studio's ShoWest event, Garcia garnered laughs when he said he was making a "farewell speech," in that his film was going against "The Lost World" (actually arriving a week later). But "Night Falls on Manhattan" now collides with "Playing God," meaning a likely split of serious-film mainstreamers. "Night Falls on Manhattan" is based on the Robert Daley novel "Tainted Evidence," so a bookstore tie-in could pay dividends.*

THE VAN

This third adaptation of novelist Roddy Doyle's Barrytown trilogy, about two men who run a fish 'n' chips van, reteams director Stephen Frears ("The Snapper") with producer Lynda Myles and star Colm Meaney (both of whom also did "The Commitments"). Donal O'Kelly co-stars. As before, Doyle adapts. (Fox Searchlight, 5/23)

Exploitips: *This threequel has a built-in audience. Still, Frears + Meaney = art-house auds unless reviews create crossover mainstream support (but see our two-star review, Aug. 1996 issue).*

Sanz), who dreams of wedded life. A fourth section picks up the stories two years later. Jorge Fons directs; Vincente Lenero adapts; Alfredo Ripstein Jr. produces. (Northern Arts, June)

Exploitips: *The film's anthology nature and Egyptian heritage make it a specialized specialized film—which is Northern Arts' specialty. Mahfouz's Nobel win is probably more citable for art-house auds than is the Hayek credit, though that can't hurt.*

Twisted

This contempo homosexual variant on "Oliver Twist" set in New York follows a homeless orphan (Keivyn McNeil Graves) brought into the "stable" of Andre (William Hickey); there, he finds a brotherly friend in Angel (David Norona) and an ally in tough drag queen Shiniqua (Billy Porter). But Angel's abusive lover, Eddie (Anthony Crivelo), takes a disliking to the orphan. Seth Michael Donsky makes his feature directing debut; Donskey also scripts, and he produces with Adrian Agramonte. (Leisure Time Features, June)

Exploitips: *"Twisted" is likely to do best in the largest cities with a gay community; expect the same audience, if in lesser numbers, that attended "johns."*

The Last Time I Commited Suicide

This drama is based on a letter written to beat icon Jack Kerouac from Neal Cassady, the man who inspired Keroauc's "On the Road." Set in the early '50s, the story follows Cassady (Thomas Jane) in the days before he met the famed writer. Keanu Reeves, Tom Bower, Adrien Brody ("King of the Hill"), John Doe ("Roadside Prophets"), Claire Forlani ("Basquiat") and Marg Helgenberger ("Species") co-star. Stephen Kay ("Intimate Power") directs and scripts; Edward Bates and Louise Rosner produce. (Roxie)

Exploitips: *This "artsploitation" effort boasts something of a name cast but is likely to draw only the specialized demo. A cross-promo with a bookstore that's heavy on Kerouac would reach that literate audience.*

Mondo Plympton

This anthology provides a retrospective look at the wild and comic worlds created by animator Billy Plympton, whose work was last seen on the big screen in 1992's "The Tune." (Cinema Village, June)

Exploitips: *Like British claymation master Nick Park ("Wallace & Gromit"), Plympton has a small (perhaps smaller) but devoted following. To pull animation fans, try an MTV or Cartoon Network cross-promo with your local cable TV operator.*



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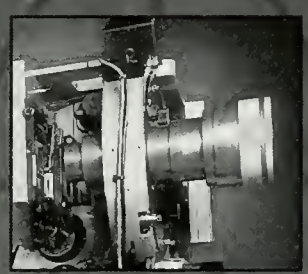
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REELIN' AND ROCKIN'

A seismic shift in projection techniques comes about as the 6,000-foot reel heads to market *by Pat Kramer*

At last, the path has been cleared for a technological advance that will not only improve the quality and longevity of film prints but also specifically benefit exhibitors across the nation and worldwide. After a quarter-century of batting the idea around, NATO board members this year endorsed a plan to begin converting film reels from the standard 2,000-foot length to the 6,000-foot extended-length reels (ELRs). This spring, ELRs—displayed at ShoWest and to be on view at ShowCanada—will begin arriving in projection booths.

The new format is expected to improve film presentation (due to fewer splices), increase the longevity of prints (less wear and tear), and most importantly save valuable makeup and breakdown time in the projection booth. Despite the advantages, it's been a long time coming. "This is something the board has discussed for some 25 years," says William F. Kartozian, president of NATO. "We were getting somewhat jaded by it but were pleasantly surprised when it became apparent it was going to happen."



Photo for BOXOFFICE *by Carlos Serrao*

A MAN WHO MADE IT HAPPEN: *Warner Bros. distribution president Barry Reardon with an extended-length reel and one of its 2,000-foot predecessors.*

Much credit for the breakthrough, Kartozian says, goes to Barry Reardon, president of domestic theatrical distribution at Warner Bros. "It's finally on track, thanks to Barry," Kartozian says. Although, due to last-minute fine-tuning, Warner Bros. was not able as planned to roll out "Selena" on a 100-theatre test of the ELR, the studio is considering giving its April 11 release "Murder at 1600" the honor.

Warner Bros. isn't the only distributor eager to make ELRs the reel of choice. New Line Cinema will start using the 6,000-foot reel on 200 prints of its May 2 release, "Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery." Harold Goldberg, Universal's vice president of print control, says his studio is also interested in using the ELRs but is waiting to see how Warner's experience goes before committing.

The ELR means exhibitors save time and money, but it means added costs for distributors. "That's part of the reason this changeover has taken so long," Kartozian says. "It was known that this could be done, but there's always a certain resistance to change—and the changeover was not going to be without cost. While the exhibitors get a great benefit by this, the principal expense is going to be borne by the studios. So we had to work out a formula pursuant to which the studios would be reimbursed a part of their costs on a fair basis."

According to Warner's Reardon, that's an extra $5 per shipment for the first two years that the new reels and their protective cases are on the market. After that time, it will be the studios' responsibility to bear any added expense. Says Al Shapiro, New Line's senior executive vice president and general sales manager, "It's going to cost us a lot to convert the film, but we think the time has come for us to help the theatre owner make sure that the pictures on the screen are presented properly."

With the introduction of the new reels, exhibitors will see an immediate benefit in presentation. Whereas the 2,000-ft. reels require five or more reel changes for a standard feature, two 6,000-ft. reels can accommodate most feature films. As an example, Reardon cites the case of a projectionist he met in Las Vegas during ShoWest, who told him that on Thursday evenings he often works until 4 a.m. breaking down six or seven films into the 2,000-foot format and putting them back in the cans for the weekly changeover at his 12-screen multiplex. With 6,000-foot reels, Reardon says, "when you open our case and pull the reel out, you just put it up on the platter, loop it through, put one splice in it—and you're in business. The same thing happens when you're breaking it down.

"That's really a huge savings in the projection booth," Reardon says. "We figure it's about 20 to 25 minutes per feature [of time saved], putting it together and breaking it down."

Adds New Line's Shapiro, "We think the 6,000-foot reels will help ensure that the prints you see on the screen in theatres across the country are in pristine condition, as much as is

humanly possible, because they're not going to be touched as much and they're not going to get scratched as much. By eliminating the need for splices and in some cases cue markers, the audience can enjoy a film without being pulled out of it by bad prints. The 6,000-foot reels will go a long way toward ensuring that the films remain in good condition for a long period of time."

the ELR and its casing with input from Inter-Society president Larry Jacobson (president of LJ Technologies) and Robert Pinkston, vice president of projection and sound at United Artists Theatre Circuit. Each maker was asked to submit six samples of an ELR case prototype, which then underwent a series of rigorous laboratory tests for impact and durability. The tests were created to mirror the conditions the

destination, exhibitors were asked to evaluate the ELRs on different qualities. In the end, each of the manufacturer's cases was found to have flaws. It was at that time that Circular Motion came into the picture, submitting to Warner Bros. its prototype plastic case, durable enough to withstand damage but lightweight enough for easy transport. The studio independently tested the Circular Motion case and found it to



THE ELR HALL OF FAME: *(left to right) William F. Kartozian, president of NATO; Al Shapiro, New Line's senior executive vice president and general sales manager; J. Wayne Anderson, head of NATO's technical committee; and the late Bud Rifkin.*

To help exhibitors with the changeover, NATO has distributed bulletins to its membership, informing those who don't have platter systems about the modifications they will need to make. Overall, the changeover will be a gradual one, with prints initially shipping in both standard and ELR formats.

The cases for the new reels are being manufactured for Warner Bros. and New Line by Circular Motion Products, a plastics manufacturer that's been producing cores, hubs and cases for Warner Bros. for many years. Circular Motion's plastic case accommodates a 24 3/4-inch diameter reel (which can actually hold 7,000 feet of film, allowing for inclusion of trailers or other pre-feature materials) and, like its smaller predecessor, has a handle for carrying. Made of plastic, a case and reel together weigh about 65 pounds (less than the weight of three standard-size reels). Its split-reel format has a four-inch core in the middle for mounting film; two plastic flanges snap around the reel to secure it to the core. In short, the new format is designed for ease of usage.

Winning the contract to be the exclusive maker for Warner Bros. and New Line was quite an accomplishment for Circular Motion, a small Downey, Calif. company, in that it won out over five larger manufacturers for the job. Although Circular Motion has long manufactured cases for the 2,000-foot reel, it was not among the original group of manufacturers (Technicolor, Hollywood, Logistical, Goldberg and Bose) that presented prototypes in March 1996.

The process began back in early 1996, when NATO's Technical Advancement Committee—presided over by J. Wayne Anderson, president and COO of Maryland-based R/C Theatres (and ShoWest's B.V. Sturdivant Award winner)—developed specifications for cases would undergo during normal transit from distributors to exhibitors.

"The interesting thing about the test is that, as rigorous as it was, all five passed the laboratory test," says Jacobson. "But only two survived a [subsequent] field test." The field trial involved two dozen theatre circuits, which tested the ELRs for functionality and ease of usage. (A sign of industry interest in the project, participating circuits included Marcus, Sony, Hoyts, Carmike, UATC, General Cinema, Cinamerica, AMC, National Amusements, Syufy, Pacific, ACT III, Metropolitan, Edwards, Harkins, Wehrenberg, Cinemark, Cineplex, Eastern Federal, Cobb, Fox, Malco, Regal, R/C, Kerasotes, Goodrich and Dickinson.)



NO MYSTERY: *Audiences of New Line's "Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery" will see cleaner presentations thanks to the ELR.*

Three film-carrier companies—NFS, ETS and TES—shipped the ELRs back and forth to the circuits, further testing durability. At each meet all the specifications. At $100 per case, Circular Motion's product was also much less expensive than those of its competitors.

Says Circular Motion's Cesar Fernandez, "It's a great honor to do this type of thing and have the acceptance of [the studios]. When we look at the 6,000-foot reel, what we see is a plastic part—not that we are selling to Warner Bros. and so the price should be going up. We have been manufacturing plastic parts for a long time. When we became exclusive for the motion picture industry, we already had experience in plastic parts, so we are able to provide quality at a price."

In looking back on how long it's taken the ELR innovation to receive widespread approval, Inter-Society's Jacobson says, "There've been a lot of people involved in the process, but what truly made it happen is the fact that Barry Reardon wanted the ELR. Someone needs to get credit for pulling it off, and that person is Barry." R/C's Anderson also acknowledges the early efforts of the late Bud Rifkin, co-founder of Cinema Centers and former president and CEO of Hoyts. As chairman of NATO's technical committee in the early 1970s (and later as president of NATO), Rifkin was a pioneer in trying to bring ELRs to the exhibition industry.

Reflecting on the present-day milestone with Warner and New Line's introduction of the 6,000-foot reel, Anderson says, "Bud would have a big smile on his face if he could see this. He tried very hard, early on, to get this started back in the '70s. That was one of his lifelong endeavors, trying to get this through." NATO's Kartozian sums it up by saying, "I think that it's great that we're moving into the 20th century—even though we're so close to the 21st! I just think it's great that we finally got it accomplished."

A View From the Capital

by Dina Lebo
Co-Chair
ShowCanada



Each year the ShowCanada convention takes on the flavor of the region where it is being held, and this year is no exception. Ottawa being Canada's capital city, our opening night gala on Tuesday, May 6 will feature an astounding array of the nation's political "who's who," as well as a truly Canadian spectacle featuring the Ottawa footguards, whom tourists see in the summer at the changing of the guard ceremonies in front of the Parliament buildings. The footguards will thrill delegates with their stage version of "the coming together of the provinces," complete with provincial flags, at the grandiose Museum of Civilization in Hull, Quebec.

The Ottawa region is also known as Canada's Silicon Valley because of the many high-tech companies that are located in the area. We've incorporated a tour of several of these facilities into our Friday morning seminar series, which we've called Technical Tours. Those who are interested will have the opportunity to tour Corel Corporation, which is recognized worldwide as an award-winning developer and marketer of PC graphics and multi-media software; the General Assembly Production Centre, a unique, state-of-the-art video, audio multimedia production center; Animatics, a young, upbeat media company creating interactive worlds of sound and light; and the New Multimedia Centre, which has a range of digital equipment.

As organizers of the convention, we try to maintain a balance of activities, with a program that includes seminars, screenings, a growing trade show, and gala events, while also showing off some of the region's highlights. Our opening gala will take place at the Museum of Civilization in Hull, Quebec, and we'll be visiting the new casino in Hull. We'll also be attending a seminar at the IMAX theatre in Hull and screenings at Famous Players' Rideau Centre Cinemas and Cineplex Odeon's World Exchange Cinemas in Ottawa. Our gala evenings will take place at the Westin Hotel and the Ottawa Conference Centre in the heart of downtown Ottawa, and we are looking into an event at the Parliament buildings as well.

Besides our themed evening events (we've got a costumed Mardi Gras night, and we're working on our own Circus-Circus evening), the gala opening night ceremonies with the Show-Canada Showmanship Awards promises to again be one of the highlights of the convention, as 22 theatre managers will be honored in an award ceremony highlighting their work in film promotions, concessions, and audience development over the last 12 months.

This award contest is among the biggest in North America. We now have six categories with three prize winners in each category. Showmanship is alive and well and growing in Canada. This year, we should receive over 120 entries as part of the award competition. Our new Blockbuster award will be given for the best promotion of a major "blockbuster" film. This will be differentiated from our Showmanship Award category for smaller films. As always, we have awards for the best promotion for a Canadian film in French and a Canadian film in English, as well as our audience development award, which is given for programs centered on how a specific theatre

ShowCanada '97: May 6-10 Ottawa, Ontario

interacts with its community—blood donor clinics, food drives, et cetera. We also give out prizes for the best promotions surrounding concessions sales.

Two different kinds of awards that we give out are for the highest-grossing Canadian film, which this year was David Cronenberg's "Crash," and for Canadian Director of the Year, which will also go to Cronenberg.

There are many new developments happening in the film industry, and our seminar series will focus on these changes and bring exhibitors up to date on the new realities. As we speak, 6,000-foot reels are becoming a reality. Warner Bros. is releasing the Wesley Snipes starrer "Murder at 1600" in the U.S. using the new format,

As organizers of the convention, we try to maintain a balance of activities, with a program that includes seminars, screenings, a growing trade show, and gala events, while also showing off some of the region's highlights.

and New Line will follow suit with the comedy "Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery" (which stars Canadian Mike Myers of "Wayne's World" fame). Canadian releases using the 6,000-foot reel are planned for the summer. We will have representatives from InterSociety on hand so that Canadian exhibitors can ask questions and see the new cases first-hand.

Also, United Artists Theatres and Todd-AO Corp. have created a compact print and are now demonstrating it across the country. The improvement of 30 frames per second from 24 frames gives a 14 percent better picture quality and better contrast resolution because of the absence of flicker. We hope to have a demonstration for exhibitors to see this new process.

And last but not least, Disney University is coming up to ShowCanada with its seminar on customer service—Disney-style. We welcome one and all and hope that you all enjoy a view from the capital!

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Response No. 159

Entertainment, Information and Inspiration

by Cathy Watson
President
Motion Picture Theatre Associations of Canada



On behalf of the Motion Picture Theatre Associations of Canada, I would like to welcome everyone to our nation's capital, Ottawa, Ontario. This year's ShowCanada convention is being held at the historical and beautiful Chateau Laurier hotel in the heart of downtown Ottawa. Our May 6 to 10 calendar of events should afford us all an opportunity to see this great city in full bloom of tulips and other sure signs of spring. We have moved our dates this year to better accommodate our industry and allow our colleagues to work on Monday and attend the convention from Tuesday to Friday. Anyone wishing to stay over on the Saturday night can enjoy a day at the end of the convention when everyone will have had a chance to get acquainted with the city and its wealth of tourism opportunities.

On Tuesday, May 6, we will be holding the annual Pioneer Golf Tournament, which is held each ShowCanada at the finest courses across the nation. We always have a great turn-out of golfers, and anyone can join in the fun.

Our opening ceremonies will once again be a spectacular show, this year with a "Changing of the Guards" theme, which will be followed by our renowned ShowCanada Showmanship Awards. Showmanship is alive and thriving in our great country, and we recognize and reward our ever-growing list of most deserving recipients.

This year's seminars include technical updates, including the new 6,000-foot reels, big-screen light measurements and the Compact Distribution Print. Another of our featured seminars is the Disney University Customer Service forum. This is a most informative and inspiring seminar that should not be missed.

After being completely motivated and extremely informed, our delegates will also enjoy numerous meals and entertainment that will be hosted by our friends from distribution, exhibition, and our many suppliers. This year's trade show has been sold out for some time and once again we will be hosting an exhibitor relations forum with the distributors available to speak to us and address any concerns at this time.

ShowCanada is now in its 11th year, and we are very proud of its growth. I would like to acknowledge the hard work of ShowCanada co-chair Carole Boudreault and her team, and Dina Lebo, executive director of the Motion Picture Theatre Associations of Canada, for their dedication and organizing of ShowCanada 1997, and the many others who have devoted their time and effort to help make this convention a success. We look forward to seeing you in Ottawa.

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Raising Canada's Profile

by Dan Johnson
President and Chief Executive Officer
Canadian Association of Film Distributors and Exporters



The Canadian Association of Film Distributors and Exporters (CAFDE) is proud to be a co-sponsor of ShowCanada '97. Each year this event gets even better at raising the profile of the theatrical sector and assisting people working in the business to keep on top of the latest industry developments in customer service, marketing, sales and new technology.

We also appreciate the opportunity to acknowledge our productive partnership with Canada's theatrical exhibitors. The work distributors and exhibitors do together to encourage Canadians to emerge from their cocoons and take in a show at the cinema is fundamental to the prosperity of the moving picture business today. There's no doubt that a successful theatrical release increases the value of the film in relation to all other media.

The eight members of the Canadian Association of Film Distributors and Exporters (CAFDE)—Alliance Vivafilm/Releasing, Coscient/Astral, CFP Distribution Inc., Cineplex Odeon Films, Film Tonic, MaloFilm Distribution, NorStar Releasing Inc., and TSC Film Distribution—are pleased to collaborate with the members of the Motion Picture Theatre Associations of Canada (MPTAC) in activities which promote Canadian culture and Canadian films. Canadian Project Pictures is a publicity plan to use donated on-screen trailer time, posters, and point-of-purchase promotional material in theatre lobbies to raise the public's name-recognition of the excellent Canadian films available throughout the year. Recently, we utilized the Canadian Project Pictures strategy to raise patriotism through a National Flag Day public service campaign. Canadian distributors and exhibitors lit up the screen like fireworks light up Parliament Hill on the 1st of July when we marked National Flag Day on screens across the country with promotional trailers in tribute to Canadian Heritage's flag-waving initiative.

In addition to an interest in national pride, CAFDE has a stake in seeing the number of Canadian films exhibited increase. Our mandate is to foster and promote the health of the Canadian motion picture industry by strengthening the distribution and export sector. To accomplish this task, CAFDE works to improve the commercial viability of Canadian films and their effective distribution and export in Canada and abroad. In addition, we seek to improve the economic viability of the Canadian distribution sector by establishing Canada as a commercially-distinct market from the U.S.

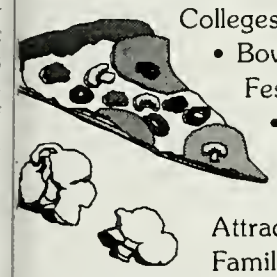
The achievements we have made in film distribution and exhibition in Canada are not only founded in private-sector ambition and entrepreneurism, but also on public-sector partnership. Given that symbiotic relationship, it's significant that ShowCanada '97 is launching its second decade in the nation's capital.

Partnerships between distributors and exhibitors and between the private and public sector have brought us to this place in time. With one more ShowCanada under our belt, we'll be even better prepared to forge ahead.

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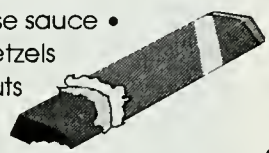


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A CAPITAL *IDEA*

In addition to the usual exhibition convention activities, ShowCanada '97 explores Ottawa's historic, multicultural treasures *by Christine James*



CAPITAL GAINS: *ShowCanada '97's host hotel, The Chateau Laurier, in Ottawa, Ontario.*

At ShowCanada '96 in Banff, Alberta, conventioneers received golden pins in the shape of the House of Parliament as a teaser for the '97 convention already in the works. Come Tuesday, May 6, the anticipated 450-500 attendees of the Great White Show will get to see the real thing. Located this year in the Canadian capital of Ottawa, Ontario, ShowCanada will offer guests a view of the famed gubernatorial center from the windows of Chateau Laurier, a prestigious hotel located next to Parliament Hill. And that's just the beginning of an agenda that incorporates a fun crash-course in Canadian history and culture, neatly interwoven between customary convention events such as a trade show, themed meals and informative seminars.

While the main focus will of course be the Canadian exhibition industry, ShowCanada's organizers decided to take advantage of the migrating convention's current site by exploring the multitudinous heritage-themed attractions the Ottawa area has to offer. Over its 11 years of existence, seven cities have hosted ShowCanada: Kananaskis, Alberta; Toronto, Ontario; Halifax, Nova Scotia; Whistler, British Columbia; Winnipeg, Manitoba; Quebec City, Quebec; and the aforementioned Banff, Alberta. One of the benefits of having a traveling convention is the new splendors to be discovered in each host province, adding an element of adventure to this industry gathering.

"I think it's great!" says Dina Lebo, co-chair of ShowCanada '97 and executive director of the Motion Picture Theatre Associations of Canada, regarding the show's nomadism. "I think it's wonderful. You get to see other parts of Canada, and experience unique cultural experiences which come out of the region where you're going. Many people have not done grand tours of Canada, and this convention, moving from place to place, allows them to see the country. It allows them to get a feel for the other provinces, and the high points and the highlights of living in different provinces across the country.

"Ottawa is wonderful because of the number of buildings and different kinds of architectural experiences," says Lebo. "As the national capital, [Ottawa is] very accustomed to having large-scale conventions, and therefore there are a lot of different sites that can be used."

About half of the scheduled destinations are located in neighboring Hull, Quebec. One might wonder why the show would travel outside its host province, even if it's just across the bridge to Hull.

"The theme is called 'A View From the Capital,' and most Canadians, [let alone] most Americans, don't understand that the capital experience is really Ottawa and Hull," explains Lebo. "The capital experience takes you back and forth between the two. It's called the capital region. Half the government buildings are in Hull, half are in Ottawa. You just drive over the bridge. [The intent of the show's theme], A View From the Capital, is to give conventioneers a unique perspective of how their country functions.

"Because you go between Ontario and Quebec, you go between English and French," Lebo adds. "Ottawa is the home of Franglais, which is that new language where you talk in English and then *tout d'accord, on change a Francais,* and then we change back again. Ottawa is the bilingual city that is held up as the Canadian model."

Lebo will honor the bilingual nature of Canada at the convention by speaking in both languages. "I will greet people and welcome them in French and English. You'll see the [notifications reading] 'We're meeting at the bus in 10 minutes down at the back door,' that will be done in French and English. Because we are going to be spending time in both

Quebec and Ontario, that *is* the Canadian experience. It's a multi-cultural country with two founding fathers. And the capital region reflects that."

This year, ShowCanada has changed its dates to begin on a Tuesday and end on a Friday in response to attendees' requests. "The opening cocktail party used to be Saturday night, and the convention ended Wednesday night," says Lebo. "The problem with that was Monday is booking day, and distributors and exhibitors were in their rooms virtually all day Monday and did not participate in the activities. So we were asked whether we could do anything about that. And the other thing people were saying was that 'You keep us so busy that we don't have a chance to see the place where you've taken us to, except in going here and there to your activities.' So this year is our first experiment shifting the whole convention so that it starts Tuesday night. Tuesday's Golf Day, so those people who want to play golf can come up Monday night. And by ending it Friday night, if they stay over Saturday night, they get the deep airfare discounts, and Saturday is their day to do whatever it is they want."





ABOVE: *The Museum of Civilization in Hull, Quebec will be the site of the opening night festivities.* **BELOW:** *An exhibit from the museum's Canada Hall, which depicts the country's history.*

Far from being merely an extended city tour, ShowCanada '97 has a rigorous schedule planned filled with seminars and information exchanges pertaining to new industry-shaking developments, interspliced with festivities that will celebrate the fun, creative, magical side of exhibition. On opening night, the convention's annual Showmanship Awards ceremony will honor 22 theatre managers in the categories of film promotions, concessions and audience development. Awards will also be given for the highest-grossing Canadian film (which this year is "Crash") and Canadian Director of the Year ("Crash's" David Cronenberg). This event will take place at Hull's Museum of Culture and Civilization, "which is a gorgeous, Indian-themed building," says Lebo. "The dining room is shaped like a canoe." Prior to the award ceremony, conventioneers will be entertained in Canada Hall, the museum's interactive Canadian history exhibit. "[There are] high-tech wax figures that speak, and they tell the history of Canada," says Lebo. "What's very interesting is our opening night cocktail party will be held in the exhibit, which is kind of like a pioneer village. It's indoors, and it [depicts] Upper and Lower Canada, which was basically what Ontario and Quebec were called before they became Ontario and Quebec. They have a model of streets from Quebec and from Ontario. And the cocktail party will be held in there. There will be people in costumes giving out *hors d'oeuvres* and cider.

"People can take their time—we're allowing 45 minutes for them to saunter through the exhibit. Those people who aren't turned on by things like that can rush through in 30 seconds and drink at the bar," she adds with a laugh. "We want to show conventioneers the history of their country and the capital, and do things that they wouldn't be able to do in another site—really take advantage of the capital region, in terms of seeing the best in the architecture and learning the most about our country."

Other events will include a trade show with 25 booths in addition to 10 exhibitor relation booths; seminars on Canadian boxoffice performance and on emerging technologies such as the 6,000-foot reel and the Compact Distribution Print; advance movie screenings; and a tour of multimedia and production companies. ShowCanada is also proud to offer for the first time a condensed version of the renowned training course offered by Disney University. "Both Cineplex and Famous send a lot of their managers and their district supervisors down to Disney University in Orlando," says Lebo. "Disney developed its own training center to train the staff of Disneyland, Disneyworld, everything that's Disney. What they found is that because of the Disney attitude and the Disney style of customer service, it was considered very attractive for people outside of the Disney family. IBM sends its managers, even the Navy sends its managers." The week-long training courses held at Disneyworld will be compressed to two hours for ShowCanada, and will be held the morning of Thursday, May 8.

And that's not all. A Casino Night is planned at the Casino De Hull, plus a New Orleans-flavored Circus Circus event will end the convention on a giddily festive note. "We were looking for something that was like French and English, and somebody came up with New Orleans!" recounts Lebo. "And we thought there's a lot we can do with that, you know, Bourbon Street and Carnival Time and Mardi Gras." Convivial conventioneers will be expected to garb themselves appropriately. "Oh, this is fun," says Lebo excitedly. "As they enter into the space that's allocated for Mardi Gras, there are going to be boxes of accessories, hats and wigs and scarves and boas, and they will be expected to costume themselves," she explains.

With all these attractions, Lebo feels ShowCanada '97 will be an event to be remembered. "[Conventioneers will] have a good time in Ottawa, they'll have a better knowledge of how business is done in the capital and what the capital is about. And they'll get first-hand, updated information on what's happening [industry-wide]. What's really exciting is putting together something that's going to be educational and informative, and offer people a great time in great surroundings."

For further information about ShowCanada '97, call 416-969-7057 or 514-279-6150.

CUT TO THE QUICK

Canada's Future in Film Production is Threatened as the Industry Suffers Severe Subsidy Cuts

by Shlomo Schwartzberg
BOXOFFICE Canadian Correspondent

If one were to judge by Canada's presence at the 1996 Cannes Film Festival, the state of the Canadian film industry would seem to be a healthy one. David Cronenberg's long-awaited "Crash" created waves in competition, and won a special Jury prize for its "audacity." Rising young Toronto filmmaker Srinivas Krishna unveiled his second film, "Lulu," in the Un Certain Regard section of the festival. Quebec director Pierre Gang debuted with "Sous-Sol" in the prestigious Critic's Week. With the presence of acclaimed director Atom Egoyan ("Exotica") on the Cannes jury, Canada's filmmaking community was high-profile and well-represented, giving the impression that all is well on Canada's filmmaking front.



Bruce McDonald's mockumentary "Hard Core Logo" was supposed to be co-financed by Ontario and British Columbia, but the film's producers had to scramble for financing at the last minute when the OFDC's film investment program was frozen.

The reality in Canada is different. Films are still being made and shown at local film festivals, but provincial funding cutbacks, lack of access to Canadian screens, and, more often than not, disinterest on the part of the Canadian public in local product, may be imperiling the future of Canadian cinema.

Most worrisome is what's happening in Ontario, Canada's largest province and home to Toronto, which, along with Montreal, accounts for the bulk of the country's local filmmaking. The ascension of a fiscally conservative provincial government in June 1995 saw a freeze of the Ontario Film Development Corporation (OFDC)'s C$6 million (US$4.2 million) budget for film funding, which was known as the Ontario Film Investment Program. That program was never revived.

"There's less money for direct investment. There's no getting around that at all," says Alexandra Raffe, chief executive officer of the OFDC. "It has changed the landscape a little in terms of the kinds of feature films that are likely to be made. Telefilm Canada will continue to be able to relate to the more commercial end of the feature spectrum where there is an ability from the producer to collect serious pre-sale or foreign money. [But] there will be far more of the very low-budget features that tend to get made in the States, that will get made in Quebec, in the C$300-600,000 (US$210-414,000) range. First-timers will be increasingly working in that kind of budget range rather then the $1-1.5 million (US$700,000-1 million) that they might [have had in the past]."


Alexandra Raffe, chief executive officer of the Ontario Film Development Corp.

And those Canadian newcomers will be financially disadvantaged compared to their predecessors, says Piers Handling, executive director of the Toronto International Film Festival and the man who in 1984 launched the festival's Perspective Canada, the popular annual program which showcases the best in Canadian cinema. "There is a widening gap between established filmmakers like Atom Egoyan and David Cronenberg, who will continue to make their films and will be financed, and young first-time filmmakers, who have no real place to go in the same way that they used to."

The Ontario government did institute some changes for the better even as they cut back on direct funding. Ontario producers can now avail themselves of a tax credit, which allows them to write off 15 percent of their eligible labor expenses, up to 48 percent of the film's total budget, which works out to 7.2 percent of the entire budget. That's an improvement on the previous OFIP system, which resulted in some films getting more rebates than others. "The tax credit is absolutely automatic," says Raffe. "It's available to absolutely everybody [and there is] a doubled rate for first-time filmmakers, double the 15 percent. I was pleased with [the government's] recognition that's it's bloody hard [for first-time filmmakers] to get started."

Alberta also faces a harsh fiscal reality as the 15-year-old Alberta Motion Picture Development Corporation (AMPDC) received its last C$300,000 (US$207,000) grant from the conservative government, thus threatening all local film production in the province. (The AMPDC invested $1.3 million in Alberta productions in 1995. About five to eight feature films are shot there each year.) "Right now as it stands there's nothing for next year," says Margaret Mardirossian, president of the Alberta Motion Picture Industries Association (AMPIA), which lobbies for

the industry. Her organization is in current discussions with the government to try to change the funding situation. "We're trying to find a way of bringing forth a favorable business climate for the industry here. I think they recognize the fact that we're at a bit of a disadvantage," adds Mardirossian, pointing to other provinces that are up-and-coming in terms of indigenous production. "Nova Scotia is doing really well." (That province announced C$17 million [US$11.7 million] worth of Canadian film and television production in 1995, and has also begun to attract Hollywood films, such as "The Scarlet Letter" and "Dolores Claiborne"). Alberta, on the other hand, lost an estimated $22 million in film and television projects in the last year due to a lack of financial incentives for film production companies, according to the AMPIA.

Even in the French-speaking province of Quebec, where culture has political implications and local film funding is still sacrosanct, traditional audiences for Quebecois films seem to be dwindling, says Francois Macerola, executive director of Telefilm Canada.

"In Quebec you could [in the past] expect a film or two making more than C$1.5 million [US$1 million] in a year. Last year we had only one film—'Liste Noire'—making one million dollars [US$700,000], and the other ones made C$300,000 to C$400,000 [US$210,000-276,000]. I remember five or six years ago we could expect very easily C$200,000 [US$138,000] from a Quebec film. Now some films are making less than that. The boxoffice has decreased for Quebec film an average of 20 to 25 percent."

According to Alex Films, a Quebec company that provides financial information on cinema to subscribers, 86 percent of French language boxoffice went to U.S. product in 1995.

"There is a widening gap between established filmmakers like Atom Egoyan and David Cronenberg, who will continue to make their films and will be financed, and young first-time filmmakers, who have no real place to go in the same way that they used to."

One culprit, says Macerola, is the 10-year-old Bill 109, under which American films must be made available in a dubbed French version within a month of the original English language release, thus grabbing both language groups right off the bat. Ironically, that law was passed with the intention of bolstering French-language cinema.

Macerola would like to see the Canadian public support Canadian film in greater numbers and get used to the idea of local films being a regular part of their film-going diet. "[The films you choose to see] could very well be Canadian if you're challenged on the screen by many Canadian films. But the problem is you have three, four Canadian films launched in September, the same number in February, and that's the end of it. You then have to wait another year in order to be challenged by Canadian films."

There are bright spots in Canadian film production, including British Columbia, which has weathered cutbacks and just recently placed three films into the Toronto International Film Festival, including Bruce McDonald's highly touted "Hard Core Logo" and the "necrophilia comedy" "Kiss." And some Canadian films, such as "Margaret's Museum" and Robert Lepage's "Le Confessional," have performed very well at the boxoffice. Optimism therefore exists, but it's tempered.

"I do not believe there will be a fading away of the talent that's been developed in the last decade," says Raffe. However, adds Handling, "It's a very fragile, uncertain time right now. The next year and the year after is when we'll really begin to see what impact the cuts have had."

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Response No. 170

A MOVABLE FEST

The Ontario Northern and Southern Film Circuits Bring Art-House Programs to Canadian Communities

by Shlomo Schwartzberg
BOXOFFICE Canadian Correspondent

For art-house fans in many of Ontario's smaller communities, it used to be fest or famine. If they wanted to see specialty fare on the bigscreen, they'd have to trek across the province to seek out a film festival. Now, the festivals can come to them, thanks to the Ontario Northern and Southern Film Circuits, which bring art and foreign language films to communities that would otherwise never see them. The program's genesis began in 1989 with the launch of Cinefest, the Sudbury Film Festival, whose success revealed a previously untapped market for niche product.

Cam Haynes, a local concert promoter, was the man chosen to help launch an international film festival in the Northern Ontario town. "I was approached about putting it together. I had no idea about a film festival, how big it could be, how little it could be." Eventually, Haynes got government funding, and on a C$250,000 (US$172,500) budget, the first year was off and running, with 24 films unveiled over three days. "The very first year, we had 9,000 people—I thought we'd have 3,000. It took off instantaneously." Nine years later, the 1996 edition of Cinefest featured 100 films and 25,000 people attended. "It would double every year," says Haynes. "The entire North would come to the festival and they would start saying, 'We'd like to see these films in our city.'" That's how Haynes began the Northern Film Circuit in 1992, an extension of Cinefest in which select foreign language, art and Canadian films are brought to towns that usually only receive Hollywood movies.

The Circuits are not a chain, but rather a loose affiliation of otherwise independent screens that show specialized product. Eleven cities have signed on to be a part of the Northern Circuit, while the Southern Circuit currently has 23 cities aboard. The Circuit program is a cooperative venture between local exhibitors, distributors and groups in each community who set up the screenings, with all three partners sharing equally in the boxoffice. Communities can elect to show movies on any basis they choose, from every week to once a month (the norm) to periodic mini-film festivals of three or four films over as many days. All of this is facilitated by The Toronto International Film Festival Group, which operates purely altruistically in order to get the word out on the types of films the Circuits (and the Toronto festival itself) show. "The general idea behind the Circuits is to [raise the films' profiles] to the point where they reach the capacity of potential in their community," says Haynes.



The Ontario Northern and Southern Film Circuit program brings art-house films like "Margaret's Museum" to communities where they might not otherwise have played.

It's been an educational experience for Haynes on several levels. "I didn't know, quite frankly, [how the Circuits would do]. The reality is that everybody said it would go over like a lead balloon. The attitude out of Montreal and Toronto was a slight feeling of 'How could [art films] go over in Sudbury?' They sit back and wonder, 'Is this going to work?', and suddenly 200 people show up for 'Margaret's Museum' [despite the fact that] it's already on video."

Economically, the Circuits are quite profitable, and have been since the beginning. "The numbers started to get pretty significant. [One Circuit screen would do] as much business in one night as the five-plex would be doing at the same time. In Thunder Bay, which has 17 screens, my guesstimate is that [one of our films] would do more business in one night than the entire [other] 16 screens would be doing."

Haynes estimates that the year-long take in 1996 for the Circuits was a healthy $C275,000 (US$190,000), more than double the 1995 total, when the Northern Film Circuit and the newly-formed Southern Film Circuit (which started in September of that year) together took in C$132,000 (US$92,000). The Southern Film Circuit is the more popular of the two: in its first calendar year, it made C$125,000 (US$91,075).

"The South is easier to do," says Haynes. "It's closer to the media base [in Toronto], closer to the action, it has more universities and colleges."

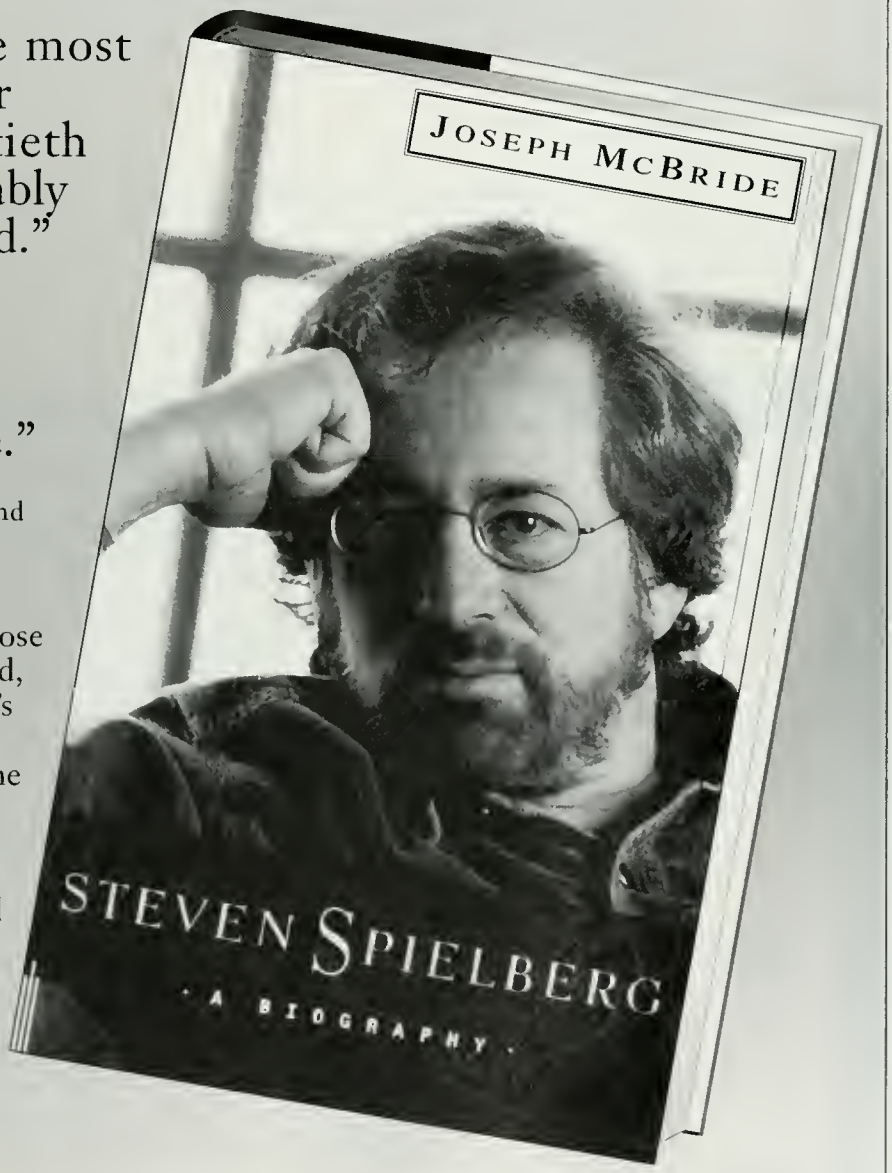
But both Circuits are prospering, thanks in large part to community involvement in raising interest. "We started to find out recently that we can do more business in one night with a film than [a competing theatre] will do [with the same film] in an entire week. It's happened a few times when the commercial exhibitor ran a film for a week, and we picked it up three weeks later, ran it one night and did more business in the 7 p.m. screening [than the competing exhibitor did for the entire run]." Haynes attributes that to several factors. "It's the community grass roots. The community picks the film, they go out and promote it, they hustle it, they put more action in that film screening than anyone can. Even Disney, when it comes down to it, they can't hit a town that hard. When you hustle things at a local level, they've got their own mailing lists they go directly to, the money goes back into the

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community—there are so many things that go into this that the distributors cannot do."

Haynes doesn't feel showing extended or open-ended runs of such films as "Breaking The Waves," "Secrets & Lies" or "Big Night" is a good idea. "You run a film for a week, you're going to start losing people every single night. We've already found that we can get, say, 400 people in one night, where [over the whole week] we [only get] 500 people."

Prices that the Circuits charge vary, depending which night the film is slotted for. Tickets on Tuesdays, the traditional cheap Canadian movie night, might be C$4.25 (US$3), or a full Canadian movie price of C$8.50 (US$5.90) may be charged. "The average is C$6.50 (US$ 4.50), says Haynes. "That's pretty close to the same prices as commercial films."

Interestingly enough, despite such controversial films as "Trainspotting" and "Priest" on the Circuits, complaints from some communities perceived as bedrocks of conservatism are quite rare. "When they were running 'Priest' in Toronto, [people] were boycotting it. [But] this thing went quietly through all these small cities, all those places where you would never expect the film to run.

"We work with the communities," says Haynes. "We suggested 'Trainspotting' and 'Hard Core Logo' [a "Spinal Tap"-like mockumentary about a fictional punk band] to spread out into a younger market. The average audience [at the Circuits' programs] is 35-years-plus, upper-scale and highly educated."

Haynes does attach one criterion to the films the communities show through the Circuits. "There is one thing we ask them to do, and that's to play as many Canadian films as they possibly can and they're willing to." It hasn't been a bad decision for them. "'Margaret's Museum' [a Canadian-British co-production, set in Glace Bay, Nova Scotia] did more business than any other film ever did." That movie averaged C$1,200 (US$830) per screening, for a total of C$40,000 (US$28,000) in 35 screenings. "C$1,000 (US$700) a night is what we gun for," says Haynes.

"Everybody said it would go over like a lead balloon. The attitude was, 'How could [art films] go over in Sudbury?' They wonder, 'Is this going to work?', and suddenly 200 people show up for 'Margaret's Museum' [despite the fact that] it's already on video."

The popularity of those Canadian films is directly traceable to the media push of local product in Toronto, he feels. "There's so much promotion that comes out for Canadian film, they're written about in the national papers."

In general, Haynes figures that perhaps 25 percent of all Circuit films (and more than 210 have been shown to date) make the optimum C$1,000 (US $700) per screen goal, and 50-60 percent are considered financially successful. Haynes points out that "since 1992, we've never lost a city [off the Circuit] due to financial considerations. We have lost cities because the theatre closed down or because the projectionist died, but we've never lost a city [otherwise]."

The expansion of the Circuits is growing rapidly. Haynes still has numerous communities that he wants to sign up, and many of them will be climbing aboard in 1997 and 1998. There have even been inquiries from other Canadian provinces, including Saskatchewan, Quebec, Alberta and British Columbia.

The Circuits are simply an affordable entertainment alternative, says Haynes "There's nothing a town can do for $500. You can't bring in Bruce Springsteen or Nana Mouskouri. [But] you can bring in the biggest Greek film of all time for $500."

The Circuits are a benefit for everyone, says Haynes. "That's what's so neat. The [patrons get what they want], exhibitors get people back in the theatre and the distributor gets the market. Everyone wins."

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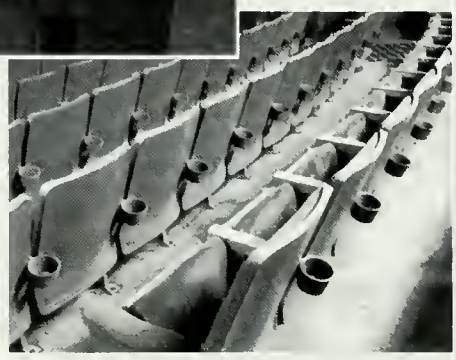
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THE HOUSE THAT KEITH BUILT

Keith Stata Turned His Kinmount, Ontario Home Into a Cinema And Museum Complex

By Susan Lambert



MARQUEE DE CINEMA: *Keith Stata shows off the Highlands cinema road sign that directs tourists to his house where a five-screen, 550-seat theatre filled with cinema antiques awaits them.*

A visit to the Highlands Theatre in Kinmount, Ontario can be a lot like dropping in on your neighbor. Because this five-screen, 550-seat cinema (which can seat 250 more patrons than there are residents in Kinmount) with its 4,000-square-foot lobby is built into Keith Stata's house. And from the front, the house is all you can see. "It's an optical illusion," explains Keith with a grin. "The theatre is part of the house. It's all joined. The house actually runs over the top of the first theatre."

Keith says the facade catches visitors by surprise. "You'll hear them outside and the kid will be saying, 'Mother, this is somebody's house.' And then they get inside and they go and go. So it's really kind of fun—the novelty of it."

Keith was involved in exhibition right from the start. At the tender of age of six, he was showing movies in the woodshed for two cents a pop. Keith made several super-8 films in high school which culminated in a hour-long sci-fi extravaganza he and friends raised thousands of dollars to make. But Keith had little desire to head to the States to pursue an iffy career in filmmaking. The Vietnam War was on and, adds Keith, "I'm a small-town person."

So Keith pursued a more practical line of work in construction. In 1975, when he began building his house, Keith as a matter of course made plans to include a small 50 seat 16mm theatre. It was an exhibitor variation on the famous "Field of Dreams" adage that "if you build it, they will come." The mortgage company wasn't as visionary. "They basically said, you can play around with this if you want, but the building cannot look like a theatre. It's got to look like a house." So the house had a rec room with 18-foot ceilings, step flooring, stadium seating and a screen in front of the patio doors.

Keith opened the theatre in 1979. "Basically at first," Keith admits, "it didn't do that well." But he switched to 35mm in 1984 and people started coming. By early 1986 the theatre had grown to 73 seats and Keith added a second screen to seat 60. And more people came. Keith started his museum of historical cinema equipment. Still more people came. And then some. "I think our attendance doubled every year from then on," explains Keith. "We were sort of scrambling to keep up. In 1988, we added a third theatre." But even that wasn't enough. So Keith expanded the second theatre to 152 seats, figuring it would never sell out. It did just that on the second night. Now at five screens, Keith thinks he may finally have caught up for the moment. "I think we're at the point right now where it would be silly to add any more. Besides which, we're running out of property."

Keith says keeping up with his audience—many of whom come from as far away as Toronto—is vital. In the summer, the population in a 30-mile radius blossoms to 30,000. "Although a good proportion of our audience is local, we need the tourists, we need the huge numbers of them to make it work. If you have people driving 50 miles to come to a show, they don't want to wait 45 minutes to get to the door to find out they can't get in. We'd thought we would never get a lot of profit out of it, but we didn't want to destroy what we had built up." The Highlands now far surpasses what the construction business was ever bringing in, and Keith proudly says all the profits go back into the theatre. "We're always upgrading."

The Highlands Cinema shows first-run movies seven days a week in the summer (May through August) and then weekends until October, when it closes until the following spring—because, when the tourists go, so does his business. But in that five month season, Keith estimates around 40,000 people will visit the Highlands cinema.

With those kinds of crowds, Keith and his manager/partner, Roland Hamilton, are not above last-minute changes to keep things run-



MUSEUM PIECE (Above): *Highlands has unique artifacts from old cinemas.*
POSTER CHILD (below): *Four of the 4000 posters and lobby cards.*



ning smoothly when one of the small theatres is overselling and the big theatre isn't. "We play musical theatres. Our audience thinks it's fun. You never know where you're going to wind up when you come here." In order to keep the crowds thinned, Keith staggers the showtimes really wide. "Now you can come in when we're sold out and not think we're busy."

That also gives his customers a chance to browse in the museum/lobby before the show, examining the largest collection of cinema artifacts in Canada. The museum is Keith's pride and joy, and he scours North America for more equipment and theatre parts. Each of the theatres is outfitted with pieces from old cinema houses in Canada and the United States. Keith says, "Part of what the theatre is all about is detail. There is a lot to do, lots to touch, things you wouldn't normally see. We throw so much stuff in that you have to come back at least six times to see everything, and even then you may not." When Keith hears of an old moviehouse closing, he'll see if he can save a piece of it. "I [stripped] a theatre last week and got a really nice gold drape out of it, which we're going to use in one of the theatres."

Keith's collection includes over 450 projectors and 4,000 posters and lobby cards. Although he's reluctant to name a favorite item, Keith is extremely proud of his 1921 Motiograph F projector. "It came from the Palace Theatre in Blind River. We were doing the roof on number two in '86 and I phoned up that theatre to see what they had there. He said, 'Well, I'm not sure, but the lamphouse has a name stenciled on it. I think it says Motiograph and it says "F" or something.' I got down off the roof, put the lids on the tar cans, drove right to Blind River—about nine hours away—and picked it up."

Keith says his customers love the atmosphere the living museum provides. "Let's put it this way: We have no plastic seats; we have no ceiling tile; we have no soundfold. The theatres all have character and there is an ambiance to the place that is really warm and welcoming." And Keith is particular about the upkeep. "We're very picky. Our bathroom floors are scrubbed and waxed every week. The carpets are shampooed every spring. The theatres themselves are extremely comfortable. We paint our floors every year and, because we're only open five months, that means we paint our floors every five months."

In return, he's just as demanding of his audience. Keith explains, "A thing that we insist on here and that we're paranoid about is silence in the theatres. We do not permit our customers to talk. The price of the ticket does not permit you to go in there and annoy other people. It is a rule." Keith says he gets standing ovations when he takes out people who are talking. He adds that many theatre owners don't realize only a few customers will actually complain about distractions and problems with sound or picture. "Most just don't come back. I disagree with that. I think the customer should have some responsibility to report a problem because things can happen and you can't be everywhere at once. But I've run into this attitude of 'Why should I? It's not my job. I just don't come back.' So I think you really need to be on your toes."

The biggest changes Keith has seen in the movie business since he started are both good and bad. He thinks the high percentages the film companies get are becoming ridiculous, but improvements in sound technology are, by and large, very good. He is particularly saddened to witness the closure of so many old-fashioned movie palaces. "There seems to be a loss of grandeur. It's unfortunate that there's not a lot of respect for history." The Highlands cinema, in contrast, revels in history and celebrates a respect for the moviegoing experience that's unsurpassed. Keith says passionately, "Somebody should care. You can have all the latest digital technology. You can have the finest screen. The finest sound system. The finest projector. But, if the darn thing is out of focus or out of frame and you've got people running it that don't know what they're doing, how good is the presentation?"

Keith says the joy of his job is the satisfaction he gets from people who truly enjoy the theatre. "There is a suggestion box and we get a lot of nice comments from people saying how much they enjoy the place. [Actor] Rick Moranis was here one night and left us a nice little note." On his security camera tapes Keith heard a woman exclaim, "Now I see why you come here all the time. This place is great." Keith adds, "It's that kind of thing that makes it well worthwhile."

By the time the summer is over, Keith says he's over, exhausted by the 16 and sometimes 20-hour days. "Nobody ever thought it would succeed, including me. It was never intended to get as big as it has. It just sort of went, and we sort of followed." Or more precisely, he built it and they came.

Highlands Cinema
Box 85, Kinmount, Ontario
KOM2AO
(705) 488-2199
Owner: Keith W. Stata

Earliest Movie Memory: "Imitation of Life" (1959)

Favorite Concession Item: Tie between cappuccino and popcorn.

Favorite BOXOFFICE Feature: June 1980 article on the evolution of the motiograph projector from 1899 to 1945. "I have BOXOFFICE magazines back to the '40s. They're all over the museum."

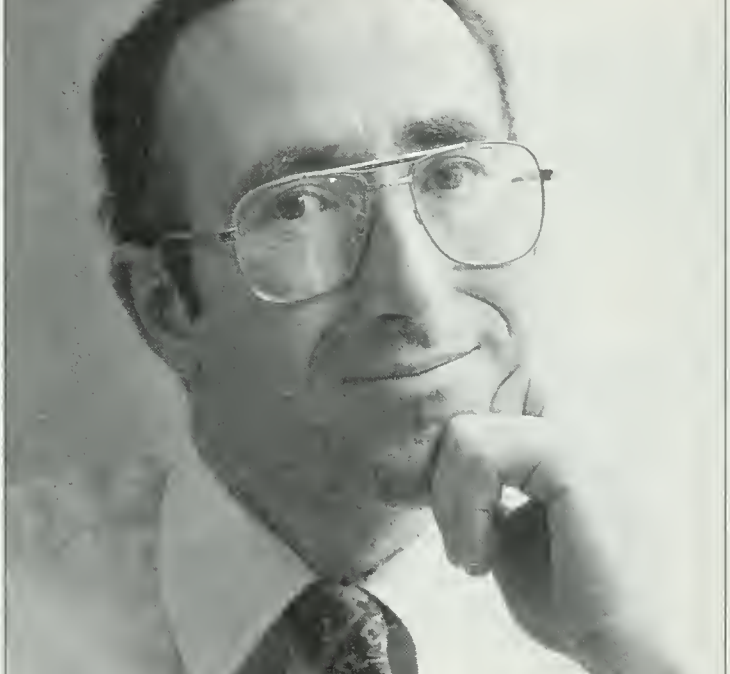
Advice to Other Independents: Make a good presentation.

THE *FIFTH* ELEMENT

Vancouver Art-House Patrons See It Coming Around Fifth Avenue *by Shlomo Schwartzberg*

With the recent opening of Vancouver's five-screen Fifth Avenue Cinemas, the city has almost overnight become a major venue for art and foreign language films. And the theatre's a success in its own right. "We've been doing very, very well. We've had over 200,000 filmgoers since we opened [last June 14]," says Leonard Schein, a longtime film programmer and exhibitor, who runs the Fifth Avenue complex, along with two other single-screen houses in the city (the Ridge and the Vancouver East). "We're fulfilling a need for people who haven't been coming to see the other [more commercial] films in the area."

Though it's one of Canada's top three markets for art-house product, Vancouver has never been as privileged as Montreal and Toronto, both of which have long had houses devoted to films of the off-the-beaten-path genre. "It was hard getting screens. Vancouver was underscreened for the non-major Hollywood films," says Schein.



"A lot of times, theatres go after the more commercial films, but hopefully, if Fifth Avenue is successful, somebody else will build other multiplexes dedicated to more art films, [which will in turn boost the market even further]."

In many ways, Fifth Avenue Cinemas has come along at a good time for the types of films it specializes in exhibiting, says Schein. "I think for good, quality films, [the market is] certainly on an upswing," he observes, noting that Canada's two major circuits, Famous Players and Cineplex, are showing more art-house fare lately (though of course, as Canada's major mainstream players, their predominant focus remains commercial product.)

"[Art-house films] are certainly being produced a lot more and distributed," he adds. "Right now in Canada, there's a shortage of good quality theatres to show them. A lot of times, theatres go after the more commercial films, but hopefully, if Fifth Avenue is successful, then Cineplex or Famous or somebody else will build other multiplexes dedicated to more specialized films, upscale films, art films, whatever you want to label them, [which will in turn boost the market even further]."

Schein, who has been in the business since 1978, cites a few reasons why Vancouver is a particularly good locale in which to operate an art-house. "Sometimes, we actually do [open] a film here before Toronto. Canada doesn't have a lot of markets and Toronto is a much more expensive city to open a film in than Vancouver. I think sometimes distributors experiment a bit more in Vancouver and see how it goes."

Vancouver, like most Canadian cities, does tend to suffer when a film fails in Toronto first, says Schein. "When a distributor decides to market a campaign, he's looking at one budget, a national budget, and if the film doesn't do well in Toronto, he'll cut the Vancouver budget, even though the film might be doing well in Vancouver. He only has to look at his bottom line for the whole country." Yet such films as "Jane Eyre" and "Lone Star" were bigger hits out West than in Toronto, Schein points out.

To get the word out on specific films, his cinema does benefits for various groups and charities and advertises foreign language films in the ethnic press. Schein will also do tie-ins for specific films with appropriate stores near his cinema.

Among the films that have done very well at Fifth Avenue are "Welcome to the Dollhouse," "Shine," "Emma," "Trainspotting," "Lone Star" and "Secrets and Lies." "'Shine' made C$200,000 (US$138,000) from its Dec. 25 opening through the end of February," says Schein. "'Secrets and Lies' made C$125,000 (US$86,250) in 11 weeks. 'Lone Star' did C$175,000 (US$120,750) in 15 weeks—three times the business of downtown—and 'Trainspotting' [did] C$175,000 (US$120,750) in 12 weeks. 'Welcome to the Dollhouse' did better here [than anywhere else] in



AVENUE TO SUCCESS: *Fifth Avenue Cinemas In Vancouver, B.C.*

Canada." Occasionally, Fifth Avenue has shown more commercial films, such as "The Fan" and "Alaska," "which have not done as well" there. "We have five screens and not all the time are there enough [art-house] films. Sometimes there is only one print for Canada, and we have to wait for Toronto."

One reason for Fifth Avenue's success, Schein believes, is the state-of-the-art equipment he had installed in his new theatre. "We're newer, we've designed bigger theatres, better sound. We have digital sound, brand new seats. We have cappuccino, a full-service concession stand, baked goods, handmade lattes, and a beautiful mural of Vancouver in the lobby. When you enter [the theatre], it's all on one floor, two theatres to the left of the concession stand, three on the right. The big theatre has a balcony, it's one of the few recent theatres built with one. The theatres [which range from 100-350 seats] are wheelchair accessible. There's free underground parking, with your ticket. You can take the elevator from there to the boxoffice.

"Fifth Avenue has nice big screens that are two full stories," Schein continues. "They don't feel like small theatres. The cinemas were designed by David Mesbur, who designed the Pantages theatre in Toronto and the Canada Square cinema in Toronto. He also designed the Universal City complex. [The auditoriums] were designed by an architect who knows acoustics inside out. The digital sound is incredible. I'm pleased by how perfect the sound is." Schein is also proud of Fifth Avenue's "airy, light" look and the unique concession booths which are seemingly on water with a mock bridge, made of neon and plywood, which is meant to simulate the nearby Burrard St. Bridge.

Patrons of Fifth Avenue have the option of taking out memberships for C$12 (US$8.28) a year, which enables them to gain discounted admission to any of Schein's three houses. With that membership, they can bring their ticket price down to C$6.50 (US$4.49) from C$8.50 (US$5.87), or on lower priced Tuesdays from C$6.50 (US$4.49) down to $5 (US$3.45); weekend matinees down a dollar to C$5 (US$3.45) and weekday matinees down a dollar to C$4 (US$2.76). The 15,000 members can also use their cards to upgrade from a small to medium popcorn or coffee for the same price.



The Fifth Avenue's lobby features a mural of downtown Vancouver.

Fifth Avenue can also boast "a very friendly staff," says Schein. (Forty-four people, mostly part time staff, work at Fifth Avenue).

Informal surveys have determined that Fifth Avenue's patrons tend to be 40 years and older. "There are very few teenagers here [because] of the type of films we show," says Schein.

Schein has seen an upsurge of business in the surrounding neighborhood since Fifth Avenue joined the West Side of the city. "The area has certainly changed. More development signs are going up, more businesses [forming]. Fifth Avenue is quite a big draw—we get 8,000 people per week."

Now that Fifth Avenue is almost a year old and going strong, the 48-year-old Schein, who started the Vancouver International Film Festival in 1982 and ran it for five years and who also helmed the Toronto International Film Festival for one year, can bask in his newest success and its drawing power.

It's a distinct change from the way things used to be in his long career as an exhibitor. "I was always calling trying to get films," says Schein. "[Now we have access to] more films that we can play. It's nice."

BOXOFFICE REVIEWS

May 1997

★★★★★ OUTSTANDING
★★★★ VERY GOOD
★★★ GOOD
★★ FAIR
★ POOR
(no stars) BOMB

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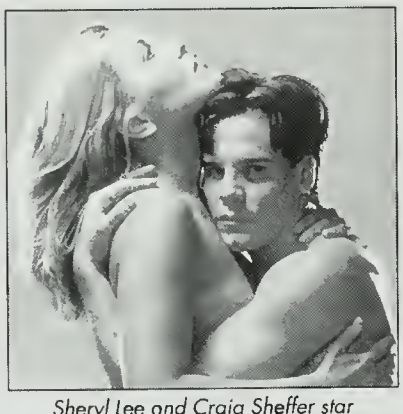
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DAY AND DATE: MAY 16

BLISS ★★★★

Starring Craig Sheffer, Sheryl Lee and Terence Stamp. Directed and written by Lance Young. Produced by Allyn Stewart. A Triumph release. Drama. Rated NC-17 for sex (rating being appealed). Running time: 102 min. Opens 5/16.

A film about sexuality and personality that will likely prove better than its audience, "Bliss" tells of the domestic dissolution and redemption of a young husband, architect Joseph ("Sleep With Me's" Craig Sheffer), and his troubled wife Maria ("Mother Night's" Sheryl Lee). "Bliss" opens on the day of their wedding, with both partners shown bringing different takes of uncertainty to the ceremony; six months later, the two are already in therapy, with Maria admitting to their psychiatrist ("Gray's Anatomy's" Spalding Gray) and her shocked husband that she fakes her orgasms. In her desperation for happiness, she clandestinely engages an unconventional sex therapist, Baltazar (Terence Stamp), for counseling. When Joseph discavers her liaisons, he first confronts Baltazar but soon finds himself being schooled in the secrets of eros—and in his wife's inner turmoils, as her long-hidden childhood trauma surfaces.



Sheryl Lee and Craig Sheffer star in Triumph's "Bliss."

Nothing in writer/director Lance Young's bio—USC golf scholarship student, Gulf + Western financial analyst, production executive at Paramount ("Black Rain") and Warner ("Dennis the Menace")—would lead audiences to expect the depth of psychology and emotion on display in "Bliss." Despite a hefty amount of nudity and carnality (thus the tentative rating), there is nothing exploitive in the film; if it's anything, "Bliss" is earnest to a fault. Contemporary moviegoers accustomed to seeing sex scenes inserted primarily for glamor are likely to be snickeringly uncomfortable with the honest item; even if they sink into the film's intimate spell, references to chakras and other Tantric lingo—despite, or perhaps because of, the film's almost scholarly nature—could set them giggling again.

But "Bliss" is hardly a chapter out of the Kama Sutra; if "Bliss" has a lesson to preach, it's to be found in its humanity. As the loving husband, Sheffer is marvelous in capturing his character's devotion for Maria; Joseph's unyielding sincerity is the film's keel. As Maria, Lee is shaky in the early, easy going but, as the film progresses and her character's private demon begins to surface, Lee is splendid at capturing her character's shattering and salvation. As Boltazar, a minefield of a character for an actor, Stamp never teeters; his august solemnity is the film's anchar. Whether "Bliss" will find a safe harbor stateside is another question.—***Kim Williamson***

REVIEWS

ROUGH MAGIC ★★

Starring Bridget Fonda and Russell Crowe. Directed by Clare Peploe. Written by Robert Mundy and William Brookfield & Clare Peploe. Produced by Laurie Parker and Declan Baldwin. A Goldwyn release. Fantasy. Not yet rated. Running time: 105 min. Opens 5/30.



Adapted from the James Hadley novel "Miss Shumway Waves a Wand," this UGC production about a young magician's assistant (Bridget Fonda) who loses her heart and her powers on a journey through Mexico only to have them restored in the end by faith in the itinerant journalist (Russell Crowe) who loves her is an uneasy mix of genres. Elements of film noir, romantic adventure and magical realism collide, undercutting the eager efforts of the players.

As crafted by Clare Peploe ("High Season"), wife of Bernardo Bertolucci, this Rysher acquisition has moments of otherworldly earthiness but in more diluted content than her husband's work. Characterization, though intriguing, wanders; happenstance too often rules a charmingly unusual narrative; a promising subplot involving the search for a magic Mayan elixir by an Englishman (Jim Broadbent) fails to lend depth; and the magic that'd be believable on the page seems impossible on the all-too-literal big screen.—*Kim Williamson*

nowhere ★

Starring James Duval, Rachel True and Nathan Bexton. Directed and written by Gregg Araki. Produced by Gregg Araki and Andrea Sperling. A Fine Line release. Comedy/drama. Rated R for scenes of strong violence, sexuality and drug use involving teens, and for strong language. Running time: 82 min. Opens 5/9.

The final installment of Gregg Araki's "teen apocalypse" trilogy (following "Totally F***ed Up" and "The Doom Generation"), "nowhere" wants to have it both ways, satirizing the affectless, brain-dead anomie of his characters while at the same time reveling in their nihilistic hedonism. A movie that makes "Less Than Zero" seem quaint and square (how quickly times change), "nowhere" no doubt also will seem ridiculously dated in the near future, if it doesn't already.

Araki's once-minimal budgets have risen to give this film a glossy metallic surface, with emptily pretty Los Angeles Gen-Xers striking self-conscious poses against stylized backgrounds. The chic visual tone, which ironically glorifies consumerism, is comically juxtaposed with the characters' constant stream of gutter vulgarity. All they talk about are bodily functions and how to satisfy their immediate physical urges.

But the sex on display is joyless, even deadly. There's little plot (plot demands reason); "nowhere" is mostly a series of absurdist incidents interspersed with escalating incidents of stomach-churning violence and encounters with a cheesy-looking alien who seems to have wandered in from the set of an old Roger Corman movie. That device is oddly appropriate, for the people here behave like characters from a sci-fi flick.

The only ones with recognizable human emotions are a sweet ingenue (Sarah Lassez) who gets horribly brutalized and James Duval's Dark, Araki's disaffected protagonist. Dark sadly calls himself "old-fashioned" because he wants to be monogamous with his bisexual, I'll-try-anything girlfriend ("The Craft's" Rachel True). Underneath Araki's hedonistic skin there beats the heart of a Puritanical moralist, maybe even a latent straight. But the conflicts on display here are too flippantly rendered to be affecting.—*Joseph McBride*

PAPERBACK ROMANCE ★★1/2

Starring Anthony LaPaglia and Gia Carides. Directed and written by Ben Lewin. Produced by Bob Weis. A Goldwyn release. Romantic comedy. Rated R for sexuality and related dialogue. Running time: 99 min. Opens 5/9.

In this romantic comedy (aka "Lucky Break"), a writer of erotica ("Two If By Sea's" Gia Carides) lets her tales take her where she thinks her crippled leg would never allow her. When she breaks that leg, however, she has the perfect "disguise." Now uninhibited, she goes after the man of her dreams—a handsome but engaged jeweler ("Trees Lounge's" Anthony LaPaglia). Comic catastrophe follows, though not in ways fans of romantic comedy might wish.

As in "Strictly Ballroom," Carides is winning onscreen, but the romance of the tale is limited by her lover's drawbacks; not only does he break hearts, he's a crook. Still, LaPaglia makes his callow crook a modestly charismatic one, meaning audiences can vote, if not root, for their ultimate union. Director/writer Ben Lewin keeps the narrative bouncing along, if sometimes too bumpily to allow the movie's resident humor free rein.—*Kim Williamson*

FLASHBACK: *AUGUST 1, 1966*
What BOXOFFICE *said about...*

BATMAN

[In the mid-'60s, when the "Batman" series ruled the airwaves (two episodes per week), Fox decided to take the camp classic to the big screen. Now Warner Bros. has a less campy Caped Crusader returning for a fourth live-action rendition since 1989's relaunching. Here's what BOXOFFICE, *using an avalanche of adjectives, thought of the cliffhanger/comedy three decades ago.]*

The incredible, incomparable adventures of that intrepid, invicible hero—Batman—and his inseparable, ingratiating aide-de-"camp"—Robin—while combating incorrigible, incurable criminals who concoct ingenious, infamous acts upon indefensible society, made such an instantaneous, indelible impression on innumerable, insatiable millions last January that Batmania has become a biweekly, intriguing, indispensable part of home entertainment. With such a pre-sold audience to draw on, it was inevitable that "Batman" should make his larger-than-life debut in DeLuxe Color. Instead of a single villain to grapple with, there are four, and the prop department at Fox has supplemented Batman's anti-crime arsenal with new Bat gadgets to combat their skulduggery, including a Batboat with a surface speed of a raging 90 knots, and special effects man L.B. Abbott creates some eye-popping illusions for the William Dozier production. Lorenzo Semple Jr., who developed the original video format for "Batman," includes all key characters from the TV series, and the same tongue-in-cheek approach to Batman's preposterous exploits is maintained by director Leslie H. Martinson. The film should make a mint for everybody. Starring Adam West, Burt Ward, Lee Meriwether, Cesar Romero, Burgess Meredith and Frank Gorshin.

EXPLOITIPS

Hold a "Batmanship" contest to find two top hitters of local Little Leagues. Give Batman merchandise as prizes at a premiere. Run a Catwoman contest and award the junior miss with the best-kept nails a complete hand-care kit.

CATCHLINES

Batman Is Coming [or Has Arrived] at the [blank] Theatre. Bigger, Braver Than Ever On The Motion Picture Screen—In Color!

REVIEWS

LETTERS OF LOVE ★★★★

Starring Miho Nakayama, Etsushi Toyokaya and Katsuyuki Shinohara. Directed and written by Shunji Iwai. Produced by Jiro Komaki, Tomoki Ikeda and Mashiiko Nagasawa. A Fine Line release. Drama. Japanese-language; subtitled. Not yet rated. Running time: 117 min. Screened at the 1995 Toronto fest. Opens 5/2 NY, 5/23 L.A.

This lovely and delicate feature debut (aka "Love Letter") of video and TV director Shunji Iwai displays a sophistication and control that many more experienced filmmakers have yet to display. It immediately propels Iwai to the front ranks of the new Japanese directors.

Hiroko Watanabe (Miho Nakayama) is a meek girl still mourning her fiance, Itsuki Fujii, who died two years earlier. On a whim, she writes him at his old address. Hiroko still receives a reply, from an Itsuki Fujii, a female classmate of the other Itsuki. She's a woman who shared his name and, as is gradually revealed, much more.

On the surface, the film evokes the British drama "84 Charing Cross Road," with two people corresponding but never meeting. But "Love Letter" goes beyond moving drama to deeper concerns of memory, love, loss and an indefinable mystery of two women fated to connect through strange coincidence.—*Schlomo Schwartzberg*

THE DESIGNATED MOURNER ★★1/2

Starring Mike Nichols, Miranda Richardson and David de Keyser. Directed by David Hare. Written by Wallace Shawn. Produced by Donna Grey and David Hare. A First Look release. Drama. Rated R for some language. Running time: 94 min. Screened at the Berlin fest. Opens 5/2 NY.

Mike Nichols is a wonderful actor. Of the three who perform this spare cinematic version—a reading, really, of Wallace Shawn's play—Nichols, the eminent director, is the one who takes the starch out of the words, reeling off Shawn's literate, elegant phrases as if he's just come up with them himself. He plays Jack, a "failed" writer. Miranda Richardson ("The Evening Star") is his wife, Judy, the daughter of Howard (David de Keyser), an intellectual. Jack is also the title's designated mourner, mourning the death of highbrow culture.

The starkness of director David Hare's presentation, three actors sitting at a table, seems to taunt viewers with making the same distinction about themselves: Can they watch such a movie and find it stimulating without the requisite explosions, quick editing cuts, even costume changes to provide visual interest? The answer is no. In the transfer from stage to screen, the electricity of live performances is lost, while the confining set and lengthy close-ups are claustrophobic.—*Melissa Morrison*

TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES, N.M. ★★

Starring Kiefer Sutherland, Vincent Gallo and Kim Dickens. Directed by Kiefer Sutherland. Written by Brad Mirman. Produced by J. Paul Higgins, Kevin Messick and Hilary Wayne. A Triumph release. Thriller. Rated R for a substantial amount of strong violence, and for sex, language and drug use. Running time: 102 min. Opens 5/2.

A passable pulp thriller, "Truth or Consequences, N.M." sustains a brisk story momentum for about an hour before collapsing into disheveled events and contrived coincidences. Directing his second feature, Kiefer Sutherland overcomes script faults with a sleek stylistic sheen and rapid pacing.

In perhaps his most fully realized and dimensional character to date, Vincent Gallo as a crook on the run turns a typical loser part into a sympathetic antihero, and Kim Dickens as his moll supports him with an equally strong and rounded portrayal. Gleefully playing another reprehensible lunatic, Sutherland conveys a bit more human edge to his villainy than usual. Capable work is turned in by the rest of the cast, who avoid stereotypes wherever possible. The hardboiled and tough-talking qualities in Brad Mirman's writing are assets, but he gets wrapped up in formula plot hokum and not enough in developing characters and relationship conflicts.—*Dale Winogura*

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REVIEWS

CHILDREN OF THE REVOLUTION ★★★

Starring Judy Davis, Sam Neill, F. Murray Abraham, Richard Roxburgh and Geoffrey Rush. Directed and written by Peter Duncan. Produced by Tristram Miall. A Miramax release. Comedy/drama. Rated R for some strong sexuality and language. Running time: 100 min. Opens 5/1.

Judy Davis—young and old, funny and sad, witty and humorless—is at her entertaining best as a lifelong relentless revolutionary. This Australian film, whose superb cast also includes a sparky Sam Neill and a charmingly soft Geoffrey Rush ("Shine"), is a fanciful black comedy about Joseph Stalin's legacy, figuratively and literally.

Davis as Joan Fraser, ardent communist and, by an oddball set of circumstances, bearer of "Uncle Joe's" child, hopes to make the son the equal of the sire. Blind as she was to Stalin's faults, it's no surprise that the boy doesn't turn out the way she wants. But the film contains lots of surprises, both humorous and touching, as it speaks of the worth of passionate belief and the dangers of blinkered devotion. Amid the stylized crazy humor and complex jokes of real farce the actors create honest feelings.

Lively and sure-footed, Peter Duncan's writing and directing take delight with pitfalls and pratfalls, though the film loses momentum eventually.—***Bridget Byrne***

PARADISE ROAD ★★

Starring Glenn Close and Pauline Collins. Directed and written by Bruce Beresford. Produced by Sue Milliken and Greg Coote. A Fox Searchlight release. Drama. Rated R for prisoner-of-war brutality and violence. Running time: 110 min. Opens 4/25.

In a Japanese war camp in Sumatra, women prisoners form a vocal orchestra to defy the brutality and hopelessness of their surroundings. Unfortunately, writer/director Bruce Beresford ("Last Dance") fails to make this true story sing on its own merits; "Paradise Road" unfolds as little more than a TV movie with extra violence and a quality cast.

Glenn Close plays Adrienne, who joins with former missionary Margaret ("City of Joy's" Pauline Collins) to organize the effort. Reeking of self-importance, Close seems on an ego-trip disguised as a performance; Collins, on the other hand, inhabits her spiritual Margaret so well that, when she says she can't hate their tormentors, she's not only believable but heroic. Australian Cate Blanchett makes a promising feature debut as young nurse Susan Macarthy, who befriends a German, Dr. Verstak (played with prickly relish by "Fargo's" Frances McDormand).

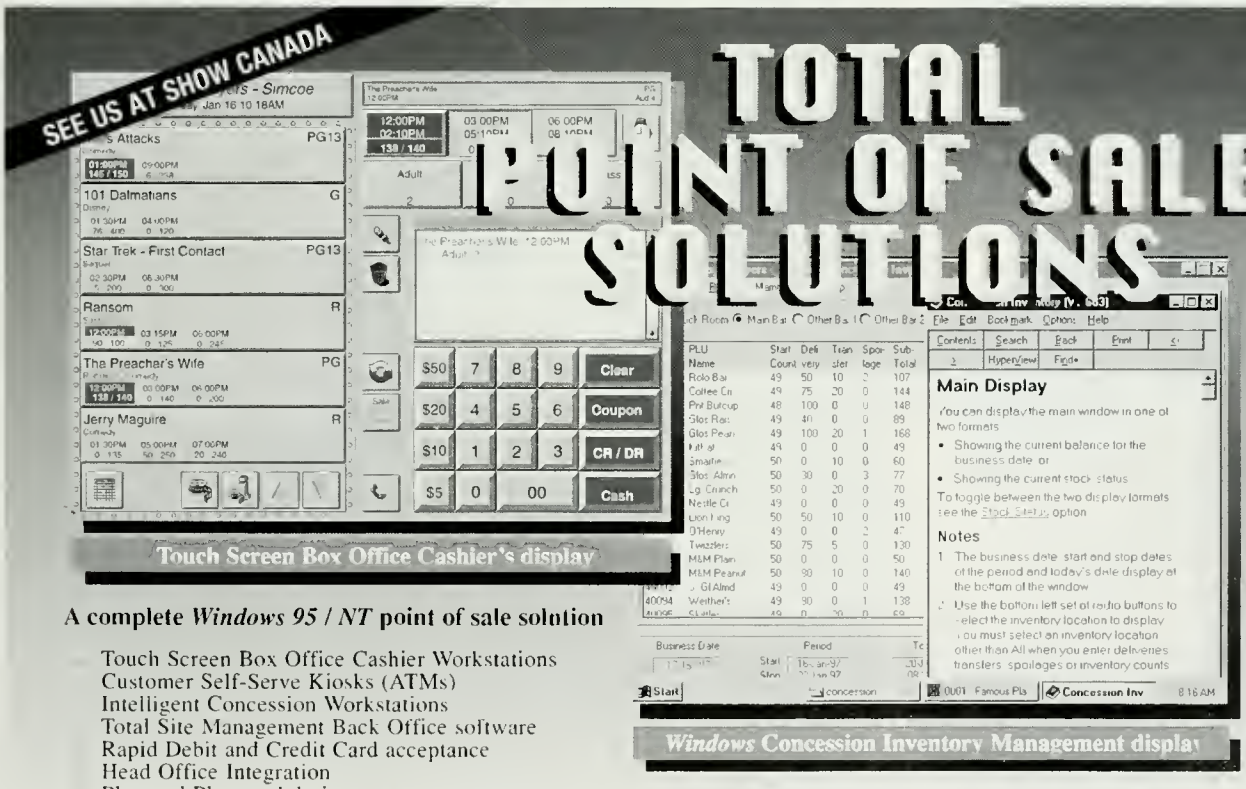
Despite a certain poetry to his words and obvious good intentions, Beresford conducts this distaff "Chorus on the River Kwai" with a heavy hand, finding cliche in place of story.—***Susan Lambert***

A CHEF IN LOVE ★★

Starring Pierre Richard, Nino Kirtadze and Jean-Yves Gautier. Directed by Nana Dzhordzhadze. Written by Irakli Kvirikadze. Produced by Marc Ruscart. A Sony Classics release. Comedy/drama. French- and Georgian-language; English subtitles. Rated PG-13 for nudity, sexual situations and some images of violence. Running time: 98 min. Opens 4/25.

Diffuse and under-realized, this year's Georgian foreign-language Oscar entry lacks the emotion and consistency to link its disparate narrative threads. With a strange mix of sweet comedy and sour drama, writer Irakli Kvirikadze fails to develop characters and episodes meaningfully, but there are moments of charm and humor that unfortunately become fewer as the film unwinds; director Nana Dzhordzhadze's wavering tone doesn't help.

In a robust yet disciplined performance, Pierre Richard is the film's most delightful asset as a middle-aged French gourmet chef in the 1920s whose passionate affair with a younger Georgian woman (a radiant and spontaneous Nino Kirtadze) turns into tragic melodrama when the Red Army invades his restaurant. Told back and forth in time, from the chef's grown son (an adept Jean-Yves Gautier) reading his father's memoirs in 1995, the story lacks dramatic contrast or thematic significance.—***Dale Winogura***



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REVIEWS

TEMPTRESS MOON ★★★1/2

Starring Leslie Cheung and Gong Li. Directed by Chen Kaige. Written by Shu Kei. Produced by Tong Cunlin and Hsu Feng. A Miramax release. Drama. Chinese-language; English subtitles. Rated R for some intense images of sexuality and opium use. Running time: 115 min. Opens 4/18.

It's as a metaphor for China's often turbulent struggle with modernization that "Temptress Moon"—a tragic tone-poem cutting to the heart and soul of a nation's identity—works best. In many ways, Chen Kaige's follow-up to his "Farewell My Concubine" is a more daring effort than anything the famed Chinese stylist has done. It's also one of his more narratively muddled ones. Reteaming Chen with "Concubine" stars Cheung and Gong Li, "Temptress Moon" tells the story of a 1920s-era Shanghai hustler and the rich woman he must seduce.

"Temptress Moon" is one of the most beautiful films ever made. Together with cinematographer Christopher Doyle, Chen has spun a magnificently seductive feverdream torn from the characters' own opium-induced delirium. Dollies, cranes and steadicams navigate the labyrinthine world of colonial Shanghai with acrobatic agility, underscoring their search for stability and equilibrium.—*Wade Major*

GROSSE POINTE BLANK ★★★★

Starring John Cusack, Minnie Driver and Dan Aykroyd. Directed by George Armitage. Written by Tom Jankiewicz and D.V. DeVincentis & Steve Pink & John Cusack. Produced by Susan Arnold, Donna Arkoff Roth and Roger Birnbaum. A Buena Vista release. Comedy. Not yet rated. Running time: 107 min. Opens 4/11.

Successful, well-respected hitman Martin Blank (John Cusack) loses his passion for his job, so where does he go to "find himself"? His 10-year high school reunion. There is one alumna Martin is particularly excited to see: former flame Debi (Minnie Driver), whom he stood up on prom night

SPECIAL FORMATS

MONTY PYTHON AND THE QUEST FOR THE HOLY GRAIL ★★★1/2

7th Level; Windows CD; $49.99.

Those who've already seen one of the funniest films of all time a half-dozen times or more have asked themselves, "How can I get more 'Holy Grail'?" This CD-ROM is the answer. Die-hard fans typically need hear only a few phrases, such as "we are the knights who say nee" or "it's only a flesh wound," to start smirking and gushing forth with their favorite bits from the movie.

Eric Idle, one of the Python troupe members and here a demented knight, serves as executive co-producer on this title and helps keep the silly quotient high throughout. The packaging touts it as the best strategy game of 932 A.D. The electronic registration of the title is a gag, with questions like: "What is your age?" "What is your quest?" "What is the air speed velocity of an unladen swallow?" If a user responds that he would like to see the entire film, you are treated to a frenetic slide show of about every thousandth frame from the 1975 movie.



The Pythons, who brought you "The Meaning of Life," offer "The Holy Grail" vio CD-ROM.

Some imagery is directly from the film. New voice material is provided by Idle and fellow Python members Terry Gilliam, Michael Palin and Terry Jones. And there is new Terry Gilliam art and animation, including a never-before-released King Brian the Wild scene.

A map appears early on, bearing all the favorite Holy Grail locations: the Plague Village, the Castle Anthrax, Camelot and the Bridge of Death. As in the movie, King Arthur (the user) must find the Grail as he traverses Arthurian England to the sound of clopping coconuts. Five arcade-style games based on scenes from the movie help one gather clues to find the Grail. They include a disgusting game called "Drop Dead," in which a player must tightly pile the bodies of plague victims before they decompose. In "Knights in Combat," one must mortally wound the Black Knight, who is not quick to give up the fight. In "Catch the Cow," large farm animals are hurled at the king by a taunting Frenchman.

Of course, anyone who hasn't seen the film will be totally confused by this point. As with a lot of games, there is no explanation in this CD, so a user can end up clicking mindlessly around the screen to collect objects that will lead to another screen for more clicking. But, at least in this title, amusing things happen when you do. Still, although the developer, 7th Level, is using a more typical gaming model than was used in the "Monty Python's Complete Waste of Time" CD-ROM, it's not as immediately enjoyable.—***Ann Kwinn***

REVIEWS

to embark on a life of well-paid violence. While he attempts to win her back, he must also contend with his former mentor (Dan Aykroyd), who's stalking him.

Performances and writing are for the most part successful in their oblique wit. Cusack makes his calm killer charming; Driver is winsome, balancing strength and playfulness; and Aykroyd is his most fun to watch in a long time.—*Christine James*

TRAVELLER ★★★

Starring Bill Paxton, Julianna Margulies and Mark Wahlberg. Directed by Jack Green. Written by Jim McGlynn. Produced by Bill Paxton, Brian Swardstrom, Mickey Liddell and David Blocker. An October Films release. Drama. Rated R for strong language and violence. Running time: 100 min. Opens in April.

Set within the real-life subculture of scheming Irish gypsies, "Traveller" is most resonant when examining the clan's fiercely tribal instincts. And the gritty-looking film (directed by Oscar-winning cinematographer Jack Green) offers plenty of breezy excitement as two Travellers, Bokky ("Twister's" Bill Paxton) and Pat ("Fear's" Mark Wahlberg), try to rip off various folk.

The film's turning point arrives when Bokky falls for outsider Jean (Julianna Margulies), a single mother who loses her bartending job as a result of one of the duo's scams. But Bokky's moral awakening is a bit cumbersome, and his relationship with Jean lacks a certain obsessive fire. "Traveller" is good when it allows moviegoers the thrill of taking part in the clever trickery, but it's even better when it explores the intense loyalty and Irish-based customs of these masterful thieves.—*Jon Matsumoto*

KEYS TO TULSA ★★1/2

Starring Eric Stoltz and James Spader. Directed by Leslie Greif. Written by Harley Peyton. Produced by Leslie Greif and Harley Peyton. A Gramercy release. Drama. Rated R. Running time: 112 min. Opens 4/11 ltd.

Prodigal son Richter (Eric Stoltz) returns to his hometown of Tulsa to try for a fresh start, but his high-society mother (Mary Tyler Moore) won't help. Richter must also contend with his feelings toward his sultry former sweetheart, Vicky (Deborah Kara Unger), who's unhappily married with child to Ronnie (James Spader), a cocky lout who Richter owes money, leaving him a pawn in Ronnie's blackmail plan.

Plot and character connections are at first confusing, and all the players are mired in lives of their own creation. The film would have been better as a black comedy, but Richter is too pathetic, causing his caustic barbs and wry observations to fall flat. Unger makes a beautiful but tragic fallen belle, and Spader does noteworthy work. Though twisted and

(CONTINUED ON P. 62 [R-78])

PREVIOUSLY REVIEWED APRIL/MAY RELEASES

"All Over Me" ★★★1/2: Fine Line, 4/25 NY/LA/SF; see Feb. 1997.
"Brassed Off" ★★★1/2: Miramax, 5/23 NY/LA; see March 1997.
"Broken English" ★★★: Sony Classics, 5/2; see April 1997.
"A Brother's Kiss" ★★★: First Look, 4/25 ltd; see April 1997.
"Brothers in Trouble" ★★★★1/2: First Run, 5/14; see Sept. 1996.
"Chasing Amy" ★★★1/2: Miramax, 4/11 & 4/25 exp; see April 1997.
"Color of a Brisk and Leaping Day" ★1/2: Artistic License, 5/2; see April 1996.
"Commandments" ★★★1/2: Gramercy, 5/2; see April 1997.
"Cosi" ★★★: Miramax, 4/4 NY/LA; see April 1997.
"Diary of a Seducer" ★★★: Leisure Time, April; see Sept. 1996.
"Fetishes" ★★★: Cinema Village, 5/9; see April 1997.
"Flamenco" ★★★: New Yorker, 4/25 excl; see Nov. 1995.
"For Roseanna" aka "Roseanna's Grave" ★★★: Fine Line, 4/18 exp; see March 1997.
"Good Luck" ★★1/2: East West, 4/4 exp; see March 1997.
"Hollow Reed" ★★★: CFP, 4/18; see April 1997.
"Intimate Relations" ★★: Fox Searchlight, 5/9 ltd; see Sept. 1996.
"Irma Vep" ★★1/2: Zeitgeist, April; see March 1997.
"Kissed" ★★: Goldwyn, 4/11; see Nov. 1996.
"Love and Other Catastrophes" ★★★: Fox Searchlight, 4/4 LA; Aug. 1996.
"Love! Valour! Compassion!" ★★★1/2: Fine Line, 5/16 NY/LA/SF; see March 1997.
"Mondo" ★★★1/2: Shadow, 5/23; see March 1997.
"A Mongolian Tale" ★★★★★: New Yorker, 4/4; see April 1997.
"The Next Step" ★★: Phaedra, April; see June 1996.
"Nothing Personal" ★★★1/2: Trimark, April; see July 1996.
"The Quiet Room" ★★★: Fine Line, 4/18 exp; see March 1997.
"Ripe" ★: Trimark, 4/4 NY; see Jan. 1997.
"Schizopolis" ★★1/2: Northern Arts, 4/11 exp; see April 1997.
"Shiloh" ★★★★: Legacy, 4/11; see April 1997.
"Sicario" ★★★★: Castle Hill, April; see June 1996.
"This Is the Sea" ★★: First Look, April; see April 1997.
"Underworld" ★: Legacy, 5/9; see April 1997.
"The Van" ★★: Fox Searchlight, 5/23 ltd; see Aug. 1996.

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REVIEWS IN BRIEF

TIMOTHY LEARY'S DEAD ★★

Directed by Paul Davids. Written and produced by Paul Davids and Todd Easton Mills. A Strand release. Documentary. Unrated. Running time: 77 min.

King of psychedelia and LSD advocate Timothy Leary has been the subject of intense scrutiny by the government, the media, his fans and his enemies. But whether he was a freak of nature or a profound thinker is one of the many unanswered questions in Paul Davids and Todd Easton Mills' documentary, "Timothy Leary's Dead."

Interviews with Leary and his friends and associates serve mainly as punchy soundbites in a timeline of the ex-Harvard psychology professor's life. The film doesn't get past Leary's shtick and his glossy eyes; the audience is left with only the image that Leary created of himself.—***Lea Russo***

EVERYTHING RELATIVE ★★★1/2

Starring Ellen McLaughlin and Olivia Negron. Directed, written and produced by Sharon Pollack. A Tara release. Drama. Unrated. Running time: 110 min.

A heartfelt, touching and lively story, "Everything Relative" is a lesbian version of "The Big Chill." When seven old friends reunite 20 years after college, they discover how far apart they've grown since "coming out" as gay women.

This film is beautifully balanced, with time to develop each member of the ensemble, revealing their strengths and vulnerabilities in the process. The scenes are well-paced with plenty of light-hearted banter, often with sharp-edged double-entendres.—***Pat Kramer***

THE WATERMELON WOMAN ★★★

Starring Cheryl Dunye and Guin Turner. Directed and written by Cheryl Dunye. Produced by Barry Swimar and Cate Wilson. A First Run release. Drama. Unrated. Running time: 90 min.

Exploring the life of a struggling black lesbian filmmaker (writer/director Cheryl Dunye) as she attempts to uncover and document the world of a virtually unknown and practically forgotten actress from the '30s, "The Watermelon Woman" looks like a high-school video project—intentionally. As her character searches for identity in the face of racial and sexual tensions, Dunye brilliantly creates a faux first-person account.

The only major flaw with this award-winning festival fave is the underdeveloped and overacted character of Tamara (Valarie Walker).—***Lea Russo***

PARALLEL SONS ★★★

Starring Gabriel Mick and Laurence Mason. Directed and written by John G. Young. Produced by James Spione and Nancy Larsen. A Greycat release. Drama. Unrated. Running time: 93 min.

An unassuming film that tackles the thorny issues of race and sexual preference in an intimate way, "Parallel Sons" is simple but surprisingly thought-provoking about a rural white (Gabriel Mick) and an urban black (Laurence Mason).

A film on an unlikely friendship is hardly original, but "Parallel Sons'" writer/director John G. Young has a fine sense of the particular and provides rich characterizations. The film takes a far darker turn than audiences might expect as the meaning of its enigmatic title is revealed. Mick and Mason are both charismatic and believable young performers, and the film looks beautiful, thanks in part to fine use of lush locations.—***Cathy Thompson-Georges***

BOYFRIENDS ★★

Starring James Dreyfus, Michael Unwin and David Coffey. Directed, written and produced by Neil Hunter and Tom Hunsinger. A First Run release. Comedy. Unrated. Running time: 85 min.

In their contemporary take on gay romance, writer/directors Neil Hunter and Tom Hunsinger explore the turbulent relationships of three very different couples on an Easter weekend in the country.

"Boyfriends" suffers from too many soap-opera-like subplots that seem set up to create tension, rather than develop the characters or shed light on the relationships. As a result, the film feels contrived, trying to sustain our interest with unscrupulous liaisons. There are moments of true insight, but they're undermined by the melodrama.—***Lea Russo***

REVIEWS IN BRIEF

MENMANIACS ★★

Starring Thomas Karasch and Paul Smith. Directed by Jochen Hick. A Turbulent Arts release. Documentary. Unrated. Running time: 86 min.

For audiences turned on by the S&M scene, "Menmaniacs" (subtitled "The Legacy of Leather") offers plenty of sweaty, writhing male torsos clad in bondage gear, but not much else. Despite a few interesting interviews with gay men and some discussion of the AIDS issue, the documentary is a surface-deep and overlong glimpse into aberrant sexual practices that's strictly for the converted.—*Dale Winogura*

LE SAMOURAI ★★★★

Starring Alain Delon, Francois Perier, Nathalie Delon and Caty Rosier. Directed and written by Jean-Pierre Melville. Produced by Eugene Lepicier. An Artificial Eye re-release. Thriller. French-language; English subtitles. Unrated. Running time: 95 min.

Long overshadowed by his New Wave contemporaries during the '50s and '60s, French auteur Jean-Pierre Melville has only recently received a proper reconsideration, thanks primarily to the likes of John Woo and Quentin Tarantino, both of whom cite Melville's rugged, noirish gangster thrillers as seminal influences on their own work.

For audiences unfamiliar with the Melville touch, this restored print of his 1967 masterpiece is an excellent place to start. As the title hints, "Le Samourai" analogizes the Bushido, or warrior code of Japan's famed swordsmen, to the life of a cold contract killer named Jef (Alain Delon).

Anchored by Delon's chillingly icy performance, "Le Samourai" is a superbly crafted blend of intrigue and style that far outclasses the era's better-known French thrillers, most of them made by Melville's friend Claude Chabrol. (Melville appeared as an actor in Chabrol's "Landru.") Where Chabrol's once innovative approach now seems dated and mundane, Melville's remains vibrant and stirring, buoyed by a subtle stylization that predates similar work in Francis Ford Coppola's "Godfather" films and Sergio Leone's "Once Upon a Time in America." More striking yet are the dozen or so similarities to Woo's own "The Killer," as if almost to suggest that some of the greatest films of cinema's future may well come from the art's past.—*Wade Major*

SHOOTING PORN ★

Starring Chi Chi La Rue and Gino Colbert. Directed by Ronnie Larsen. Produced by Caryn Horwitz and Doug Lindeman. A Caryn Horwitz release. Documentary. Unrated. Running time: 75 min.

"Shooting Porn" would indeed be a perfect name for this project, if the filmmakers had thought to put the word "Gay" in the middle. As it stands, there's a chance that an untold number of straight male moviegoers, perhaps emboldened by cinema's recent takes on Larry Flynt and Al Goldstein, might slink in expecting an entirely different take on eroticism.

Fans of homoerotics, however, could be entranced by such scenes as an actor taking an enema, or discourses on how a Hitler-moustache trim of pubic hair can make a man's genitals look larger on camera. And more power to that specialized demographic, for they're the only possible audience for this film.—*Sean O'Neill*

FOLLOW ME HOME ★★1/2

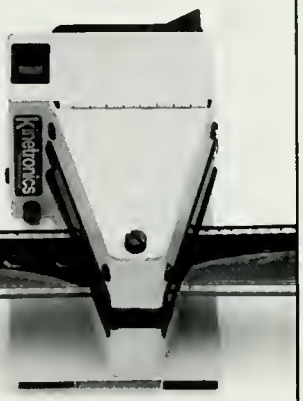
Starring Alfre Woodard, Benjamin Bratt, Jesse Borrego and Steve Reevis. Directed, written and produced by Peter Bratt. A New Millenia release. Drama. Unrated. Running time: 120 min.

This first feature by independent filmmaker Peter Bratt is an overtly political look at race relations and issues of cultural colonialism in American society. Made on a microbudget, "Follow Me Home" still has a look and level of technical polish that rivals mainstream product; it also has a few mainstream problems.

The story: Four street artists (two Latino, one American Indian, one black) take a road trip. Bratt's simple, effective conceit: All the "bad guys" they meet are white. Nothing implausible happens, but the believability and dramatic impact of many scenes are hampered by uneven levels of acting ability. A series of B&W fantasy scenes are heavy-handed, ruining points made elsewhere in well-written character interactions.—*Alex Albanese*

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REVIEWS

unsuspenseful, "Keys to Tulsa" is an interesting character study.—*Christine James*

LEO TOLSTOY'S ANNA KARENINA ★★1/2

Starring Sophie Marceau, Sean Bean, Alfred Molina and Mia Kirshner. Directed and written by Bernard Rose. Produced by Bruce Davey. A Warner Bros. release. Drama. Rated PG-13 for mature thematic elements and some sensuality/nudity. Running time: 108 min.

In speeding through Tolstoy's massive work, this Icon production does only partial justice to its two narratives: That of the despairing Levin, who leaves society behind and finds salvation working his rural estate with his similarly transformed wife, the princess Kitty ("The Crow: City of Angels'" Mia Kirshner); and the central story, that of the wife Anna ("Braveheart's" Sophie Marceau) who, unhappy with her marriage to the wealthy but older Karenin (James Fox), has a passionate affair with the dashing officer Count Vronsky ("GoldenEye's" Sean Bean).

In this Bernard Rose ("Immortal Beloved") adaptation, Levin's ennui, Anna's despondency and Vronsky's principles are barely sketched, leaving their narrative arcs broken at the beginning. As a waveringly accented Anna, Marceau gives fire to her interludes with Vronsky but lacks the hauteur for the fall. Similarly, Bean has the chin but not the regal reserve. As Levin, the gap-toothed Molina has Levin's soul, but like Kirshner has too little screen time. When at tale's end Anna meets her fate under the locomotive's wheels, the audience feels the tragedy of the act, but with the suspicion that the train arrived ahead of schedule.—*Kim Williamson*

THE DEVIL'S OWN ★★

Starring Harrison Ford and Brad Pitt. Directed by Alan Pakula. Written by Kevin Jarre and Robert Mark Kamen. Produced by Lawrence Gordon and Robert Colesberry. A Columbia release. Action/drama. Rated R for strong brutal violence, and for language. Running time: 110 min.

IRA leader Frankie McGuire (Brad Pitt) exits Ireland for America. His mission: procure stinger missiles. He stays with a New York City police officer, Sgt. O'Meara (Harrison Ford), who—not knowing his boarder's true identity—befriends him. McGuire has a perfect hiding place—until his terrorist past catches up with him and places O'Meara and his family in jeopardy.

Only in the last fourth do the two leads get to mix it up, but the one-on-one climax is nowhere close to being as good as what audiences might expect with these two boxoffice titans; its utter predictability diminishes any intended suspense.

The movie's draggy pace is also surprising. That slowness allows the filmmakers to enrich their tale with bonding drama—"The Devil's Own" has the feel of the art-house about it that one might expect of foreign-language fare—but in the action department overall "The Devil's Own" doesn't deliver. This one will need the luck of the Irish to deliver and keep broad mainstream numbers.—*Dwayne E. Leslie*

SELENA ★★★

Starring Jennifer Lopez, Edward James Olmos and Jon Seda. Directed and written by Gregory Nava. Produced by Moctesuma Esparza and Robert Katz. A Warner Bros. release. Drama. Rated PG for some mild language and thematic elements. Running time: 127 min.

As Tejano superstar Selena, Jennifer Lopez ("Blood and Wine") is sensational. She not only looks remarkably like the late singer, but she radiates the energy, warmth, style and magnetism for which Selena was known. As a whole, though, the film suffers from some of the usual flaws of a mainstream music biopic.

That includes syrupy incidental music (Selena's songs, lipsynched by Lopez, are terrific); retro split-screen concert scenes; and schmaltzy moments between characters. Except for Selena's father (Edward James Olmos), the supporting characters are too good to be true, never losing their tempers or becoming jealous. Like the English-language album she worked on before her murder, "Selena" (too ardently) aims for crossover appeal.—*Jean Oppenheimer*

LIAR, LIAR ★★★

Starring Jim Carrey, Maura Tierney and Justin Cooper. Directed by Tom Shadyac. Written by Paul Guay and Stephen Mazur. Produced by Brian Grazer. A Universal release. Comedy. Rated PG-13 for sex-related humor and language. Running time: 86 min.

The human cartoon is back with a vengeance. After his detour into black comedy with "The Cable Guy," Jim Carrey returns to boxoffice-demolishing form with "Liar, Liar," a largely formulaic entry in the "neglectful dad" sweepstakes that's just hilarious enough to restore trust in his bankability.

Carrey plays a hopelessly dishonest (and successful) attorney. His young son Max (Justin Cooper), in a moment of love and disappointment, makes a birthday wish for his dad to get through just one day without lying. Amazingly, the wish comes true—and thus open the floodgates of comedy.

However unremarkable, "Liar, Liar" still has the distinction of actually having a narrative, an element lacking in most of the actor's outings. And Carrey has his first-ever chance to act, creating surprisingly watchable moments of emotion between the obligatory outbursts.—*Wade Major*

SMILLA'S SENSE OF SNOW ★★

Starring Julia Ormond and Gabriel Byrne. Directed by Bille August. Written by Ann Biderman. Produced by Bernd Eichinger and Martin Moszkowicz. A Fox Searchlight release. Drama. Rated R for language, some violence and a sex scene. Run time: 127 min.

The elements of "Smilla's Sense of Snow," a German/Danish/Swedish co-production led by Constantin Film, are themselves an amalgam: Mainstream dashes of "Jurassic Park," "Outbreak" and James Bond make an uneasy mix with fine mathematical philosophizing, iceberg-panderous plotting and blue-ice cinematography

SANTA BARBARA FEST

SHALL WE DANCE? ★★★1/2

Starring Koji Yasuyo, Tamiyo Kusakari and Naato Takenaka. Directed and written by Masayuki Suo. Produced by Shoji Masui and Yuji Ogata. A Miramax release. Comedy. Japanese-language; English subtitles. Rated PG for mild language. Running time: 122 min. Screened at the Santa Barbara fest. Opens 5/16 NY/LA.

Given the success of the hugely popular Australian indie "Strictly Ballroom," many viewers will no doubt come to "Shall We Dance?" expecting more of the same. But this Japanese film is far more sympathetic to its characters than the sometimes freakish Luhrmann film, treating them with humanity and respect. Whereas the earlier movie was a parade of garish costumes and human grotesques, "Shall We Dance?" is a gentle examination of the graceful appeal of ballroom dance, using it as a metaphor for human longings for beauty and release.

"Shall We Dance?" opens like a midlife crisis romance. A Tokyo salaryman (Koji Yasuyo) becomes captivated by a beautiful woman (Tamiyo Kusakari) who, on his way home, he glimpses in the window of a dance studio; he pursues lessons to win her eye. What begins as infatuation for a young woman, however, develops into a love of dance, and our hero finds himself caught up in a world far outside his office—of tango and quickstep, dance competitions and weekend dance halls. What he really wants, it seems, is not a fling but the chance to spread his wings outside the stifling confines of his office and the regimentation of Japanese life.

"Shall We Dance?" abounds with charming small maments: An older instructor (Naoto Takenaka) whirls the bashful beginner through a dancehall as she explains her love for "The King and I"; the simple salaryman practices dance steps in the rain beside a train platform; and an office colleague (Akira Emoto) proves to have a second life as a flamboyant, bewigged king of Latin dance. The cast is uniformly winning, especially the handsome Yasuyo, as he graws from stumbling beginner into an assured and tuxedoed dancer. The film relies a little too heavily on a subplot about a dancer who has fallen in competition, but this is a cavil; "Shall We Dance?" is a light-footed Japanese film that invites American audiences to love it.—***Cathy Thompson-Georges***

REVIEWS

more suitable to the art house. In adapting Danish novelist Peter Hoeg's book (published stateside as "Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow") about a Inuit/American woman (Julia Ormond) seeking the truth about a young boy's death, Danish director Bille August ("Jerusalem") and American screenwriter Ann Biderman ("Primal Fear") have triumphed in making a frigidly beautiful film full of sinister intrigue and psychological conflict but have failed to make that intrigue plausible or that conflict emotionally important.—*Kim Williamson*

love jones ★★★1/2

Starring Larenz Tate, Nia Long and Isaiah Washington. Directed and written by Theodore Witcher. Produced by Nick Wechsler and Jeremiah Samuels. A New Line release. Romantic comedy. Rated R for language and sexuality. Running time: 110 min.

At last, a romantic drama has been written for an all-black cast featuring intelligent dialogue, an insightful and well-acted plot, and a showcase of the actors as genuine human beings. "love jones" tells the story of a group of young black adults and their viewpoints and misconceptions regarding finding love and holding on to it.

Inspired by his college-days experiences, writer/director Theodore Witcher in his directorial debut gives audiences a new perspective on educated blacks. His talented ensemble depicts the conflicts and challenges presented by love in funny and poignant fashion.—*Pat Kramer*

JUNGLE 2 JUNGLE ★★1/2

Starring Tim Allen, Sam Huntington, Martin Short and Lolita Davidovich. Directed by John Pasquin. Written by Bruce A. Evans and Raynold Gideon. Produced by Brian Reilly. A Buena Vista release. Comedy. Rated PG for some mild violence and language. Running time: 105 min.

This remake of "Un Indien Dans La Ville" (released last year stateside as "Little Indian, Big City") is simplistic but family-friendly fare. Tim Allen plays Michael, a self-absorbed commodities broker who wants to marry the beautiful but shallow Charlotte (Lolita Davidovich). But first he must travel to a South American isle to get a divorce pact from his estranged wife (JoBeth Williams); there he finds and brings back a loinclothed 13-year-old son (Sam Huntington). Mayhem ensues predictably. "Jungle 2 Jungle" will satisfy kids and undemanding audiences with its even but unambitious humor, its good pace and warm-heartedness.—*Christine James*

PRIVATE PARTS ★★★1/2

Starring Howard Stern. Directed by Betty Thomas. Written by Len Blum and Michael Kalesniko. Produced by Ivan Reitman. A Paramount release. Comedy. Rated R for strong language, nudity and crude sexual humor. Running time: 109 min.

Digitally enhanced breasts. Fartman. Minuscule schlongers. Puppet intercourse. D-cup porn starlets. Wet underwear. Woofer sex. Hot lesbo action. It's Howard!

Assuredly directed by Betty Thomas ("The Brady Bunch") and smoothly adapted by Len Blum and Michael Kalesniko, shockjock Stern's bio is comically affectionate and almost low-key, with Stern downright warm. But, reportage not cinema, it progresses like real life, not art. And the laughs, while plentiful, don't fill in all the quiet holes where a real narrative would live. Still, the real laugh is Howard's, all the way to the bank.—*Kim Williamson*

BERLIN FEST

TWIN TOWN ★★1/2

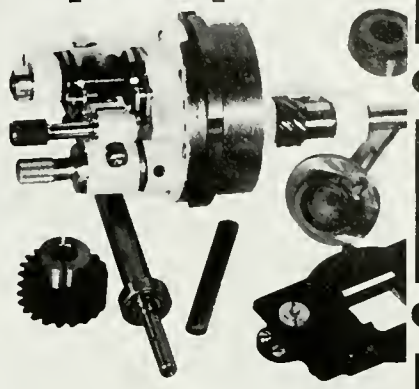
Starring Dougray Scott, Dorien Thomas, Rhys Ifans, Llyr Evans, William Thomas, Sue Roderick, Jenny Evans and Rachel Scorgie. Directed by Kevin Allen. Written by Paul Durden and Kevin Allen. Produced by Peter McAleese. A Gramercy release. Drama/comedy. Not yet rated. Running time: 99 min. Screened at the Berlin fest. Opens 5/9 NY/LA, 5/23 exp.

"Pretty, shitty city" were the words poet Paul Durden came up with as a suggested replacement for poet Dylan Thomas's tag "ugly lovely town." Both were in reference to Swansea in South West Wales, the locale for the story Durden has concocted with director Kevin Allen for the movie "Twin Town." It's a setting where there are no holds barred in terms of bad behavior, criminal shenanigans and obscene language.

The plotline about petty criminals and corrupt cops doing themselves and each other down is nothing special, but there is vigor to all the characters, humor (both blunt and sick) to the storytelling, and energy to the acting and filmmaking. The experience is a bit like savoring a bad smell—the tendency to hold one's nose undercut by the desire to sneak just a whiff because there's something in the air that speaks true about life as a whole, and it might all point to a good laugh in the end.

"Twin Town" is an intensely regional film that, despite its heavy accents, speaks a universal language about human small-mindedness and resilience. All the actors clearly relish the chance to be seedy, lewd, rude, duplicitous, warped, crudely sexy, basically irredeemable, but somehow still people one might just about tolerate. Only now and then are the inside jokes obviously from folks who know the scene too well and want to parody it a bit too much, visible in this colorful splurge of a stew into which has been thrown almost everything a "pretty, shitty" mind can dream up, including a dead dog and a massed Welsh choir.—***Bridget Byrne***

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Review Digest

Genre key: (Ac) Action; (Ad) Adventure; (An) Animated; (C) Comedy; (D) Drama; (Doc) Documentary; (F) Fantasy; (Hor) Horror; (M) Musical; (My) Mystery; (R) Romance; (Sat) Satire; (SF) Science Fiction; (Sus) Suspense; (Th) Thriller; (W) Western.

TITLE/MPAA DISTRIBUTOR	5 Excellent 4 Very Good 3 Good 2 Fair 1 Poor	RUN TIME	GENRE	REVIEWED IN ISSUE	BOXOFFICE	VARIETY	H. REPORTER	L.A. TIMES	N.Y. TIMES	USA TODAY	AVERAGE	TOTAL BOXOFFICE$*
Absolute Power **R** (Col)		*122*	Th	5-97	3	3	3	3	2		2.8	45.6
The Beautician and the Beast **PG** (Par)		*105*	C	4-97	2	3	2	3	3	2	2.5	10.8
Beavis and Butt-head Do America **PG-13** (Par)		*80*	Ani	2-97	3	3	2	3	3		2.8	62.3
Beverly Hills Ninja **PG-13** (TS)		*85*	C	3-97	2	2	2	3	2		2.2	29.2
Blood and Wine **R** (FS)		*100*	Th	3-97	3	3	3	3	3	4	3.2	0.9
Booty Call **R** (Col)		*80*	C	5-97	3	3	3	2	2		2.6	17.1
Breaking the Waves **R** (Oct)		*158*	D	7-96	2	3	5	2	4		3.2	3.4
City of Industry **R** (Ori)		*136*	Ac D	5-97	2	3	3	3			2.8	0.8
Dangerous Ground **R** (NL)		*92*	D	4-97	2	2	2	2	2		2.0	5.1
Dante's Peak **PG-13** (Uni)		*108*	Ac D	4-97	4	2	3	2	2	3	2.8	59.8
Donnie Brasco **R** (TS)		*121*	D	4-97	3	3	3	3	4	5	3.5	31.3
The English Patient **R** (Mir)		*159*	R	1-97	3	3	4	4	4	4	3.7	60.3
Everyone Says I Love You **R** (Mir)		*100*	MusC	1-97	3	4	4	2	4	3	3.5	9.3
Evita **PG** (BV)		*136*	Mus	2-97	4	4	2	2	3		3.0	48.6
Fools Rush In **PG-13** (Col)		*106*	R C	4-97	3	2	2	4	2		2.6	26.8
Hard Eight (Gol)		*93*	D	8-96	3	3	3	4	4		3.4	0.1
Jerry Maguire **R** (TS)		*138*	D	2-97	4	4	2	3	4	4	3.5	140.6
Jungle 2 Jungle **PG** (BV)		*105*	C	5-97	2	3	3	3	2	2	2.5	27.2
Kama Sutra (TM)		*115*	D	1-97	2	2	2	2	3		2.2	0.7
Kolya (Mir)		*111*	D	12-96	3	4	4	4	4		3.8	1.4
Lost Highway **R** (Oct)		*135*	D	2-97	4	3	3	2	3	3	3.0	2.8
love jones **R** (NL)		*110*	R C	5-97	3			2			2.5	3.9
Marvin's Room **PG-13** (Mir)		*97*	D	2-97	3	3	4	3	3		3.3	10.9
Michael **PG** (NL)		*105*	R C	2-97	3	2	3	4	3		2.6	89.5
Mother **PG-13** (Par)		*103*	C	11-96	4	4	4	4			4.0	18.6
101 Dalmatians **G** (BV)		*103*	C	2-97	3	3	3	2	2		2.6	133.6
One Fine Day **PG** (Fox)		*109*	R C	2-97	3	3	4	3	3	3	3.2	46.0
The Pest **PG-13** (TS)		*82*	C	4-97	1	2			1		1.3	3.5
The Preacher's Wife **PG** (BV)		*124*	RC	2-97	3	3	3	3		3	3.0	47.2
Prisoner of the Mountains **R** (Ori)		*99*	D	2-97	4	4	4	4	3		3.8	0.5
Private Parts **R** (Par)		*109*	C	5-97	3	4	4	4	3		3.7	27.6
Ransom **R** (BV)		*121*	Th	1-97	3	4	4	3	4	3	3.5	135.9
Rhyme & Reason **R** (Mir)		*90*	Doc	5-97	2	3	3	2	2		2.4	1.5
Rosewood **R** (WB)		*103*	Th	4-97	3	4	4	3	2	4	3.3	11.4
Scream **R** (Mir)		*111*	HorC	2-97	3	2	3	3	2		2.5	85.6
Secrets & Lies **R** (Oct)		*142*	D	7-96	4	4	4	4	4		4.0	10.0
Shine (FL)		*104*	D	4-96	5	5	4	4	3	3	4.0	30.8
Sling Blade **R** (Mir)		*140*	D	11-96	4	4	4	4	3		3.8	8.4
Smilla's Sense of Snow **R** (FS)		*127*	D	5-97	2	3		2	3	4	2.8	0.5
subUrbia (SPC)		*120*	CD	1-97	2	3	3		4	3	3.0	0.4
That Darn Cat **PG** (BV)		*90*	C	5-97	2	2	2	3			2.2	16.4
Touch **R** (MGM)		*97*	C D	6-97	2	2			3		2.3	0.3
Vegas Vacation **PG** (WB)		*95*	C	5-97	2	2	2	2	2	2	2.0	32.9
Waiting for Guffman **R** (SC)		*82*	C	11-96	3	3	3	4	3	4	3.3	0.8
When We Were Kings **PG** (Gra)		*88*	Doc	2-97	3		3	4			3.2	0.6
Zens and Roxanne **PG** (MGM)		*98*	Adv	4-97	2	2	2	2	2		2.0	7.1

** Total boxoffice, in millions, as of March 18, 1997.*

REVIEWS

GENTLEMEN DON'T EAT POETS ★1/2

Starring Sting, Alan Bates and Theresa Russell. Directed by John-Paul Davidson. Written by Patrick McGrath. Produced by Trudie Styler. A Live release. Comedy. Rated R for sexuality and some gore. Running time: 98 min.

"Gentlemen Don't Eat Poets" is a schizophrenic film providing, at best, lukewarm entertainment value. Chosen by the film's producer, Trudie Styler, as an acting vehicle for her rock star/actor/husband Sting ("Plenty"), the film is sketchy in plot and incoherent in its efforts to bring to the screen Patrick McGrath's mystery novel "The Grotesque."

"Gentlemen Don't Eat Poets" has potential for black comedy but is so lacking in direction that it falls far short of that goal. Filmed in just six weeks' time, "Gentlemen Don't Eat Poets" will be remembered for what it is: a film created as a vehicle for Sting by his wife.—*Pat Kramer*

CITY OF INDUSTRY ★★1/2

Starring Harvey Keitel, Stephen Dorff, Famke Janssen. Directed by John Irvin. Written by Ken Solarz. Produced by Evzen Kolar and Ken Solarz. An Orion release. Action/drama. Rated R for strong language, violence and some sexuality. Running time: 136 min.

What hath Quentin Tarantino wrought? "City of Industry" is in a long line of slick-yet-gritty, bloody-hip imitators. Only Harvey Keitel's redoubtable presence, and an intriguing glimpse at the dusty underbelly of Los Angeles, provide reasons to watch this Largo production.

The one place where the film feels fresh is its look at L.A.'s rarely filmed eastern suburbs, shabby and burglar-barred. Also intriguing is the meeting of black and Chinese gang elements in the underworld, but this isn't really explored, just used to provide a little Chinatown color to the proceedings. Keitel is fine and looks convincing with a gun in his hand, but he could do this role in his sleep. Despite its labor-union title, "City of Industry" doesn't really work.—*Cathy Thompson-Georges*

RHYME & REASON ★★1/2

Directed by Peter Spirer. Produced by Chuck Block. A Miramax release. Documentary. Rated R for pervasive strong language and some drug content. Running time: 90 min.

A serious attempt to document the history and cultural values of rap and hip-hop, "Rhyme & Reason" skates too slickly over the surface of its subject to thoroughly mine the depths. Well shot in 16mm over several years, the film—thanks to director Peter Spirer—employs a rapid-fire barrage of interviews with various rap performers as they discuss the whys and wherefors of the music industry and their own pasts.

Unfortunately, as concentrated as Spirer's technique is, "Rhyme & Reason" remains a series of visual sound bytes that don't reveal enough of the artistic and personal causes of the musicians. But the film's strength lies in putting a human face on rap and hip-hop.—*Dale Winogura*

BOOTY CALL ★★★1/2

Starring Jamie Foxx and Tommy Davidson. Directed by Jeff Pollack. Written by Takashi Burrord and Bootsie. Produced by John Morrissey. A Columbia release. Comedy. Rated R for nonstop sexuality including sex-related dialogue and humor, and for strong language. Running time: 80 min.

"Booty Call" marks the first re-teaming of Davidson and Foxx since their days together on Fox TV's "In Living Color." Davidson, a funny comedian, is oddly cast as a straight man in this two-guys-on-a-double-date tale; on the other hand, Foxx's Bunz has wit streaming from his pores.

But both actors profit from being given the freedom to improvise. The film crosses color lines and makes fun of every race; a highlight is a conversation spoken by Foxx in Cantonese, leaving the Asian extras in even more shock than audiences will be. "Booty Call" is funny throughout (not wanting to miss a trick, the filmmakers even give a dog subtitles for his barking), although the majority of laughs come in the first half.—*Dwayne E. Leslie*

REVIEWS

THAT DARN CAT ★★

Starring Christina Ricci and Doug E. Doug. Directed by Bob Spiers. Written by S.M. Alexander and L.A. Karaszewski. Produced by Robert Simonds. A Buena Vista release. Comedy. Rated PG for mild thematic elements. Running time: 90 min.

Christina Ricci is again called on to be a black-garbed caustic misfit in this remake of the 1965 Hayley Mills starrer "That Darn Cat." Scripters Scott Alexander and Larry Karaszewski, best known for the eccentric "Ed Wood" and "The People vs. Larry Flynt," lay on wacky, oblique touches, but the screenplay seems to be in a tug-of-war between dumbing-down and smartening-up.

Tracking a cat's hijinks may be six-year-olds' idea of high comedy, but the story needed to have deductive reasoning, not fluke happenstance, solve the case to hold their parents' interest.—***Christine James***

VEGAS VACATION ★1/2

Starring Chevy Chase, Beverly D'Angelo and Randy Quaid. Directed by Stephen Kessler. Written by Elisa Bell. Produced by Jerry Weintraub and R.J. Louis. A Warner Bros. release. Comedy. Rated PG for sensuality, language and thematic elements. Running time: 95 min.

The Griswold family adventures have always had a flair for mind-numbing slapstick humor, but "Vegas Vacation," the latest in the formulaic comedies starring Chevy Chase and Beverly D'Angelo, is so far from funny it's actually painful to sit through.

Here, Chase's bumbling husband comes across as pathetic, a death-knell even for a comic hero; the only scenes that give a glimpse of the original hilarity of this series are those involving D'Angelo's Ellen, who becomes star-struck by sugary Vegas headliner Wayne Newton.—***Pat Kramer***

ABSOLUTE POWER ★★★

Starring Clint Eastwood. Directed by Clint Eastwood. Written by William Goldman. Produced by Clint Eastwood and Karen Spiegel. A Columbia release. Thriller. Rated R for violence, sexuality and language. Running time: 122 min.

In "Absolute Power," a thriller about a sex murder involving the president of the United States, everyone is morally tainted. The movie's moral center, ironically, is jewel thief Luther Whitney (Clint Eastwood, also directing and producing), who witnesses the crime and, guilt-ridden over his own passivity, decides not to let the president (Gene Hackman) and his aides cover it up.

As adapted by William Goldman from a novel by David Baldacci, the movie to keep Luther alive piles on so many contrivances that it becomes absurd. And, in opting for one-dimensional caricatures, the movie seems to be winking at the audience, as if to say such things couldn't really happen here. "Absolute Power" would have been more genuinely disturbing if the president had been portrayed not as monstrous but as a genial moral weakling like...so many other Oval Office occupants.—***Joe McBride***

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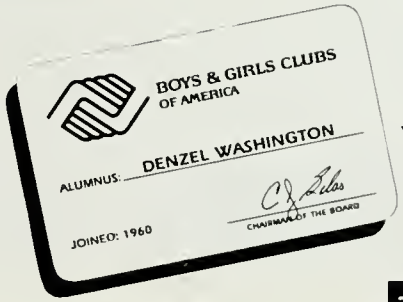
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NATIONAL NEWS

GOLDWYN UPPED AT PARAMOUNT

John Goldwyn, president of production at Paramount's Motion Picture Group for the past six years, has signed a new five-year contract, under which he'll be promoted to the newly-created position of president of Paramount Motion Pictures. The move leaves open his old post, which insiders say may eventually be filled by current executive vice president of production Michelle Manning. Goldwyn is the grandson of legendary producer Samuel Goldwyn and the son of Samuel Goldwyn Jr., chairman and CEO of Goldwyn Entertainment Co.

In his new position, Goldwyn will continue to oversee production at Paramount, but will now become more involved in long-term strategic planning for the studio. Goldwyn began his career in 1982 as executive story editor for producer Alan Ladd Jr. After a stint at MGM, Goldwyn joined Paramount in 1990 as executive vice president of production. He was promoted to president of production in 1991. Films produced and released under his tenure include "The First Wives Club," "Star Trek: First Contact," "Mission: Impossible," "Braveheart" and "Forrest Gump."

NATHANSON FILLS MARCUS SLOT AT MGM

Metro Goldwyn Mayer Inc. chairman Frank Mancuso brought in New Regency Prods. chairman and CEO Michael Nathanson to replace Mike Marcus (who resigned in February) as head of MGM Pictures. New Regency's president David Matalong said the departure came with the company's blessing and hopes it will help along discussions for possible co-productions between the two companies. There is some talk that when New Regency's deal is up at Warner Bros. in 1998, they might find a new home at MGM. During his tenure at New Regency, Nathanson was responsible for "A Time to Kill," "Tin Cup," "Natural Born Killers" and the first two "Free Willy" films. Before joining New Regency in 1994, Nathanson was a production executive at Columbia Pictures under the Peter Guber/Jon Peters regime.

DREAMWORKS BACK AT THE DRAWING BOARD FOR A SITE

Another setback has arisen in DreamWorks' efforts to build itself a studio. The deal with financier Gary Winnick to take over a majority stake in the Playa Vista develoment and cover the $150 million debt was never signed, and Robert Maguire, lead developer on the Maguire Thomas Partners project, is now negotiating with other parties to invest the monies needed to keep the banks at bay. Some industry sources say Maguire was never entirely comfortable with the Winnick group, which would have had the largest stake in the project. Maguire was reportedly unhappy with comments made by Winnick about taking over the project, which has been a long-held dream of Maguire's.

The agreement in principal was never signed because of legal issues. So DreamWorks continues to look elsewhere for a studio. Alternatives under consideration include a location in Burbank and a site next to the Dreamworks animation campus which is currently under construction in Glendale. There is even talk of staying put on the Universal lot. None of those options hold the allure of the Playa Vista project, so it remains to be seen what will become of DreamWorks: The Studio.

Meanwhile, DreamWorks plans to open a New York office in June to handle East Coast distribution and marketing. Located on the 22nd floor of 650 Madison Avenue, the offices will serve as home to approximately 10 employees and will be a base for visiting executives. Production offices already exist in New York at Chelsea Piers on the Hudson River.

NEW LINE LOOKS TO EUROPE FOR INVESTORS

New Line Cinema, which has been looking for money to maintain its independence from Time Warner, may have found what it's looking for in Europe. A European consortium led by French media giant Havas and U.K. broadcaster Carlton Communications. New Line chairman Robert Shaye and COO Michael Lynne began discussions last year with Havas for the Havas-Carlton contingent to make a significant investment in New Line.

New Line and Havas already formed a joint venture in 1995, NHVL, to invest in interactive games and software following a successful partnership on the interactive game for the New Line film "The Mask." Havas is the second largest publicly held media group in France. The investment, if it goes through, will allow Shaye and Lynne to keep control over the company they founded.

DISNEY PICKS UP CINERGI ENERGY

Walt Disney Pictures bought Cinergi Pictures Entertainment Inc. for an estimated $20 million after more than six months of discussions between the two. Andy Vajna, who owns 58 percent of Cinergi, put the company on the market a year ago. Insiders say that rising production costs made it difficult to continue to do the big-budget studio films that Vajna favored and that Vajna was not happy with Cinergi's move to smaller-budgeted pictures. Disney seemed the most logical buyer since it has 16 pictures outstanding on a 25-picture distribution deal with the company. Additionally, Disney already owned five percent of Cinergi's stock and had been lending money to the company to help fund production costs. Disney looked to acquire the company last summer, but did not. But perhaps faced with the prospect of entanglements with other buyers or trying to recoup its production advances (listed at $35.4 million) from a company in liquidation (which was increasingly becoming a possibility), the studio decided to go ahead with the deal.

Potential suitors had included Arnon Milchan's New Regency Enterprises, Mike Medavoy's Phoenix Pictures and Jim Robinson at Morgan Creek Productions. Although Cinergi posted losses in 1995 and early 1996, "Evita," which grossed $132 million to date worldwide, should ensure a positive fourth quarter. Disney will now have access to Cinergi's small library which includes "Evita" as well as less-than-successful films such as "Nixon" and "The Scarlet Letter."

SUSPECTS ARRESTED IN SILENT MOVIE MURDER

In a tragic and strange development that could have come straight out of a film noir, the murder of theatre owner Lawrence Austin (reported in the April issue of **Boxoffice**) is close to being solved, but what the LAPD has uncovered is quite a bit more complicated, if, regrettably enough, a little more understandable, than the seemingly senseless robbery/murder that shocked the exhibition world.

The LAPD has arrested two suspects in the killing of Austin, the owner/operator of the Silent Movie Showcase in Los Angeles. James Leslie Van Sickle, 34, of Los Angeles, and Christian Rodriguez, 19, of South Gate, Calif., are being held without bail for the January 17th murder. The 74-year-old Austin was killed in the lobby and a 19-year-old theatre employee (who survived) was shot while working the concession stand in what was originally believed to be a robbery. Now LAPD homicide detectives say it looks like a contract killing. Van Sickle, who hoped to inherit Austin's estate (which may be worth almost $1 million), allegedly hired Rodriguez to kill Austin for approximately $25,000. Austin's will apparently gave Van Sickle ownership of the theatre, its entire library of silent films and $80,000 in a bank account. LAPD officer John Miller said Van Sickle had been Austin's roommate and business partner for seven years. Van Sickle often worked as a projectionist and was at the theatre the night of the murder. Both suspects are charged with murder, attempted murder, two counts of robbery and one count of commercial burglary. Deputy District Attorney Curtis Hazell said it was not yet determined if the special circumstances of lying in wait and murder for financial gain would be used to seek the death penalty.

In a further twist, police are now investigating whether Austin even legitimately owned the theatre. Austin may have defrauded the theatre's original owners in order to acquire the Silent Movie Showcase. John and Dorothy Hampton opened the theatre in 1942 and ran it for 37 years until John Hampton fell ill. Austin, a family friend, reopened the theatre in 1991, shortly after John Hampton died. Dorothy Hampton, who lives in a nursing home since a stroke left her with diminished capacities, apparently signed over the theatre to Austin three years ago.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS BRIEFS

NORTHERN EXPOSURE

Canadian News Notes *by Shlomo Schwartzberg*

LEAD STORY: MAJOR "PLAYER"

Famous Players has announced the largest expansion in its 77-year history. The Canadian chain plans an additional 13 theatres, encompassing 136 screens and more than 39,000 seats. The 13 theatres will be added in four provinces—Ontario, British Columbia, Manitoba and Alberta—and the final builds are expected to be completed by May of 1999. The expansion will cost Famous Players more than C$75 million (US$51.7 million) and will create an estimated 1,500 jobs. The new theatres will feature spacious tiered seating, digital sound and such innovations as Starbucks coffee in lobby cafes and Techtown, featuring Sega and other computer games.



"We need to rebuild and reconfigure the existing circuit to meet the demand of moviegoing in the '90s," Roger Harris, Famous Players' vice president and general manager of marketing and theatre operations, told **Boxoffice**. The expansion will "showcase more variety on screens and better presentation [of films]," says Harris. "By providing more services and options in the lobby, we will encourage more people to spend time with Famous Players."

The 136 proposed screens will mark a 25 percent increase in Famous' total screens: Famous currently boasts 511 screens in 110 locations across Canada.

Recent add-ons in Burlington, Calgary and Moncton have been enormous successes, says Harris. "People come back and say 'Moviegoing is a bigger part of our life.'" He says that "Calgary did over and above what we anticipated," adding that one million patrons came to that city's new multiplex in its first year of operations.

The new theatres will make up the final wave of Famous Players' total 250-screen expansion, which began with a 50-screen expansion in 1996. "That investment will put us in a strong position in the marketplace, [and will] keep us in a strong position in the [next] 10 years." Harris says. Announcements of additional new projects are still forthcoming, but Famous' expansion will be essentially "scaled down" as the company enters the next century, according to Harris.

ASTRAL BACK ON DISTRIBUTION PLANE

After a brief scaling-back of its theatrical distribution efforts, Astral Distribution is back in the game, says its newly appointed director of theatrical distribution Jim Murphy. "We're going to be more aggressive," he said. Astral is currently distributing "Breaking The Waves," and its forthcoming slate includes several major titles, including Giles Walker's "Never Too Late," Volker Schlondorff's "The Ogre" and the controversial Tilda Swinton movie "Female Perversions." "We will [also] have a presence in Cannes," says Murphy, the former director of sales and distribution for the Ontario Film Development Corp. He conceded that the company was wrong to minimize its distribution as it had done of late. "There is a greater awareness and understanding that theatrical is a driving engine. You have got to have a theatrical presence [in the field]."

The distribution arm's parent, Astral Communications, is now called Coscient/Astral, after its purchase by the Quebec-based Coscient Inc. As a result of its combining with Quebec distribution company Allegro, another name change is imminent, says Murphy.

CINEPLEX, PROJECTIONISTS SETTLE DISPUTE

After nearly five months, Cineplex Odeon has come to an agreement with its projectionists in Ontario. The dispute centered around wages and hours, which Cineplex wanted to cut down, citing new technologies that have made the projectionists' jobs less vital.

Under the new agreement, projectionists' salaries go down by almost half to C$14-16 (US$9.66-11.04) an hour for a 40-hour work week or an annual salary of C$29,000-33,000 (US$20,000-22,750). In addition, 49 of the projectionists out of 102 who were locked out lost their jobs, due to a new agreement under which Cineplex will not employ projectionists in houses with three screens or less—theatre managers will do the job—and will use one instead of two projectionists in houses with eight screens or more. "It was a fair and equitable agreement, given the requirements of [the job]," said Howard Lichtman, Cineplex Odeon's executive vice president of marketing, who adds that Cineplex will offer a 26-week severance package to its laid off workers and access to a job education retraining fund, "which we are not obliged" to do.

Robert Hilder, a spokesman for Local 173, which represents projectionists in Ontario, said that "the members aren't very happy" with the strike's final outcome. Hilder expressed worries that projectionists at Famous Players will face the same difficulties when their contracts expire there on July 3. Asked about the situation at his company, Roger Harris of Famous Players said "the issues are very similar. [We face] the same challenges as Cineplex. The degree of difficulty in performing that function has been removed. [We need to find] a fair wage in the context of [the demands of the job]."

POLYGRAM TO SET UP FILM COMPANY IN CANADA

Netherlands-based music and movie company PolyGram NV has secured an agreement with the Canadian government to set up a film company in Canada. Originally, Polygram had hoped to be able to release films directly in Canada, as Hollywood studios do, circumventing existing regulations on distribution and foreign investment in cultural industries. But Canada's government vetoed that proposal, instead allowing PolyGram Filmed Entertainment (PFE) to only distribute movies it made or owns the rights to sell in all international markets. This ensures that PolyGram will not restrict its Canadian titles to niche marketing, but instead will have a commitment to distribute the films internationally, thereby helping to boost the Canadian film industry. Under the deal, PFE has agreed to invest at least C$20 million (US$13.8 million) in backing Canadian films and film festivals, and distributing Canadian films internationally. The reason Hollywood studios are able to distribute in Canada without restriction is that they were active in the Canadian market before the 1988 film distributors policy was enacted, under which film distributors must use a percentage of their profits to make domestic movies and market them internationally.

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EXHIBITION BRIEFINGS

NEW FEATURE: SHOWMINDER

With exhibition's Show calendar growing by leaps and bounds, BOXOFFICE brings you this new feature, giving you the wheres and whens of the best in exhibition-related events. Remember to save the following dates: **ShowCanada,** May 6-10, Chateau Laurier, Ottawa, Ontario. Call 416-969-7057 or 514-279-6150...**NAC Expo,** June 2-5, Marriott Hotel, Anaheim, Calif. Call 312-236-3858...**Cinema Expo,** June 15-18, RAI, Amsterdam. Call 212-246-6460...**Mid-Atlantic NATO Seminar-Reunion,** July 10-11, Harbor Court Hotel, Baltimore, Md. Call (757) 722-5275...**Australian Movie Convention,** August 13-16, Royal Pines Resort, Gold Coast, Australia. Call 61 733565671...**ShowSouth,** August 19-20, Callaway Gardens and Resort, Pine Mountain, Ga. Call (770) 455-8988...**ShowEast,** Oct. 21-23, Trump Taj Mahal, Atlantic City, N.J. Call 212-246-6460. Watch BOXOFFICE's Exhibition Briefings pages for future updates.

THE FINNISH LINE: NORDIC 40-PLEX SETS NEW RECORD

Finnkino, the largest circuit in Finland, will soon have another superlative to add to its credit: the company plans to build the world's first 40-plex—a staggering figure, given that the U.S. industry is only now rising to the 30-screen benchmark. The 3,500-seat behemoth will be located in downtown Helsinki and is scheduled to open in October 1998. Finnkino, owned by the newspaper and kiosk chain Rautakirja, currently operates 82 screens.

REGAL BUYS 95 SCREENS FROM MAGIC CINEMAS

Michael Campbell, president and CEO of Regal Cinemas, announced the signing of a definitive asset purchase agreement with Magic Cinemas LLC, an independent theatre company with operations in New Jersey and Pennsylvania (not to be confused with the Loews-owned Magic Johnson Theatres). Regal will pay $24.5 million in cash to purchase the 36 screens in five theatres that Magic Cinemas currently has in operation, the 52 screens in four theatres under development, and a seven-screen addition to an existing theatre. Campbell says that Regal "will continue to pursue appropriate acquisition opportunities aggressively," and that the circuit has more than 900 new screens either under construction or in pre-construction development that are scheduled to be open by the end of 1998.

NATIONAL AMUSEMENTS SPRINGS MORE SCREENS ON SPRINGDALE

National Amusements wants to double patrons' pleasure with double the screens at their Showcase Cinemas in Springdale, Ohio. The nine-plex will be expanded to an 18-plex, making it the largest cinema complex in greater Cincinnati. The cinema will be open during renovations, with the new screens set for operation in summer of 1998. Each auditorium in the 5,600-seat Springdale 18 will be equipped with Dolby Digital sound. The lobby will reflect National Amusements' trademark design, with glass ceilings, neon Hollywood-motifed sculptures and an art gallery of famous movie scenes and stars.

CINEMASTAR SCREENS TO TOTAL 157

Rising star CinemaStar, the San Diego-based chain with 64 screens in Southern California, has announced an aggressive theatre expansion program with plans to increase their screen count to 157 over the next 18 months. The circuit has sites planned in Tijuana, Mexico; Guadalajara, Mexico; and Kona, Hawaii, marking CinemaStar's first forays outside of Southern California. Several SoCal sites are planned as well, including San Bernardino, San Marcos, South Gate and Palm Springs. Also in the works is a five-screen addition to CinemaStar's first multiplex, the Mission Marketplace 8 in Oceanside, Calif.

CinemaStar is also in talks with commercial real estate developer J.H. Snyder Company to build multiplexes in major retail entertainment centers to be developed in California and Nevada over the next five years. If the agreement is completed, CinemaStar would have through the combined expansion an estimated 460 screens in 35 theatres by 2002.

SOUND BITES: NEWS FROM THX, DOLBY, DTS AND SONY CINEMA PRODUCTS

ACT III OPENS 200TH THX SCREEN

According to Lucasfilm Ltd., Act III Theatres has the most THX screens in all of exhibition. With the opening of its Cornelius 9 in Oregon, Act III hit the all-time high of 200 THX screens, which is the largest commitment by any exhibitor worldwide. And Act III isn't stopping there: currently, there are 200 more Act III screens under development within the THX design office. "Act III builds every auditorium in every theatre to the THX standard for one simple reason: it sells tickets," says Randall Blaum, director of advertising and marketing for Act III. Says Monica Dashwood, general manager of the THX division: "From the beginning, Act III believed in the THX philosophy. We are thrilled that our two companies are set to work together for many years to come."

DOLBY SALES TOP 8,200

Sales of Dolby Digital processors have exceeded 8,200 units, in part due to the new Model CP500 digital processor, which Dolby president Bill Jasper calls "one of our fastest-growing products ever." Additionally, more than 200 films have been announced to be released with Dolby Digital soundtracks, bringing the total number of films with Dolby Digital soundtracks to 820. Among these titles will be such high-profile projects as Buena Vista's "Hercules" and "Con Air"; Paramount's "The Saint" and "Titanic"; New Line's "Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery" and "Mortal Kombat 2"; and Warner Bros.' "Murder at 1600" and "Batman and Robin." There are approximately 38,000 Dolby-equipped theatres worldwide.

WARNER TO USE ALL THREE DIGITAL SOUND FORMATS

Having entered into an agreement with Digital Theater Systems, Warner Bros. will release all of its 1997 titles in all three digital sound formats. Previously, Warner had used DTS only on selected releases, in addition to Dolby and SDDS. The deal will apply to all Warner productions and acquisitions.

SONY CINEMA PRODUCTS CORP. OPENS LONDON OFFICE

Sony Cinema Products Corp. has opened a new office in London for the European distribution and service of the Sony Dynamic Digital Sound format. The new London operation replaces the former SCPC office in Frankfurt, Germany, and will handle the expansion of the company's activities in Europe. David Pope has been named operations manager of the London office, and Les Brock has been appointed field service engineer, recorder systems.

UA LOVES A PARADE

Those of you attending ShoWest this year may have been a little mystified if you were walking along the Las Vegas strip only to find yourself surrounded by marching bands, celebrity look-alikes and "Star Wars" characters. It's easily explained: The March 5 opening of United Artists' Showcase 8 Theatre, located in the Showcase retail and entertainment complex next to the MGM Grand Hotel, was celebrated with a parade that made its way throughout the town, headed by the Clark High School Marching Band. Several Vegas resorts welcomed UA by participating in the parade. Celebrity impersonators from the Imperial Palace's "Legends in Concert" were joined by the cast of "Showgirls of Magic" from the San Remo Hotel and Casino. Actors portraying King Kong and Lady Liberty represented the New York-New York Hotel and Casino. "Star Wars" characters Darth Vader, C-3P0 and Boba Fett were on hand at the festivities, as were the caped crusaders Batman and Robin. The Showcase 8—the only first-run movie theatre on the Strip—features eight wall-to-wall screens; DTS, SDDS, Dolby Digital and THX sound technologies; seating with cupholder armrests; and special booster seats for children.

COBB RINGS IN BELL TOWER 20

Cobb Theatres is building an 80,000-square-foot 20-plex, the Bell Tower 20, in Ft. Myers, Florida, scheduled to open this summer. The Bell Tower 20 will offer DTS, Dolby and SDDS sound systems; stadium style seat-

ing; and Cobb's luxurious high-back "cozy chairs" with lifting cupholder armrests. Birmingham, Ala.-based Cobb has 600 screens throughout the southeast, and is the largest theatre operator in Florida with 465 screens in 54 locations.

CARDLOGIX GETS SMART

Smart Card manufacturer CardLogix has formed a strategic alliance with MPO Videotronics to jointly provide Smart Cards, software and interactive touchscreen terminals to movie theatres for automatic ticketing. Movie Magic software is provided by Card-Logix free of charge for customization of theatre-specific information. The system is designed to let customers avoid long lines and carry less cash. Customers can obtain tickets with a Movie Gold Card, with deductions made when the card is inserted into a reader located on the terminal. The customer is prompted by a touchscreen to preview movie selections, order tickets and select other purchase options. The items are deducted from the card balance and issued.

ON THE MOVE

United Artists Theatre Circuit Inc. announced that its board of directors has named executive VP and CFO **Kurt C. Hall** acting COO, following former UA topper Stewart Blair's resignation. Blair's position as president and CEO remained vacant at press time. **Bob Capps**, executive vice president of film, has also resigned, with UATC citing "personal reasons." **Mike Pade** has assumed Capp's post...Loews co-chairs Jim and Barrie Lawson Loeks have named **Michael Norris** executive vice president of **Loews Theatres**. Norris joined Loews in 1995 as senior vice president of operations ...**Showscan Entertainment Inc.** announced that president and CEO **William Soady** has tendered his resignation. He will be succeeded by executive VP and CFO **Dennis Pope**. Additionally, Tucker Lemon, VP and general counsel, has been promoted to senior VP, and will retain his title of general counsel...**Wehrenberg Theatres'** head film buyer **Doug Whitford** has been promoted to vice president, film...**Mann Theatres** has appointed **John DeLorenzo** to the newly-created position of senior executive vice president, finance and administration. DeLorenzo was formerly executive VP of Act III Broadcasting Inc., and VP and CFO of its parent company, Act III Communications Holdings, L.P....**Joan M. Romine** was promoted to treasurer of **Clearview Cinema Group Inc.** Romine joined Clearview in July 1996 as Controller...**Lyndon Golin** has been named director of exhibitor relations for **Hollywood Online,** a website that covers the motion picture industry. Golin will manage Hollywood Online's strategic partnership with the National Association of Theatre Owners to provide nationwide movie and theatre listings...**Lucasfilm Ltd.** has hired **Kurt Schwenk** as director of Professional THX Operations. Schwenk, who was formerly VP of film applications for Dolby Laboratories, will oversee the worldwide daily operations of both the THX Theatre Program and the THX Theatre Alignment Program.

Q&A: TURNING JAPANESE: CINEMARK PARTNERS WITH SHOCHIKU

Marking the next step in Cinemark's rapid and aggressive international expansion plans, the U.S.'s fourth-largest circuit has partnered with Shochiku Co. Ltd. to build 100 screens in Japan by the year 2000. The first theatre under the deal, a seven-plex in Kobe, opened March 20, bringing one of the first state-of-the-art multiplexes to the country. Tim Warner, president of Cinemark International, spoke with* BOXOFFICE *about Cinemark's foray into one of the most rapidly-growing markets on the globe.



BOXOFFICE: How did you go about selecting Shochiku as your strategic partner in Japan?

TIM WARNER: I knew [Shochiku president and CEO] Toru Okuyama for a number of years through my involvement with NATO/ShoWest, and was aware of both the quality and status of his company in Japan. I suggested to him when I took my current position as the president of Cinemark International that he might want to consider doing a joint venture, allowing Cinemark International to join the new company he'd formed in Japan, which was Shochiku Multiplex Theatres.

BOXOFFICE: And that is the second largest chain in Japan?

WARNER: They're the second largest exhibition company in Japan, but they're the largest entertainment company in Japan, because they're also in production and distribution.

BOXOFFICE: What will the theatres themselves be called?

WARNER: They'll be called Movix, and we will operate under that trade name. Shochiku has had that name for their drive-in theatres, so the name has been in Japan, linked with the exhibition business, for a number of years.

BOXOFFICE: What will Cinemark/Shochiku, aka Movix, bring to Japan's exhibition scene?

WARNER: The thing we're going to primarily bring is the state-of-the-art multiplex theatre to Japan. Although Warners and UCI have opened multiplexes in Japan, they're not in the major markets. The only multiplex theatre that has currently opened in a major market is AMC.

BOXOFFICE: What are the pertinent statistics that make Japan such an attractive market?

WARNER: Right now, they have something like one screen for every hundred and some thousand people—as compared to the U.S., which is about one screen for every 10,000 people—and yet it's still one of the primary markets outside of the U.S. for U.S. [films], from a dollar standpoint.

BOXOFFICE: Do you have any theories as to why that is?

WARNER: One is the price, because the average ticket price in Japan is much, much higher than the U.S., almost two or three times as high. Also, they enjoy movies very much, and they enjoy American culture. I think as the market develops, the potential of the marketplace is probably one of the best in the entire world.

BOXOFFICE: The real estate in Japan is notoriously expensive and scarce. With AMC, Time Warner and UCI building, how do you plan to secure well-positioned sites?

WARNER: Having our joint venture is going to be an advantage, because we are dealing with a company that has literally done business in Japan for over 103 years. And so we're counting on the fact that they do know the local market and the local developers. And I think that they will bring with them access to the marketplace.

BOXOFFICE: Does the partnership plan to build in other countries?

WARNER: Yes, it is contemplated that Shochiku and Cinemark will consider joint ventures in markets in the Far East, outside of Japan.

BOXOFFICE: What are some other countries that just Cinemark is building in?

WARNER: Just Cinemark, we're in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Central America, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Argentina, and Brazil.

BOXOFFICE: What are the challenges and benefits of going into foreign territories?

WARNER: I think the challenge is trying to change our corporate culture and develop into a global exhibition company. And with that comes all the management strains that [that scale of endeavor] puts on an organization. But the potential of the marketplace, or the risk versus rewards, are very high, because most of the markets that we are going in are very, very much underscreened. And as we develop the state-of-the-art cinemas in the marketplaces, we feel that we will achieve results similar to those in markets such as England and Australia and inner Germany, where the market was really underscreened, and exhibitors went in and built, and of course the attendance has doubled and tripled in those marketplaces.

BOXOFFICE: And you want to reproduce those results!

WARNER: We want to reproduce those results around the world!

ANATOMY OF A MERGER

At ShoWest '97, BOXOFFICE is a Witness to History *by Ray Greene and Kim Williamson*

Putting together the May issue of **BOXOFFICE** *is always an interesting challenge in that its primary purpose is to alert exhibition to the golden networking opportunity presented each year by the ShowCanada convention, while its secondary theme is to wrap up various types of unfinished business related to ShoWest, ShowCanada's unaffiliated but nonetheless significant cousin to the south.*

While most publications which cover ShoWest tend to focus on such benchmarks of that annual show as the studio-sponsored dining events, the vast exhibition-related trade show and the star-studded final night awards event, many stories that may have even more lasting impact on global exhibition occur in the margins of the official show schedule, where private meetings and business discussions occur every minute of each show day. With that in mind, **BOXOFFICE** *editors Ray Greene and Kim Williamson determined that they would keep their eyes open at ShoWest '97 for a single story that could be given extra play in the pages of* **BOXOFFICE**, *both as a way of getting important first-hand news to our audience and in order to find a symbol for the hundreds of other bits of significant industry business which occur out of the limelight at ShoWest each year.*

On the final day of ShoWest, in a nondescript restaurant off the lobby of Bally's, our two intrepid editors found what they were looking for when they were witnesses to a piece of exhibition history as Decatron's legendary managing director Joost Bert and A.J. "Ad" Weststrate of Holland's Cinema Groep executed the final contracts for a unique partnership. The Cinema Groep/Decatron compact will combine Decatron's vast experience with Cinema Groep's deep understanding of the Dutch marketplace in an alliance that just might mark a new beginning for the way the people of Holland go to the movies. The first build will be called the Palais de Cinema Alhambra, and it will house eight state-of-the-art theatres in the Dutch town of Vlissingen. And the contracts launching this new team on the Dutch scene were signed right before **BOXOFFICE's** *bulging eyes.*



HISTORY IN THE MAKING: *A.J. Weststrate talks to* **BOXOFFICE** *at ShoWest.*

And so, on these pages, Kim and Ray bring you eyewitness interviews for a breaking piece of international exhibition news. Like the song says, this could be the start of something big. And we were there, so you didn't have to be.

BOXOFFICE: I understand you have an interesting announcement to make.

A.J. WESTSTRATE: Well, it's a quite big announcement for Holland. As you know, there's a very successful Belgian company called Decatron, run by the Berts. They're very successful in Belgium and in France already, and now we've made up a joint venture to open our first cinema in Holland. Construction will be starting in a few months and will finish toward the end of this year.

BOXOFFICE: How many screens?

WESTSTRATE: There are going to be eight screens with about 1,500 seats.

BOXOFFICE: Located?

WESTSTRATE: In the south of Holland, in Vlissingen [English name: Flushing], in the province of Zeeland. And the cinema there now has only 500 seats, so it's going to be three times as big.

BOXOFFICE: A Dutch exhibitor once said to us that The Netherlands didn't need multiplexes, that there were enough screens and nothing needed to change. Why do you think this development will better serve the moviegoing public?

WESTSTRATE: You only need look at the enormous success that the Berts have already had. And there's nothing in Holland that's that same way. This is going to be the first one built with their formula. So if it's a success elsewhere in the world, why not in Holland? I think [exhibitors] are waiting too long [to multiplex the country], and there's too little competition in Holland.

BOXOFFICE: Do you envision there will be more theatres in Holland from this joint venture?

WESTSTRATE: Well, we're going to look to see what the market is, and when there are good sites we're going to try, of course.

JOOST BERT: I think, together with Ad as a partner, we will be aggressive in the Dutch

market. We are now working on some sites that we can't discuss for the moment. But as soon as everything is secured we will announce them. As a Flemish family, working together with Ad, we are very thrilled. We know we are doing the right thing for the Dutch market. We have found somebody in Holland who is on the same frequency, who has the same ideas of quality—who's willing to go to the extremes in providing comfort, who's willing to go to the extremes in what people are asking for.

If some guy from Holland said that about theatres, that's not true. The need for comfort is a universal feeling everywhere. People appreciate leg space, appreciate a big screen, appreciate state-of-the-art presentation. And that's what we're going to do. I'm quite surprised to find someone like Ad, who really starts with what's going to be a big investment—we're talking between 9 million and 10 million Dutch guilders—a very big investment for that part of the country. And I'm quite sure that we will be very successful with that theatre. And from this theatre we will start on—Ad, how many other projects?

WESTSTRATE: About 10 projects in total, and hopefully we'll be a big market player in a few years over in Holland.

BOXOFFICE: Do you have an estimate of the total number of screens your joint venture will have at build-out?

WESTSTRATE: About 100, 120.

BERT [*laughing*]**:** It's nice to hear that, Ad! The more the merrier.

BOXOFFICE: In one of the seminars on ShoWest's international day, they talked about how the megaplexing phenomenon doesn't necessarily work in the European market. Do you agree with that statement?

BERT: I think that multiplexing and megaplexing will work in Holland. Eventually, it will come. Whether it will be us or somebody else, multiplexing and megaplexing are coming to Holland. We are not the first in Holland with a multiplex—Pathe, the French company that took over Cannon/MGM, is already successful with its cinema in downtown Rotterdam. So that proves that the formula of multiplexing works.

BOXOFFICE: What are the parameters about this particular build that add up to success? How does it fulfill the formula that you need to have a successful multiplex in a place like The Netherlands?

BERT: It's extremely—I won't say "difficult," that's not the word—but where we start with is Ad, it's in his hometown. It's a small town. The catchment area is very small. And in the town of Vlissingen, how many inhabitants do you have?

WESTSTRATE: A hundred thousand.

BERT: Well, it will draw. It will draw at least in an area of 50 to 60 kilometers. I think it may take away some business from [Decatron's theatre in] Antwerp. We have so many Dutch people traveling for one hour coming from cities like Utrecht, all the way down to Antwerp. So in some ways we will lose some patrons, maybe, to the new cinema.

BOXOFFICE: (laughter) But better to lose it to yourself than to some other guy.

BERT: But I'm very much thrilled that we've found Ad, who's thinking the same way, who's "crazy" enough to invest... Ad is the first one to do this. So we're going to do it better than Pathe, we're going to do it better than anybody else, any other players in the Dutch market.



SIGNED, SEALED, DELIVERED: *Cinema Groep's Weststrate and Joost Bert shake hands after executing the contracts for their historic joint venture.*

BOXOFFICE: What effect will this have on the Dutch film industry?

WESTSTRATE: There is a big strategy plan already, building toward the year 2000. At this moment in Holland, people [on average] go only once a year to the cinema. In four years time, we want to double that—so we've got to go to 25 million to 30 million yearly admissions in the year 2000.

BOXOFFICE: In some quarters in Europe—specifically in France—naysayers insist that multiplexes will provide more screens only for more Hollywood movies, not the local films.

BERT: I disagree 100 percent. The fact that we have more theatres in France means that the boxoffice attendance goes up. We don't take away from other people. It gives more opportunities for local producers to start making product again. I made a bet with a guy from Buena Vista, saying that the Dutch market has the potential to go back to 35 million on a yearly basis, and when that happens, the local people will have the opportunity to start again making very successful Dutch movies. Same thing for France: If the cinema attendance in France doubles, it will also double the number of people coming to French films.

BOXOFFICE: Is this also a plus for the suppliers, the folks who provide the sound equipment, the concessions?

WESTSTRATE: It's a plus for everybody in the industry. And as for local films, [at Cinema Groep] we always reserve screens especially for European films. That's all they show. So hopefully this will mean there will be more screens [for homegrown product].

BOXOFFICE: What again is the projected cost for this first site?

BERT: Between 9 million and 10 million Dutch guilders. And who will be the winners? The profession itself, and the patrons, the customers.

BOXOFFICE: Is this a 50/50 venture, or is there a different partnership split?

BERT: Let's say I don't want to answer this. We will build it—it will be the same standards and it will be a partnership between the two families doing it. There are two parts: On the one hand, I'm supplying know-how, and I'm Decatron; on the other hand, I'm the family Bert, going in joint venture with the family Weststrate.

WESTSTRATE: We're going in as big friends.

BOXOFFICE: I don't expect you can name the Dutch towns you're thinking of for your next sites, but could you characterize them as urban areas where perhaps there are already small theatre sites, or will it be more rural places where there aren't screens already?

BERT: I think if we give that information we will already have said too much.

WESTSTRATE: It's a very small country, Holland. A very small country.

BOXOFFICE: Do either of you have any final comments?

BERT: The partnership we sign now with Ad, we did exactly the same thing last year with some people from Luxembourg. Their theatre opened last year on the 18th of December, it's a 10-plex, and it's a very successful theatre. You know, Luxembourg has only 360,000 inhabitants, and also over there the partnership works wonderfully, attendance is up, patrons are pleased, the distribution companies are very pleased with what we're doing over there. So I'm sure this will be exactly the same thing in Holland.

BOXOFFICE: Is there any chance Decatron is ever going to come to America?

[*Bert offers a wide, "wouldn't-you-like-to-know" smile, and is silent for a very long time. All laugh.*]

BOXOFFICE: (laughing) We're going to have to describe that smile. (to Weststrate) Do you have a final comment?

WESTSTRATE: I'm hoping that this is the start of a very successful operation, and I think this is the smallest, with eight, where we started. But the other ones may become very much bigger. We hope to tell you more then.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS BRIEFS

PACIFIC OVERTURES

NOTES FROM THE PACIFIC RIM *by Susan Lambert*

LEAD STORY: JUDGEMENT DAY IN SOUTH KOREA FOR U.S.DISTRIBS

SEOUL—Columbia TriStar, 20th Century Fox, United Intl. Pictures (UIP), Warner Bros. and Buena Vista were all found guilty of anticompetitive practices by the Korean Fair Trade Commission. A KFTC official, Im Young-jun, issued a warning to the Seoul branches of the top five U.S. film distributors. The officials admitted their wrongdoing and were granted leniency. If convicted again, each would be subject to a fine or ordered to shut down its South Korean branch offices.

South Korea has become one of the top ten foreign markets for United States product since UIP pioneered direct distribution in 1988, amid much protest from local companies. The anticompetitive practices involved the withholding of ads from two Seoul-based newspapers which U.S. companies withdrew from because they felt they were paying 30 percent more than locals were for ads. Local independent distributors, including Hana Media and Kwak Kyung-hee claimed that was not true. The U.S. companies were paying for ad agency services and missed cost-saving measures implemented by the locals who are equally frustrated by the high prices of movie ad rates.

Meanwhile, more U.S. companies are looking to get in on the lucrative South Korean market. Polygram Filmed Entertainment and Paramount Pictures are in talks about a three-year, co-financing joint venture to distribute 10-12 big budget Hollywood films per year in the country. The deal may involve a third-party South Korean company, and Paramount is in discussion with several major players about a possible arrangement. Many Seoul-based distributors are interested in working with the U.S. companies, but may be leery since they feel they have been burned before with deals that involved high price films which did not perform well.

SATOSHI ISEKI HEADS UP HERALD

TOKYO—Satoshi Iseki, the head of NDF, a production financing company, has taken over as head of the international department at Nippon Herald, an independent distributor. Iseki left Nippon Herald 12 years ago and will now also serve on their board of directors. He will be in charge of acquisitions and financing for Herald, which owns a 10 percent stake in NDF, where Iseki will continue to run operations. NDF has 10 films in production, including Chen Kaige's "Assassins," a thriller about a plot to assassinate Shih-Huang-Ti of the Ch'in Dynasty. Based on the book "Shiji," "Assassins" is considered to be the most expensive movie ever made in Asia with a budget of US$30 million.

AUSTRALIA MERGES FILM AGENCIES

SYDNEY—The state government of Queensland will merge its two principal film agencies into one. Film Queensland, a state-based project and talent development agency, will join with the Pacific Film and Television Commission (PFTC). The PFTC is noted for its aggressive marketing campaign to bring offshore productions to Queensland for location filming. Arts Minister Joan Sheldon said the restructure will "refocus" funding away from corporate services and administration to more "front line services," such as arts organizations and producers.

In other news, Australian animation and production company Energee Entertainment won the movie and merchandising rights to the classic Queensland book "The Magic Pudding." Energee, which beat out such contenders as Disney and Jim Hensen Productions, plans to turn the children's book, about a pudding that can be eaten forever, into an animated feature. The book, written by the late Norman Lindsay, will be adapted by children's writer Morris Gleitzman.

KIWI COMMISSION NAMES HARLEY

AUCKLAND—Dr. Ruth Harley OBE, former chief executive of the television funding body, New Zealand On Air, was named to head New Zealand's Film Commission. Harley is also a former national media director of the Saatchi and Saatchi ad agency. The Commission helps promote a strong New Zealand voice in film.

SHOCHIKU AND CINEMARK MAKE MOVIX

KOBE—On March 20th, Shochiku Co., Ltd. and Cinemark International Inc. opened their first joint venture multiplex theatre in Kobe, Japan. The state-of-the-art seven-plex features stadium seating, oversized screens, THX and digital sound. Next up will be a twelve-screen theatre in Kyoto. Shochiku and Cinemark share equivalent ownership of a 53 percent interest in Shochiku Cinemark Theatres (SCT), which will operate under the trade name Movix. The remaining 47 percent is owned by a consortium of prominent Japanese companies including Orix Corp., Taisei Corp., Obayashi Corp., Shimizu Corp., Nishimatsu Corp., Toda Corp., Mitsui & Co. and Lotte Co.

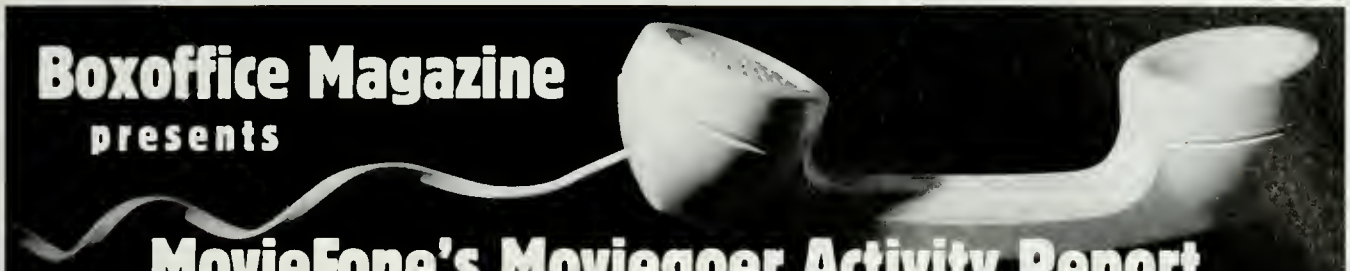
Shochiku is a leading distributor, exhibitor and producer of movies. It currently owns and operates over 200 screens, making it the second largest movie exhibitor in Japan. Cinemark is the fourth largest movie exhibitor in the world with 1,525 screens in the United States, Canada, Mexico and Chile. Toru Okuyama, president and chief executive officer of Shochiku stated that merging the resources of the two companies makes great business sense. "Our expertise and knowledge of the Japanese marketplace combined with one of the fastest growing global exhibition companies will make SCT a leader in the Japanese exhibition market." For more on Movix, see our interview with Cinemark International president, Tim Warner, pg. 69.

WARNER MYCAL BREAKS NEW GROUND

TOKYO—Warner Mycal Cinemas, a joint venture between the Japanese supermarket chain Nichii and Warner Bros. and the first circuit to build a multiplex in Japan, plans to open 39 new screens at five more sites this year. That would bring Warner Mycal Cinema's screen total to 96. Despite an overall 7.5 percent drop at the Japanese boxoffice last year, Warner Mycal's admissions were up 15 percent indicating its strategy of building sites in suburbs and small urban areas may well prove to be a success. The five new sites include a nine-screen, 2,124 seat build in the Shinyurigaoka Vivre department store outside Tokyo, a free standing multiplex in Niigata and retail-merged outlets in Hiroshima, Hokkaido and Hyogo Prefecture.

DO YOU HAVE AN EXHIBITION-RELATED NEWS ITEM ABOUT THE ASIA-PACIFIC MARKET? E-MAIL SUSAN LAMBERT IN CARE OF boxoff@earthlink.net

Boxoffice Magazine presents



MovieFone's Moviegoer Activity Report

For the Month of February 1997

MovieFone® (777-FILM®) and its sister service, MovieLink® Online, are now the single largest source of movie showtime information in the country, providing information to over 12 million moviegoers each month. The following information represents the most requested theatres and exhibitors on MovieFone.

Top 10 Exhibitors & Theatres

Most Requested Exhibitors

Rank	Exhibitor	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
1	Cineplex Odeon	724,528	2
2	United Artists	723,150	3
3	Sony	605,269	1
4	AMC	588,764	4
5	General Cinema	373,897	5
6	Century	250,230	6
7	Cinemark	178,449	8
8	Mann	165,489	9
9	National Amusements	153,852	7
10	Regal	122,183	14

Most Requested Theatres

Rank	Market	Theatre	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
1	NY	Sony Lincoln Square	69,586	1
2	BO	Sony Cheri	50,216	5
3	NY	CO Ziegfeld	43,488	45
4	BO	Sony Assembly Sq.	35,508	11
5	LA	AMC Century 14	31,003	4
6	BO	Sony Copley Place	29,692	8
7	NY	CO Chelsea	29,244	3
8	PH	UA Riverview Plaza	28,388	16
9	BO	NA Circle Cinema	26,173	37
10	NY	Sony Orpheum	26,162	10

Most Requested Theatres Per Screen

Total Requests	Rank	Theatre (# screens)	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
New York	1	CO Ziegfeld (1)	43,433	2
1,068,228	2	CO Chelsea West (2)	20,520	5
	3	UA Continental 3 (1)	7,535	52
Los Angeles	1	Mann Village (1)	15,697	3
698,973	2	Mann Chinese (3)	20,506	9
	3	Vista Theatre (1)	5,387	34
Dallas	1	GCC Northpark 1 & 2 (2)	7,487	1
551,499	2	Landmk Inwood (2)	7,022	9
	3	UA Galaxy (9)	18,329	11
San Francisco	1	UA Coronet Theatre (1)	17,706	16
381,071	2	Century 21 (1)	7,065	10
	3	UA Stonetown Twin (2)	9,457	24
Boston	1	Sony Cheri (4)	50,216	1
340,923	2	Sony Janus (1)	3,803	5
	3	NA Circle Cinema (7)	26,173	7
Chicago	1	CO McClurg Court (3)	22,651	4
292,284	2	CO Woodfield 1 & 2 (2)	5,405	8
	3	Sony Webster Place (8)	21,454	10
Philadelphia	1	UA Sameric (4)	20,892	1
289,582	2	UA Wynnewood (1)	2,627	22
	3	UA Riverview Plaza (11)	28,388	6
Miami	1	Cobb Miami Lakes (10)	14,603	3
278,212	2	AMC Kendall T & C (10)	14,436	12
	3	Cobb Kendall (9)	12,955	1
Toronto	1	CO York 1 & 2 (2)	8,136	14
205,486	2	Famous Cumberland (4)	12,394	18
	3	Famous Markville (4)	10,309	12
Phoenix	1	Hark Cine Capri (1)	7,722	1
197,275	2	UA Christown Mall (6)	13,566	4
	3	Hark Christown (5)	8,317	2
Houston	1	CO Spectrum (9)	11,549	1
160,886	2	CO River Oaks Plaza (12)	14,468	2
	3	Landmk River Oaks (3)	3,590	3
San Diego	1	Mann Cinema 21 (1)	4,701	2
136,132	2	UA Glasshouse (6)	5,290	12
	3	UA Horton Plaza (14)	11,126	7

Total Requests	Rank	Theatre (# screens)	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
Kansas City	1	Dksn Glenwood (4)	12,547	1
116,662	2	Dksn Westglen (12)	17,205	4
	3	Liberty Cinema (8)	10,813	5
Seattle	1	CO Cinerama (1)	3,989	7
97,467	2	Landmk Neptune (1)	3,729	1
	3	CO Northgate (1)	2,493	8
Atlanta	1	Carmike Exchange (3)	1,495	13
96,727	2	AMC Phipps Plaza (14)	6,444	2
	3	AMC Galleria (8)	3,406	3
Minneapolis	1	Landmk Uptown Theatre (1)	890	1
89,557	2	UA St. Anthony Main (5)	4,057	16
	3	Mann MN St. Louis Pk. (6)	4,368	8
Cleveland	1	GCC Ridge Park Square (8)	7,432	1
76,472	2	Regal Severance Movies (8)	6,372	5
	3	Sony Cedar (2)	1,244	14
Las Vegas	1	Century Rancho (16)	14,161	3
65,062	2	Act III Boulder Station (11)	8,557	8
	3	Century Cinedome (12)	9,254	5
Denver	1	UA Continental (1)	3,991	1
64,641	2	AMC Westminster (5)	2,437	4
	3	AMC Tiffany Plaza (4)	1,884	6
Detroit	1	AMC Southland (4)	2,274	3
50,871	2	AMC Eastland (2)	765	17
	3	Star Taylor (10)	3,604	2
San Antonio	1	Act III Fiesta (16)	8,538	2
48,740	2	Act III Galaxy (14)	7,154	3
	3	Act III Crossroads (6)	2,943	1
Sacramento	1	UA Greenback (6)	5,906	9
46,514	2	Century Sacramento D-I (6)	4,238	1
	3	Century Century 21 (2)	1,232	4
Cincinnati	1	SupSav Forest Fair (8)	5,707	1
31,412	2	SupSav Cinemas (8)	3,693	2
	3	NA Showcase Eastgate (7)	2,144	6
Washington, DC	1	CO Uptown (1)	1,599	1
30,027	2	CO Embassy (1)	345	2
	3	CO Avalon (2)	475	9

Top 3 Actively* Requested Theatres:

1. CO Worldwide New York, NY
2. CO Ziegfeld New York, NY
3. Sony Lincoln Sq. New York, NY

*Caller specifically requested theatre

Key to Exhibitors

AMC	AMC Theatres, Inc.	CO	Cineplex Odeon Corp.	Hollywood	Hollywood Theatres
Act III	Act III Theatres	Cobb	Cobb Theatres	Landmk	Landmark Theatre Corp.
Blm	Blumenfeld Theatres	Dksn	Dickinson Theatres	Laemmle	Laemmle Theatres
Carmike	Carmike Cinemas, Inc	Famous	Famous Players	Mann MN	Mann Minneapolis
Century	Century Theatres	GCC	General Cinema Theatres	Met	Metropolitan Theatres Corp
CinAm	CinAmenca Theatres, LP	General	General Theatres	MJR	MJR Theatre Service
CityCin	City Cinemas	Hark	Harkins Theatres	Muvico	Muvico Theatres

777-FILM

NA	National Amusements
Pacific	Pacific Theatres
Regal	Regal Cinemas
Sony	Sony Theatres
Star	Loews-Star Theatres
SupSav	Super Saver Cinemas
UA	United Artists Theatre Circuit

BOXOFFICE

	February	March	April	MAY (Current)
Buena Vista (818) 567-5000 (212) 593-8900	**That Dam Cat**, 2/14, Com, PG, 89 min., Dolby SR, SR-D, Flat. Christina Ricci, Doug E. Doug, Dyan Cannon. Dir: Robert Spiers.	**Jungle2Jungle**, 3/7, Com, PG, 105 min., Dolby SR, SR-D, SDDS, Flat. Tim Allen, Martin Short, Sam Huntington, Lolita Davidovitch, David Ogden Stiers, JoBeth Williams. Dir: John Pasquin. **The Sixth Man**, 3/28, Com, PG13, 104 min, Dolby SR, SR-D, SDDS, Flat. Marlon Wayans, Kadeem Hardison, David Paymer. Dir: Randall Miller	**Grosse Pointe Blank**, 4/11, Com, R, 106 min, Dolby SR, SR-D, SDDS, Flat. John Cusack, Minnie Driver, Dan Aykroyd, Joan Cusack. Dir: George Armitage.	**Playing God**, 5/16, Dra, R, Flat. Timothy Hutton, David Duchovny. Dir. Andy Wilson. **Romy and Michelle's High School Reunion**, 5/30, Com, R. Mira Sorvino, Lisa Kudrow, Janeane Garofalo, Elaine Hendrix. Dir: David Mirkin.
Columbia (310) 280-8000 (212) 833-8500	**Absolute Power**, 2/14,Thr, R, 120 min., Dolby A &SR, SDDS. Anamorphic. Gene Hackman, Scott Glenn, Judy Davis. Dir/Star: Clint Eastwood. **Fools Rush In**, 2/14, Rom/Com, PG-13, 106 min., Dolby A, SR, SDDS, Flat. Matthew Perry, Salma Hayek. Dir: Andy Tennant. **Booty Call**, 2/26, Com, R, 77 min., DTS, SDDS, Flat. Jamie Foxx, Vivica Fox. Dir: Jeff Pollack.	**The Devil's Own**, 3/26, Sus/Thr, R, Dolby A & SR, SDDS, Anamorphic. Harrison Ford, Brad Pitt, Margaret Colin, Treat Williams, Ruben Blades. Dir. Alan J. Pakula.	**Double Team** (formerly The Colony), 4/4, Act, SDDS, Jean-Claude VanDamme, Dennis Rodman, Mickey Rourke. Dir: Tsui Hark. **Anaconda**, 4/18, Adv, PG13, Dolby A, SR, SDDS. Jon Voight, Jennifer Lopez, Ice Cube, Eric Stoltz, Kari Wuhrer. Dir: Luis Llosa.	**The Fifth Element**, 5/9, SF, Bruce Willis, Gary Oldman, Ian Holm, Milla Jovovich. Dir: Luc Besson.
MGM/UA (310) 449-3000 (212) 708-0300	**Touch**, 2/14, Dra, R, 97 min, DTS. Tom Arnold, Bridget Fonda, Christopher Walken, Gina Gershon, Janeane Garofalo. Dir: Paul Schrader.			**Warriors of Virtue**, 5/2, Act/Adv, PG, DTS. Angus MacFadyen, Mario Yedidia, Marley Shelton, Chao-Li Chi. Dir: Ronny Yu.
Miramax (212) 941-3800 (213) 845-4200		**Rhyme & Reason**, 3/7, Doc. Features Ice-T, Salt N Peppa, Dr. Dre. Dir: Peter Spirer. **Chasing Amy**, 3/28 NY, LA, April exp., Rom/Com, 105 min. Ben Attleck, Joey Lauren Adams, Jason Lee. Dir: Kevin Smith.	**Cosi**, Com, 4/4 NY, LA, 100 min. Toni Collette, Barry Otto, Ben Mendlesohn, Rachel Griffiths, Pamela Rabe. Dir Mark Joffe. **Temptress Moon**, 4/18, Dra, R, 115 min. Gong Li, Leslie Cheung. Dir: Chen Kaige. **Nightwatch**, 4/25, Dra/Thr. Nick Nolte, Ewan McGregor, Patricia Arquette, Josh Brolin. Dir. Ole Bornedal.	**Children of the Revolution**, 5/1, Com, 102 min. Judy Davis, Geoffrey Rush, Sam Neill. Dir: Peter Duncan. **The Psychic**, 5/9 LA, NY. **Shall We Dance** (Japan), 5/16, Com, PG. Koji Yasuyo, Tamiyo Kusakari. Dir: Masayuki Suo. **Brassed Off**, 5/23 NY LA, Dra, 107 min, Dolby SR, Flat. Pete Postlethwaite, Tara Fitzgerald, Ewan McGregor. Dir: Mark Herman.
New Line (310) 854-5811 (212) 649-4900	**Dangerous Ground**, 2/12, Act/Dra., R, 92 min, SR, SDDS, Flat. Elizabeth Hurley, Ice Cube, Ving Rhames. Dir: Darrell James Roodt	**Love Jones**, 3/14, Rom/Com, R. SR, SR-D, SDDS, Flat. Larenz Tate, Nia Long Dir: Theodore Witcher. **B.A.P.s**, 3/28, Com, R. SR, SR-D, SDDS, Flat. Halle Berry, Martin Landau, Ian Richardson, Natalie Desselle. Dir: Robert Townsend.		**Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery**, 5/2, Com. Mike Meyers, Elizabeth Hurley, Mimi Rogers, Michael York. Dir: Jay Roach **Boogie Nights**, 5/23 ltd, 6/13 wide, Com/Dra. Mark Wahlberg, Julianne Moore. Dir: Paul Thomas Anderson.
Paramount (213) 956-5000 (212) 373-7000	**Beautician and the Beast**, 2/7, Com, PG, 109 min. Fran Drescher, Timothy Dalton, Michael Learner, Phyllis Newman. Dir: Ken Kwapis	**Howard Stern's Private Parts**, 3/7, Com, R. Howard Stern, Robin Quivers, Fred Norris, Mary McCormack. Dir: Betty Thomas. **The Godfather** (1972 reissue), 3/21 ltd., Dra, R. Marlon Brando, James Caan, Al Pacino, Robert DuVall. Dir: Francis Ford Coppola.	**The Saint**, 4/4, Act/Adv, DTS. Val Kilmer, Elisabeth Shue, Rade Serbedzija. Dir: Phillip Noyce **'Til There Was You**, 4/11, Rom/Com. Jeanne Tripplehorn, Dylan McDermott, Sara Jessica Parker, Jennifer Aniston. Dir: Scott Winant.	**Breakdown**, 5/2, R. Kurt Russell, Kathleen Quinlin, J.T. Walsh. Dir: Jonathan Moslow. **Night Falls on Manhattan**, 5/16, Dra, R. Andy Garcia, Richard Dreyfuss, Lena Olin, Ian Holm Dir: Sidney Lumet.
TriStar (310) 280-8000 (212) 833-8500	**The Pest**, 2/7, Com, PG-13, 88 min., Dolby A, SR, SDDS, Flat. John Leguizamo, Jeffery Jones, Edoardo Ballerini. Dir: Paul Miller. **Donnie Brasco**, 2/28, Dra, R, 122min, Dolby A, SR, SDDS, Flat. Johnny Depp, Al Pacino, Anne Heche, Michael Madsen. Dir: Mike Newell			
20th Century Fox (310) 369-1000 (212) 556-2400	**The Empire Strikes Back Special Edition** (1980 reissue), 2/21, SF, PG, ~127 min. Dobly SR & SRD, SDDS, DTS, Anamorphic. Harrison Ford, Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher, Billy DeeWilliams. Dir. Irvin Kershner.	**Return of the Jedi Special Edition** (1983 reissue), 3/14, SF, PG, ~133 min, Dobly SR & SRD, SDDS, DTS, Anamorphic. Harrison Ford, Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher, Billy Dee Williams. Dir: Richard Marquand. **Turbo: A Power Rangers Adventure**, 3/26, Adv, PG, Dolby SR, Flat. Jason David Frank, Steve Cardenas, Catherine Sutherland Dir: David Winning	**Inventing the Abbots**, 4/4, Dra, R, ~120 min. Dolby SR, SDDS, Anamorphic. Liv Tyler, Joaquin Phoenix, Billy Crudup, Jennifer Connelly Dir: Pat O'Conner **Volcano**, 4/25, Act/Adv, PG13, Dolby SR, SRD, SDDS, DTS, Anamorphic. Tommy Lee Jones, Anne Heche, Gaby Hoffmann, Don Cheadle, John Corbett. Dir: Mick Jackson.	**Out to Sea**, 5/30, Com. Dolby SR, SDDS, Flat. Walter Matthau, Jack Lemmon, Brent Spiner, Dyan Cannon. Dir: Martha Coolidge
Universal (818) 777-1000 (212) 759-7500	**Dante's Peak**, 2/7, Act/Adv, PG-13, 108 min, Dolby SR, DTS. Pierce Brosnan, Linda Hamilton. Dir: Roger Donaldson	**Liar Liar**, 3/21, Com, Dolby SR, DTS. Jim Carrey, Maura Tierney, Cary Elwes, John Lovitz, Swoosie Kurtz, Jennifer Tilly. Dir: Tom Shadyac.	**That Old Feeling**, 4/4, Com, Dolby SR, DTS. Bette Midler, Dennis Farina, Danny Nucci Dir: Carl Reiner. **McHale's Navy**, Com, Dolby SR, DTS. Tom Arnold, David Alan Grier, Dean Stockwell, Tim Curry. Dir: Bryan Spicer	**The Lost World**, 5/23, Adv, Dolby SR, DTS Jeff Goldblum, Jullanne Moore, Vince Vaughn, Pete Postlthewaite, Arliss Howard, Richard Schiff, Peter Stormare, Vanessa Le Chester. Dir: Steven Spielberg.
Warner Bros. (818) 954-6000 (212) 484-8000	**Vegas Vacation**, 2/14, Com, PG, 91 min, DTS. Chevy Chase, Beverly D'Angelo, Randy Quaid Dir. Stephen Kessler **Rosewood** 2/21 wide, Dra, R, 142 min, DTS. Jon Voight, Ving Rhames, Michael Rooker, Ester Rolle. Dir: John Singleton.	**Selena** 3/21, Dra, PG, 131 min, DTS. Jennifer Lopez, Edward James Olmos, Beckey Lee Meza. Dir. Gregory Nava. **Cats Don't Dance**, 3/26, Ani, G, 69 min, DTS. Voices: Scott Bakula, Kathy Najimy, Ashley Peldon, Natalie Cole. Dir: Mark Dindal.	**Leo Tolstoy's Anna Karenina**, 4/4 ltd, Dra, PG13, 105 min, DTS. Sophie Marceau, Sean Bean, Mia Kirschner, Alfred Molina. Dir.: Bernard Rose. **Murder at 1600**, 4/11, Thr, R, 106 min, DTS. Wesley Snipes, Diane Lane, Daniel Benzali. Dir: Dwight H. Little. **Addicted to Love**, 4/18, Rom/Com. Meg Ryan, Matthew Brodenck. Dir: Griffin Dunne **Venice**, Dra, R, 112 min. Catherine McCormack. Dir: Marshall Herskovitz	**Father's Day**, 5/9. Com, DTS. Robin Williams, Billy Crystal, Natassja Kinski, Julia Louis-Dreyfuss. Dir: Ivan Reitman.

FEATURE CHART — MAY 1997

June	July	Forthcoming	
Air, 6/6, Act/Adv, R, Anamorphic. Nicolas e, John Malkovich, John Cusack, Steve cemi, Ving Rhames, Colm Meaney. Simon West. **cules** 6/27, Ani, Flat. Voices: James ods, Danny DeVito, Tate Donovan. Ron Clements, John Musker.	**George of the Jungle**, 7/18, Live Act. Brendan Fraser, Leslie Mann, Thomas Hayden Church. Dir: Sam Weisman. **Nothing to Lose**, Com. Martin Lawrence, Tim Robbins, John C. McGinley, Giancarlo Esposito, Kelly Preston. Dir: Steve Dedekerk	**Gone Fishin'**, 8/8, Com, PG. Joe Pesci, Danny Glover, Lynn Whitfield. Dir: Christopher Cain. **Deep Rising**, Act/Thr. Treat Williams. Dir: Stephen Sommers. **In Pursuit of Honor** (formerly G.I. Jane, Navy Cross), Act.. Demi Moore, Viggo Mortensen. Dir. Ridley Scott. **Rocket Man** (formerly Space Cadet), Harland Williams. **The Absentminded Professor** (aka Flubber), Com. Robin Williams. Dir: Les Mayfield. **An Alan Smithee Film** (working title), Com. Sylvester Stallone, Whoopie Goldberg, Jackie Chan. Dir: Arthur Hiller. **A Thousand Acres**. Dra. Jessica Lange, Michelle Pfeiffer, Jennifer Jason Leigh. Dir: Jocelyn Moorhouse. **Kundun**, Dra. Dir: Martin Scorsese. **Ishmael**, Dra. Dir: Jon Turteltaub. **The Little Mermaid** (reissue), Ani. Dirs. John Musker, Ron Clements. **Firelight**, Dra. Dir: William Nicholson. **Mr. Magoo**, Com. Leslie Nielsen. Dir. Stanley Tong	**Buena Vista** (818) 567-5000 (212) 593-8900
dy, 6/6, Com. Rene Russo, Robbie Coltr- Paul Reubens. Dir: Caroline Thompson.	**Men in Black**, 7/2, SF, Dolby A, SR, SDDS. Tommy Lee Jones, Will Smith, Linda Fiorentino, Rip Torn. Dir: Barry Sonnenfeld **Air Force One** (formerly AFO), 7/25, Act, SDDS. Harrison Ford, Gary Oldman, Glenn Close. Dir: Wolfgang Peterson.	**Excess Baggage**, Aug. Act/Adv, Dolby A, SR, SDDS. Alicia Silverstone, Benicio del Toro, Christopher Walken. Dir. Marco Brambilla **Gattaca** (formerly The Eighth Day), Fall, SF. Ethan Hawke, Uma Thurman, Jude Law. Dir: Andrew Niccol **The Replacement Killers**, Act Chow Yun-Fat, Mira Sorvino, Michael Rooker, Clifton Gonzales-Gonzales Dir: Antoine Fugua. **Das Boat** (1981 German reissue), Dra, R. Jurgen Prochnow, Herbert Gronemeyer. Dir: Wolfgang Petersen.	**Columbia** (310) 280-8000 (212) 833-8500
		Hoodlum(formerly Hoods), Sum, Dra, R, DTS. Laurence Fishburne, Tim Roth, Andy Garcia Dir: Bill Duke. **The End of Violence**, Sept, Dra. Gabriel Byrne. Dir: Wim Wenders. **Hurricane**, Dra, Fall. Brendan Sexton III. Dir: Morgan J. Freeman. **Tomorrow Never Dies** (formerly Bond 18), X-mas. Pierce Brosnan, Michelle Yeoh. **Red Corner**, X-mas, Dra Richard Gere Dir. Wolfgang Petersen. **Breakers**, Com. Gerard Depardieu, Anjelica Huston **The Fantasticks**, Mus/Com. Dir: Michael Ritchie. **Killer's Kiss**, Act/Thr. Linda Fiorentino. **Kiss Me Deadly**. Thr. Dir: Michael Mann. **The Man In The Iron Mask**, Adv. Leonardo DiCaprio, John Malkovich, Gabriel Byrne. Dir: Randall Wallace. **Sixteen Pleasures**. Dir: Michael Apted. **Supernova**, SF/Thr. Dir: Joe Nimziki. **To Brave Every Danger** , Dra **The Fortune Cookie**, Com, Bette Midler, Candice Bergen. Dir: John Amiel.	**MGM/UA** (310) 449-3000 (212) 708-0300
uth to Mouth (Spain), 6/6, Com, R, Dolby), Scope, 110 min. Javier Bardem, Maria ranco. Dir: Manuel Gomez Pereira. **eeze**, 6/13, Thr. Tyrone Burton, Eddie anda. Dir: Robert Patton-Spruill. **e Serenade**, 6/20. Miranda Otto. Shirley Barrett. **s of Angels**, 6/27, Dra, PG-13, 97 min., Dolby Polly Walker, Vincent Perez. Dir: Nick Hamm.	**The Wings of a Dove**, 7/11, Dra Helena Bonham Carter, Linus Roache, Terrance Stamp, Alison Elliott. Dir: Ian Softley. **B. Monkey**,7/18, Dra. Asia Argento, Jared Harris, Rupert Everett, Thandie Newton. Dir: Michael Radford. **Mimic**, 7/25, SF, Mira Sorvino, Josh Brolin, Jeremy Northam, Charles Dutton. Dir: Guillermo del Toro.	**Copland**, 8/1, Dra. Sylvester Stallone, Robert DeNiro. Dir: James Mangold. **Sonatine**, B/8 NY, LA, Dra. Dir/Star: Takeshi Kitano **Wide Awake**, 8/15, Dra, PG Dana Delany, Denis Leary. Dir: M Night Shyamalan. **She's DeLovely**, 8/22, Dra. Sean Penn, Robin Wright Dir. Nick Cassavetes. **An American Werewolf in Paris**, 8/29, Hor/Com. Julie Delpy. Dir. Anthony Waller. **Operation Condor** (Hong Kong), 9/26, Act/Adv. Dir/Star. Jackie Chan. **The House of Yes** , 10/10, Dra/Com. Parker Posey. Dir: Mark Waters. **Phantoms**, 10/24, Hor. Peter O'Toole, Joanna Going. **A Price Below Rubies**, Dra. Renee Zellweger. Dir. Boaz Yakin. **Full Tilt Boogie**, Doc. Dir. Sarah Kelly. **The Mighty**, Dra. Sharon Stone, Gena Rowlands. Dir: Peter Chelsom. **Welcome to Sarajevo** (formerly Sarajevo), Dra Woody Harrelson Dir. Michael Winterbottom. **Wishful Thinking**, Fall. Jennifer Beals.	**Miramax** (212) 941-3800 (213) 845-4200
	Money Talks, 7/18, Act/Com, R, Dolby SR, SR-D, SDDS, Anamorphic. Charlie Sheen, Chris Tucker, Heather Locklear, Paul Sorvino. Dir: Brett Ratner.	**Mortal Kombat II: Annihilation**, 8/1, Act. **Spawn**, 8/22, SF. Michael Jai White, John Leguizamo. Dir: Mark Dippe. **Trial and Error**, 8/29, Com, PG-13. Michael Richards, Jeff Daniels. Dir: Jonathan Lynn. **One Night** (formerly One Night Stand), 9/26, Dra. Flat. Wesley Snipes, Nastassija Kinski. Dir. Mike Figgis. **Most Wanted** (formerly America's Most Wanted), 10/3, Act/Com. Keenan Ivory Wayans. Dir: David Hogan. **Woo**, 11/7, Rom/Com. Jada Pinkett. Dir: Daisy Von Scherler Mayer. **Dark City**, 9/12, Thr. William Hurt. Dir: Alex Proyas. **Overnight Delivery** Jason Bloom. **Wag the Dog**, '98. Dustin Hoffman, Robert DeNiro. Dir. Barry Levinson. **Lost in Space**, '98 William Hurt, Gary Oldman. Dir: Stephen Hopkins. **Pleasantville**, Com. Tobey Maguire. Dir: Gary Ross **The Wedding Singer**, Com. Adam Sandler. Dir: Frank Coraci. **American History X** Edward Norton.	**New Line** (310) 854-5811 (212) 649-4900
nd Out, 6/13, Com. Kevin Kline, Tom eck, Joan Cusack, Debbie Reynolds. Frank Oz.	**Titanic**, 7/2, Rom/Adv. Leonardo DiCaprio, Kate Winslet, Bill Paxton, Billy Zane. Dir: James Cameron. **Face Off**, 7/2, Act. John Travolta, Nicolas Cage, Joan Allen, Gina Gershon. Dir. John Woo.	**The Truman Show**, 8/8, Dra. Jim Carrey, Dennis Hopper. Dir Peter Weir **Event Horizon**, 8/22. Laurence Fishburne, Kathleen Quinlin. Dir: Paul Anderson. **A Smile Like Yours**, Rom/Com, Sum, R. Greg Kinnear, Lauren Holly. Dir: Keith Samples. **The Magic Hour** (tentative title), 9/19. Paul Newman, Susan Sarandon. Dir: Robert Benton.**The Flood**, Fall, Act. Christian Slater, Morgan Freeman. Dir: Mikael Salomon. **Going West in America**, Fall, Thr. Dennis Quaid, Danny Glover Dir: Jeb Stuart . **Kiss the Girls**, Fall, Sus. Morgan Freeman, Ashley Judd Dir Gary Fleder **Fairy Tale: A True Story** (formerly Illumination), Dra. Peter O'Toole. Dir. Charles Sturridge. **Prince Valiant**, Act/Adv. Stephen Moyer. Dir. Anthony Hickox. **The Rainmaker**, Dra. Matt Damon, Claire Danes. Dir: Francis Ford Coppola. **The Real Blonde**. Matthew Modine. Dir: Tom DiCillo. **Kiss Me Guido**, Com. Dir: Tony Vitale.	**Paramount** (213) 956-5000 (212) 373-7000
Best Friend's Wedding, 6/27, Rom/Com, lby A, SR, SDDS. Julia Roberts, Dermot lroney, Cameron Diaz. Dir: P.J. Hogan.		**Desperate Measures**. 8/8, Act. Michael Keaton, Andy Garcia. Dir: Barbet Schroeder. **Seven Years in Tibet**, 10/10, Dra. Brad Pitt, David Thewlis, B.D Wong. Dir: Jean-Jacques Annaud **Starship Troopers**, 11/7, SF, SDDS. Neil Patrick Harris, Denise Richards. Dir: Paul Verhoeven. **Apt Pupil**, Dra. Ian McKellen, Brad Rentro, Kevin Pollack, Joe Morton. Dir Bryan Singer **Kilronen**, Thr, SDDS. Jonathan Schaech, Jessica Lange, Gwyneth Paltrow. Dir: Jonathan Darby **Old Friends**, Dra. Jack Nicholson, Helen Hunt, Greg Kinnear. Dir: James Brooks. **Peter Pan**, Adv Dir: John Hughes. **Stinkers**, Com. B.D. Wong, Bronson Pinchot Dir: Barnet Kellman. **Killing Time**, Thr. Kendra Torgan, Craig, Fairbrass. Dir: Bharat Nalun **The Mark of Zorro**, Act/Adv. Antonio Banderas, Anthony Hopkins, Catherine Jones. Dir: Martin Campbell.	**TriStar** (310) 280-8000 (212) 833-8500
ed II: Cruise Control, 6/6, Act, Dolby SR, DS, Anamorphic. Sandra Bullock, Jason nc, Willem Dafoe, Glenn Plummer. Jan De Bont..	**Alien Resurrection**, 7/25, SF. Sigourney Weaver, Winona Ryder, Ron Perlman. Dir: Jean-Pierre Jeunet.	**Picture Perfect**, 8/8, Rom/Com, ~110 min. Jennifer Aniston, Kevin Bacon, Olympia Dukakis, Jay Mohr, Illeana Douglas. Dir: Glenn Gordon Caron. **Firestorm**. Dct. Act./Adv. Howie Long, Suzy Amis, Scott Glenn. Dir : Dean Semler. **Anastasia**, 11/21, Ani. Voices: Meg Ryan, Kelsey Grammer. Dirs: Don Bluth, Gary Goldman. **Untitled Bulworth**, Nov, Dra Halle Berry, Paul Sorvino. Dir/Star: Warren Beatty **Home Alone 3**, Dec, Com. Alex D.Linz, Olek Krupa. Dir: Raja Gosnell. **Bookworm**, Fall, Act./Thr. Anthony Hopkins, Alec Baldwin. Dir: Lee Tamahori. **Doctor Dolittle**, Com. Eddie Murphy. Dir: Betty Thomas. **Great Expectations**, Fall, Dra. Robert De Niro, Gwyneth Paltrow. Dir. Alfonso Cuaron. **A Life Less Ordinary**, Dra. Cameron Diaz, Holly Hunter. Dir: Danny Boyle. **Soul Food**, Dra. Vanessa Williams, Mehki Phifer. Dir: George Tillman, Jr. **Hope Floats**, Com. Sandra Bullock. Dir Forrest Whitaker.	**20th Century Fox** (310) 369-1000 (212) 556-2400
		Reach the Rock, Sum, Dra/Com. Alessandro Nivola, William Sadler, Bruce Norris Dir: Bill Ryan. **Leave it to Beaver**, 8/1, Com. Janine Turner, Christopher McDonald Dir: Andy Cadiff. **Kull the Conqueror**, 8/29, Adv Kevin Sorbo, Tia Carrere. Dir: John Nicolella. **The Fairy Godmother** (formerly A Simple Wish), Sum, Com. Mara Wilson, Martin Short, Kathleen Turner, Robert Pastorelli. Dir. Michael Ritchie. **Untitled Jackal Project**, Sum, Thr. Bruce Willis, Richard Gere, Sidney Potter. Dir: Michael Canton-Jones. **Virus**, Fall, Thr. Jamie Lee Curtis, Donald Sutherland. Dir: John Bruno. **For Richer For Poorer**, Rom/Com Tim Allen. Dir. Bryan Spicer. **Primary Colors**, Dra. John Travolta, Billy Bob Thorton. Dir: Mike Nichols. **Meet Joe Black**, Rom/Dra. Brad Pitt. Dir: Martin Brest. **Simple Simon**, Thr. Bruce Willis. Dir. Harold Becker	**Universal** (818) 777-1000 (212) 759-7500
man and Robin, 6/20, Act/Adv, DTS. orge Clooney, Chris O'Donnell, Alicia erstone, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Uma rman. Dir. Joel Schumacher.	**Edwards and Hunt**, 7/2, Com, DTS. Chris Farley, Matthew Perry. Dir: Christopher Guest. **Wild America**, 7/1, Adv, PG, DTS. Jonathan Taylor Thomas. Dir: Bill Dear. **Free Willy 3**, 7/2, Fam/Adv, DTS. Jason James Richter. Dir: Sam Pillsbury **Contact**, 7/11, Thr, DTS. Jodie Foster, Matthew McConaughey, John Hurt. Dir: Robert Zemeckis. **Conspiracy Theory**, 7/25, Thr, DTS. Mel Gibson, Julia Roberts. Dir: Richard Donner.	**The Devil's Advocate**, 8/1. Al Pacino, Keanu Reeves. Dir: Taylor Hackford **Steel**, 8/1, Act/Adv, 105 min. Shaquille O'Neal. Dir: Kenneth Johnson. **187**, 8/1, Dra, R. Samuel L. Jackson Dir: Kevin Reynolds. **Home Fries**, 9/1, Com. Drew Barrymore, Gary Busey. Dir: Dean Parisot. **Mad City**, 9/1, Dra John Travolta, Dustin Hoffman. Dir: Constantin Costa-Gravas. **L.A. Confidential**, 9/12, Dra, R, 138 min. Kevin Spacey, Kim Basinger Dir: Curtis Hanson. **Fire Down Below**, 10/1, Act. Steven Segal. **Incognito**, 10/1, Thr, Jason Patric. Dir: John Badham. **Pre**,10/1, Dra. Billy Crudup, Donald Sutherland. Dir: Robert Towne. **Fallen**, Nov, Dra. Denzel Washington, John Goodman. **Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil, Dec** Dir: Clint Eastwood. **The Postman**, SF Dir/Star. Kevin Costner **Watch That Man** Bill Murray. Dir: Jon Amiel. **Eyes Wide Shut**. Tom Cruise, Nicole Kidman. Dir: Stanley Kubrick.	**Warner Bros.** (818) 954-6000 (212) 484-8000

BOXOFFICE Independent Feature Chart MAY 1997

APRIL

CFP
212-995-9662

Hollow Reed, Dra, 106 min. Martin Donovan, Ian Hart. Dir: Angela Pope. 4/18

Castle Hill
212-888-0080

Sicario *(Venezuela)*, Dra, 105 min. Gledys Ibarra, Pedro Lander. Dir: Jose Novoa.

Fine Line
212-649-4800

Pink Flamingos, *(1972 reissue)*, NC-17. Dir: John Waters. 4/11
The Quiet Room, Dra, PG, 93 min. Chloe Ferguson, Celine O'Leary. Dir: Rolf de Heer. 4/18 exp.
Roseanna's Grave, Com, PG-13, 99 min. Jean Reno, Mercedes Ruehl. Dir: Paul Weiland. 4/18
All Over Me, Dra, R, 90 min. Alison Folland, Tara Subkoff. Dir: Alex Sichel. 4/25

First Look
310-855-1199

A Brother's Kiss, Dra, Nick Chinlund, Michael Raynor. Dir: Seth Zvi Rosenfeld.
This is the Sea, Rom/Dra. Richard Harris. Dir: Mary McGuckian.

Fox Searchlight
310-369-4402

Love and Other Catastrophes *(Australia)*, Com, 79 min. Frances O'Connor, Alice Garner. Dir: Emma Kate Croghan. 4/4 LA
Paradise Road, Dra, 110 min. Glenn Close, Frances McDormand. Dir: Bruce Beresford. 4/11 NY, LA, 4/25 exp

Goldwyn
310-282-0550

Kissed, Dra, 80 min. Molly Parker, Peter Outerbridge. Dir: Lynne Stopkewich. 4/11

Gramercy
310-777-1960

Keys to Tulsa, Thr. Eric Stoltz. Dir: Leslie Grief. 4/11 ltd

Legacy
213-467-3700

Shiloh. Michael Moriarty. Dir: Dale Rosenbloom. 4/11
Cadillac Ranch, Dra, R, 103 min. Suzy Amis, Christopher Lloyd. Dir: Lisa Gottlieb. 4/4 ltd

Leisure Time Features
212-267-4501

Diary of a Seducer *(France)*, Com, 95 min. Chiara Mastroianni. Dir: Daniele Dubroux.

Live
818-778-3174

The Winner, Thr. Rebecca de Mornay, Vincent D'Onofrio. Dir: Alex Cox.

Milestone Film & Video
212-865-7449

Woman in the Dunes *(Japan, 1964 reissue)*, 72 min. Dir: Hiroshi Teshigahara. 4/11

New Yorker Films
212-247-6110

A Mongolian Tale *(China)*, Dra, 106 min. Dir: Xie Fei. 4/4
Flamenco, Doc, 100 min. Dir: Carlos Saura. 4/25

Northern Arts
413-268-9301

Schizopolis, Com, 99 min. Steven Soderbergh, Betsy Brantley. Dir: Steven Soderbergh. 4/11

October
212-539-4000

Traveller, Dra, R, 100 min. Bill Paxton, Mark Wahlberg, Julianna Marguilies. Dir: Jack Green.

Orion Pictures
310-282-0550

Eight Heads in a Duffle Bag, Com/Dra, R. Joe Pesci, Carol Kane. Dir: Tom Schulman. 4/18

Phaedra Cinema
310-478-3308

The Next Step, Dra, 90 min. Rick Negron. Dir: Christian Faber

Rhino Films
310-474-4778

Plump Fiction, Com, 85 min. Julie Brown, Sandra Bernhard. Dir: Bob Koherr.

Sony Classics
212-833-8851

A Chef in Love *(Repulic of Georgia)*, Dra, 95 min. Pierre Richard. Dir: Nana Djordjadze. 4/25

Theafilm
213-368-1778

A Chorus of Disapproval *(1989 UK reissue)*, Com. Jeremy Irons, Anthony Hopkins. Dir: Michael Wimer.

Trimark
310-314-3040

Nothing Personal, Dra, R. John Lynch. Dir: Thaddeus O'Sullivan.
Ripe, Dra. Dir: Mo Ogrodnik.

Triumph
310-280-8059

Bliss, Rom/Dra, NC-17. Terence Stamp, Craig Sheffer, Sheryl Lee. Dir: Lance Young. 4/4
The Assignment *(formerly Jackal)*. Act. Aidan Quinn, Ben Kingsley, Donald Sutherland. Dir: Christian Duguay. 4/25

Zeitgeist
212-274-1989

Irma Vep *(France)*, Com, NR, 98 min. Maggie Cheung. Dir: Olivier Assayas.

MAY

Artistic License
212-265-9119

Color of a Brisk and Leaping Day, Dra. Dir: Chrisopher Munch. 5/2

Artificial Eye
212-255-1922

Happiness *(France)*, Com, 102 min. Michel Serrault. Dir: Etienne Chatiliez. 5/16 NY

Cinema Village Features
212-431-5119

Fetishes, Doc, 82 min. Dir: Nick Broomfield. 5/9

Fine Line

nowhere, Dra, R, 88 min. James Duval. Dir: Gregg Araki. 5/9
Gummo., Dra. Chloe Sevigny. Dir: Harmony Korine. 5/16
Love! Valor! Compassion! Dra, 115 min. Jason Alexander, John Glover. Dir: Joe Mantello. 5/16
Letters of Love *(Japan, formerly Love Letters)*, Dra, 116 min. Dir: Shunji Iwai. 5/2 NY, 5/23 LA

First Run
212-243-0600

Brothers in Trouble, Dra, 102 min. Dir: Udayan Prasad. 5/14

Fox Searchlight

Intimate Relations, Dra, 102 min. Dir: Philip Goodhew. 5/9 ltd.
The Van, Com. Colm Meaney. Dir: Stephen Frears. 5/23

Goldwyn

Paperback Romance *(formerly Lucky Break)*, Rom/Com. Anthony LaPaglia. Dir: Ben Lewin.
Rough Magic, Rom/Adv, 104 min. Bridget Fonda, Russell Crowe. Dir: Clare Peploe.

Gramercy

Commandments, Dra. Courteney Cox, Aidan Quinn, Anthony LaPaglia. Dir: Daniel Taplitz. 5/2
Twin Town, Com/Thr. Rhys Ifans, Llyr Evans. Dir: Kevin Allen

Legacy

Underworld, Thr. Denis Leary, Joe Mantegna. Dir: Roger Christian. 5/9

New Yorker Films

La Promesse, Dra, NR, 93 min. Dirs: Jean-Pierre Dardenne, Luc Dardenne. 5/16 NY

Shadow Distribution
207-872-5111

Mondo *(French)*, Dra, 87 min. Philippe Petit. Dir: Tony Gatliff 5/23

Sony Classics

Broken English, Dra, 91 min. Rade Serbedzija, Sashka Vujcic Dir: Gregor Nicholas. 5/2

Strand
310-395-5002

Timothy Leary's Dead, Doc, 80 min. Dir: Paul Davids.
Late Bloomers, Rom/Dra, 104 min. Dir: Julia and Gretchen Dyer. 5/2

Trimark

Sprung, Com, Tisha Campbell. Dir/Star: Rusty Cundieff. 5/2

Triumph

Truth or Consequences, Sus, Vincent Gallo, Kim Dickens. Dir/Star: Kiefer Sutherland. 5/2
Masterminds *(formerly Smart Alec)*, Act/Com. Patrick Stewart. Dir: Roger Christian. 5/30

JUNE

CFP

The Pillow Book, Dra, 126 min. Vivian Wu, Ewan McGregor. Dir: Peter Greenaway. 6/6

Cinema Village Features

Mondo Plympton, Ani. Dir: Bill Plympton.

First Look

Different For Girls, Rom/Com, 97 min. Rupert Graves, Steven Mackintosh. Dir: Richard Spence.

Kino Intl.
212-629-6880

M *(1931 German re-issue)*, Dra, 99 min. Dir: Fritz Lang. 6/27

Leisure Time Features

Twisted, Dra, 100 min. Dir: Seth Michael Donsky.

New Yorker Films

Gabbeh, Dra, 75 min. Abbas Sayahi, Hossein Moharami. Dir: Mohsen Makhmalbas. 6/27

Northern Arts

Midaq Alley (Mexico), Dra, 140 min. Salma Hayek, Ernesto Gomez. Dir: Jorge Fons.

Orion Classics
310-282-0550

Ulee's Gold, Dra, R, 113 min. Peter Fonda, Patricia Richardson. Dir: Victor Nunez.

Roxie Releasing
415-431-3611

The Last Time I Commited Suicide, Dra, 92 min. Thomas Jane, Keanu Reeves. Dir: Stephen Kay

Sony Classics

Dream With the Fishes, Dra, R, 96 min. David Arquette. Dir: Finn Taylor. 6/20
When the Cat's Away *(France)*, Dra/Com, R, 95 min. Garance Clavel. Dir: Cedric Kapisch. 6/20

Strand

The Tit and the Moon, Com, 92 min. Dir: Bigas Lunas.

BOXOFFICE Independent Feature Chart MAY 1997

JULY

Artistic License
La Renconter *(France)*, Dra, 80 min. Dir: Alain Cavalier.

Gramercy
Twin Town, Com/Thr. Rhys Ifans, Llyr Evans. Dir: Kevin Allen.

CFP
Guantanamera, Com, NR, 124 min. Dirs: Thomas Gutierrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabio Rey. 7/2

Fox Searchlight
Star Maps, Dra, 90 min. Douglas Spain. Dir: Miguel Arteta. 7/11

Strand
Contempt *(1963 reissue)*, Dra/Com, 103 min. Brigitte Bardot. Dir: Jean-Luc Godard.

Trimark
Box of Moonlight, 107 min. John Turturro. Dir: Tom DiCillo. 7/25

AUGUST

Cinema Parallel
Talking To Strangers (reissue). 8/2

Fox Searchlight
The Full Monte, Com, 90 min. Robert Carlyle. Dir: Peter Cattaneo. 8/15

Goldwyn
Napolean, Ani, G, 82 min. Voices: Adam Wylie, Bronson Pinchot. Dir: Mario Andreacchio.

Gramercy
How To Be a Player, Com. Bill Belamy. Dir: Lionel Martin. 8/15
Going All the Way, Dra. Jeremy Davies. Dir: Mark Pellington.

Sony Classics
Fast, Cheap & Out of Control, Doc, 79 min. Dir: Errol Morris.

Strand
Nights of Cabiria *(1957 Italian reissue)*, Dra, 110 min. Giulietta Masina. Dir: Federico Fellini.

Triumph
Warrior of Waverly Street, SF. Dir: Manny Coto. 8/8

FORTHCOMING

Arrow
212-258-2200
Breathing Room, Rom/Com, 90 min. Dir: John Sherman. 11/8
Ponette *(France)*, Dra. Victoire Thivisol. Dir: Jacques Doillon.

Cabin Fever
203-622-3449
The Elevator, Com. Martin Sheen.
The Secret Agent Club, Act.

CFP
Bandwagon, Com/Mus, NR, 103 min. Kevin Corrigna, Lee Holmes. Dir: John Schultz. Sept

Cinema Parallel
To Have (Or Not), Dra, NR, 93 min. Sandrine Kibberlane. Dir. Laetitia Masson. Fall

Cinema Village Features
Cartoon Noir, Ani. Fall

Dove
310-786-1600
Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, Com/SF, 92 min. Douglas Adams. Dir: Neil Davies.

Dreamworks SKG
818-733-7000
El Dorado: City of Gold, Ani. Dir: Will Finn.
Mousehunt, Com/Ani. Nathan Lane. Dir: Gore Verbinski.
The Peacemaker, Act/Adv. George Clooney, Nicole Kidman. Dir: Mimi Leder. Fall.
The Prince of Egypt, Ani. Dirs: Simon Wells, Steve Hicker and Brenda Chapman. Fall '98
Amistad, (formerly Mutiny) Dra, Matthew McConaughey, Anthony Hopkins. Dir: Steven Spielberg.
Saving Private Ryan, Dra. Tom Hanks. Dir: Steven Spielberg.
Blue Vision, Dir: Neil Jordan.
Deep Impact. Dir: Mimi Leder
Ants, Ani. Voice: Woody Allen.
Paulie: A Parrot's Tale. Dir: John Roberts.

Filmopolis
310-914-1776
In a Strange City. Winston Chao, Kuei-mai Yang. Dir: Chi Yin.

Fine Line
Didier *(France)*. Alain Chabat. Dir: Alain Chabat.
Head Above Water, Dra/Com, PG-13, 92 min. Harvey Keitel, Cameron Diaz. Dir: Jim Wilson.
The Tears of Julian Po. Christian Slater. Dir: Alan Wade.
Girl Talk, Dra/Com. Troy Beyer, Randi Ingerman. Dir: Troy Beyer.
Winter Guest, Dra. Emma Thompson, Phylidda Law. Dir: Alan Rickman. Fall

First Look
Slaves to the Underground, Dra, 92 min. Marisa Ryan, Jason Bortz. Dir: Kristine Peterson. Sum
Mrs. Dalloway, Dra. Vanessa Redgrave. Dir: Marleen Gorris.
Alive and Kicking (aka Indian Summer). Dir: Nancy Meckler.
The Other Side of Sunday (Norway), Dra. Bjorn Sundquist. Dir: Berit Nesheim.

First Run
Hamsun. Max Von Sydow. Dir: Jan Troell
Six O'Clock News. Dir: Ross McElwee.
Project Grizzly. Dir: Peter Lynch.
Forgotten Silver. Mock Doc. Dirs: Peter Jackson, Costa Botes.

Fox Searchlight
Cousin Bette, Dra. Jessica Lange. Dir: Des McAnuff. Sept
Ice Storm, Dra. Kevin Kline, Joan Allen, Sigourney Weaver, Christina Ricci. Dir: Ang Lee. Oct
Oscar & Lucinda. Ralph Fiennes. Dir: Gillian Armstrong. Nov
Hard Men *(UK)*, Dra. Vincent Regan. Dir: J. K. Amalou.
Polish Wedding. Claire Danes, Gabriel Byrne, Lena Olin. Dir: Theresa Connelly.

Goldwyn
The Big Red. Jonathan Schaech, Rod Taylor. Dir: Stephan Elliott. Oct
I Love You... Don't Touch Me, Com, 86 min. Marla Schaffel. Dir: Julie Davis.

Gramercy
The Matchmaker, Com. Jeanene Garafalo. Dir: Mark Joffe. Sept
Bean, Com. Rowan Atkinson. Oct
Body Count, Act. Ving Rhames, Forest Whitaker, David Caruso. Dir: Robert Patton Spruill. Nov
The Big Lebowski. Jeff Bridges, John Goodman, Steve Buscemi. Dirs: Joel and Ethan Coen. Nov

Kit Parker
800-538-5838
Coffy *(1973 reissue)*, Dra, R, 91 min. Pam Grier. Dir: Jack Hill.

Live
No Way Home, Dra. Tim Roth. Dir: Buddy Gioviazzo. Sept
Wishmaster, Hor. Dir: Robert Kurtzman. Sept
Critical Care, Dra/Thr. James Spader, Albert Brooks. Dir: Sydney Lumet. Oct
Boys Night Out, Thr. Christopher Walken, Sean Patrick Flannery. Dir: Peter O'Fallow. Nov

Movieworld Ent.
510-244-5590
The Killing Kind, Dra. Kirk Harris.
The Lost Woman. Jennifer Rubin.

New Yorker Films
Forever Mozart, Dra, NR, 84 min. Dir: Jean-Luc Godard. Sum
Beaumarchais *(France)*, Com, 100 min. Fabrice Luchini. Dir: Edouardo Molinaro. Fall
Deep Crimson, Dra, NR, 114 min. Dir: Arturo Ripstein. Oct.

Northern Arts
Hearts and Minds, Thr, R, 105 min. Danny Keogh, Patrick Shai. Dir: Ralph Ziman.

October
Kicked in the Head. Linda Fiorentino, Michael Rappaport, Lili Taylor. Dir: Matthew Harrison
Career Girls, Dra. Katrin Cartlidge, Lynda Steadman. Dir: Mike Lee.

Orion Classics
This World, Then the Fireworks, Dra. Billy Zane, Gina Gershon. Dir: Michael Oblowitz. Fall
Storefront Hitchcock, Doc. Dir: Jonathan Demme.

Orion Pictures
Gang Related, Dra, R. Tupac Shakur, Jim Belushi. Dir: Jim Kous. 9/10
The Locusts, Dra. Kate Capshaw, Ashley Judd. Dir: John Patrick Kelley. Sept
Independence, Dra. Dean Cain, Drew Barrymore. Dir: Tamra Davis. Fall
Music From Another Room, Com. Brenda Blethyn, Jennifer Tilly. Dir: Charles Peters
Stella Does Tricks. Kelly Macdonald. Dir: Coky Giedroy

Rhino Films
Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas, Dra. Johnny Depp. Dir: Alex Cox.

Seventh Art Releasing
213-845-1455
Things I Never Told You, Rom/Com. Lili Taylor, Andrew McCarthy. Dir: Isabel Coixet.
The Long Way Home, Doc. Dir: Mark Jonathan Harris.

Shadow Distribution
La Petite Apocalypse *(French)*, Com/Dra, 110 min. Pierre Arditi. Dir: Costa-Gavras.

Sony Classics
The Myth of Fingerprints, Dra. Noah Wyle, Julianne Moore, Roy Schneider. Dir: B. Freundlich. Sept
Call Me Victor *(France)*, Com, PG, 100 min. Jeanne Moreau. Dir: Guy Jacques.

Strand
La Sentinelle.*(France)*, Thr, 144 min. Emmanuel Salinger. Dir: Arnaud Desplechin. Sum
Self-Made Hero (France), Dra. Matthieu Kassovitz. Dir: Jacques Audiard. Fall
Full Speed, Dra, 85 min. Elodie Bouchez. Dir: Gael Murel. Aug

Tara Releasing
415-454-5838
Mushrooms *(Australia)*, Com, 93 min. Dir: Alan Madden.

Theafilm
Dirty Weekend. Lia Williams, Slyvia Syms.
James Dean: Race With Destiny. Casper Van Dien, Robert Mitchum. Dir: Mardi Rustam. Fall

Trimark
Chairman of the Board, Com. Carrot Top. Sept
Eve's Bayou, Dra. Samuel L. Jackson, Lynn Whitfield. Dir: Kasi Lemmons. 10/17
Prarie Fire. Natasha Henstridge.

Zeitgeist
Fire *(India)*, Dra. Shabani Azmi. Dir: Deepa Mehta. Sum
My Sex Life... or How I Got Into An Argument *(France)*, Com. Dir: Arnaud Desplechin. Sum
Conspirators of Pleasure *(Czech)*, Com. Dir: Jan Svankmajer. Fall
Anthem, Doc. Dir: Shainee Gabel and Kristin Hahn.

THE BOXOFFICE HOME RELEASE CHART

BOXOFFICE

MAY 1997

HOME VIDEO RELEASE DATE	TITLE	BOXOFFICE GROSS	SCREENS	THEATRICAL RELEASE	THEATRICAL/VIDEO DISTRIBUTOR
May 6	The Evening Star	$12,500,000	1,268	December 25	Paramount
May 6	Get On the Bus	$5,700,000	1,207	October 16	Columbia/Columbia TriStar
May 13	Ransom	$135,900,000+	2,768	November 8	Buena Vista/Touchstone
May 20	Daylight	$32,900,000	2,189	December 6	MCA/Universal
May 20	Stephen King's Thinner	$15,200,000	2,009	October 25	Paramount
May 20	Swingers	$4,500,000	164	October 18	Buena Vista/Miramax
June	Mars Attacks!	$37,800,000+	1,955	December 13	Warner Bros.
June	The Mirror Has Two Faces	$41,000,000	2,489	November 15	TriStar/Columbia TriStar
June	My Fellow Americans	$21,500,000	1,915	December 20	Warner Bros.
June	Shine	$30,800,000+	314	November 22	Fine Line/New Line
July 1	Fierce Creatures	$9,100,000	1,620	January 24	MCA/Universal
July 1	Meet Wally Sparks	$3,800,000	1,552	January 31	Trimark/Vidmark
July	Beavis & Butt-head Do America	$62,301,000+	2,417	December 20	Paramount
July	The Crucible	$7,300,000	344	November 27	Fox
July	Hamlet	$4,000,000+	92	December 25	Columbia/Columbia TriStar
July	In Love and War	$14,000,000	1,612	December 18	New Line

July	Meet Wally Sparks	$3,800,000	1,552	January 31	Trimark/Vidmark
July	Beavis & Butt-head Do America	$62,301,000+	2,417	December 20	Paramount
July	The Crucible	$7,300,000	344	November 27	Fox
July	Ghosts of Mississippi	$12,500,000	1,200	December 20	Columbia/Columbia TriStar
July	Hamlet	$4,000,000+	92	December 25	Columbia/Columbia TriStar
July	In Love and War	$14,000,000	1,612	December 18	New Line
July	Jerry Maguire	$140,600,000+	2,531	December 13	TriStar/Columbia TriStar
July	Jingle All the Way	$60,600,000	2,404	November 22	Fox
July	Michael	$89,500,000+	2,141	December 25	New Line
July	Mother	$18,600,000+	621	December 25	Paramount
July	One Fine Day	$44,800,000	1,975	December 20	Fox
July	The People vs. Larry Flynt	$19,400,000	1,233	December 25	Columbia/Columbia TriStar
July	Ridicule	$1,700,000	74	November 27	Buena Vista/Miramax
July	Scream	$85,600,000+	1,994	December 20	Buena Vista/Miramax
July	Star Trek: First Contact	$91,400,000	2,812	November 22	Paramount
July	Vegas Vacation	$32,900,000+	2,054	February 14	Warner Bros.
July	Zeus and Roxanne	$7,100,000	1,745	January 24	MGM/UA
August 3	Dangerous Ground	$5,100,000	808	February 12	New Line
August	Absolute Power	$45,600,000+	2,568	February 14	Columbia/Columbia TriStar
August	Beverly Hills Ninja	$29,200,000	2,112	January 17	TriStar/Columbia TriStar
August	Dante's Peak	$59,800,000+	2,657	February 7	MCA/Universal
August	Evita	$48,600,000+	1,045	December 25	Buena Vista/Hollywood
August	Fools Rush In	$26,800,000+	1,674	February 14	Columbia/Columbia TriStar
August	Jackie Chan's First Strike	$14,400,000	1,344	January 10	New Line
August	Metro	$30,100,000	2,005	January 17	Buena Vista/Touchstone
August	The Relic	$32,100,000	2,128	January 10	Paramount
August	That Darn Cat	$16,400,000+	1,891	February 14	Buena Vista/Walt Disney
August	Turbulence	$11,200,000	2,094	January 10	MGM/UA

Compiled by BOXOFFICE MAGAZINE. Numbers for ***Boxoffice Gross*** represent total domestic boxoffice grosses to the nearest $100,000; + signs indicate that films remain in theatrical release. Number of ***Screens*** indicates the maximum number of screens in widest, simultaneous release. Entries in the ***Theatrical/Video Distributor*** column list two names when the video releasing company is different from (or releases through a subsidiary different from) the theatrical distributor. Exact day-and-date specific entries for ***Home Video Release*** are confirmed; in all other cases, the month indicated for a release is forecast by the editors of BOXOFFICE. BOXOFFICE is not liable for errors or omissions in the chart.

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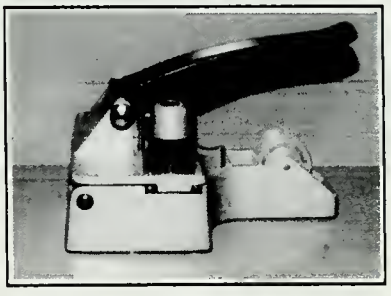
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The Big Picture

One of the less publicized of the annual events that swirl around each year's Oscar ceremonies is the nominees luncheon. It's a quaint custom—a bringing together of all the nominated actors, technicians and artisans from across any given year's Academy Awards spectrum—and one Oscar event that may even embody a deeper truth about the movies than the ultimate outcome of the Oscar race itself.

Take a good look at the photo printed on this page. Only a few of the faces it contains will be familiar to you. If you squint, you can spot Billy Bob Thornton, James Woods, Kristin Scott Thomas, a handful of recognizable others. "English Patient" co-producer Saul Zaentz is that bearded gent in the top row, eight spaces in from the left. Brenda Blethyn of "Secrets and Lies" is in the second full row from the bottom, eight spaces in from the right. To get to her, you just passed by Blethyn's director Mike Leigh and "Ghosts of Mississippi" supporting actor nominee James Woods—did you spot them? There are so many faces in this image that it's almost impossible to reproduce them in an easily viewable form. And many of the most famous 1997 nominees weren't even able to attend: Indie film fixtures (and "Fargo" creators) the Coen Brothers appear to have stayed in New York, no doubt kept at home by the complexities of getting their latest black comedy, "The Big Lebowski," up and running; "Jerry Maguire" star Tom Cruise was busy making his London-based Stanley Kubrick film "Eyes Wide Shut" opposite wife Nicole Kidman; and "Shine" star Geoffrey Rush, well, he still lives in Australia, which is a hell of a long way to come for a free lunch.



Getting eyestrain over looking for famous profiles in this shot is really beside the point. It's the very anonymity of the majority of these faces that speaks volumes about the nature of a medium which is so often discussed in terms only of "name" actors and directors, but which in fact remains the most complex of collaborative arts. A typical studio-produced movie employs literally hundreds, from the people who lay and tape down the electrical cables to the hair and make-up artists to accountants (who some believe may have the most creative job of all) to the guys who drive the catering trucks.

Not everyone's work shows up on the screen, and not everyone's function is illustrious enough to warrant Oscar recognition. But the teamwork required to pull off even an *un*successful movie is perhaps the most fundamental attribute of filmmaking, and though almost every film is inevitably run according to hierarchical management principles, each player in the behind-the-scenes drama performs an integral part. And the irony is, if everyone does his or her job correctly, most will remain invisible, since even the most fantastical movie creation seeks in some way to present an utterly believable and decipherable world.

So look at these faces. For some, like this year's "Cinderella," Billy Bob Thornton, a 1996 Oscar nomination is undoubtedly the beginning of bigger things. Others may have peaked right here within this image without knowing it. One or two of these faces may even be capping off careers that stretch back decades, and which may comprise anything from years of steady, self-effacing craftsmanship to long periods of struggle and hardship and waiting for a lucky break that finally came at last.

The whole world loves a horserace in one form or another, and the Oscars, through no fault of their own, are often depicted as the ultimate competition. Something like a billion people are watching each and every year, and millions of dollars are riding on the outcome—not just in the form of the ubiquitous office betting pool, but in terms of raised salaries and bigger budgets for the winners, and increased top-dollar earning longevity for the nominees. By the time the dust clears, few aside from the participants remember the nominees' lunch.

But still, there's a truth buried in this quaint, old-fashioned custom of bringing together an improvised mutual admiration society comprised of the women and men who, for this year, have ridden that Hollywood hobby horse to within sight of the big brass ring. The law of averages being what it is, most of the people standing here had to know that in all likelihood they would not take home a 1996 Oscar. But something in their eyes and smiles seems to say that's O.K., that it can be lived with as they head back to their normal professional lives. Excellence is, of course, to be cultivated and celebrated and afforded the highest accolades and most lasting honors. But there's still a lot to be said for the honorable nature of an honest day's work.—***Ray Greene***

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OPENING CREDITS

Thanks to the delightful but very busy period ushered in by the ShoWest convention, a bit of business we meant to share with you last month fell by the wayside. Those of you who've been reading us regularly since June of 1994 already know all about our website **BOXOFFICE ONLINE**. The very first and, to our minds, still the most complete website launched by any film trade publication, **BOXOFFICE ONLINE** was dramatically revamped and "relaunched" in March 1996. The "new and improved" **BOXOFFICE ONLINE** is an astonishing success story. In its first year of operations, it has already reached well over 500,000 discrete, individual users, logging many millions of "hits" and receiving multiple awards in the process.

The big surprise, though, came a few months back, when, right in the middle of the ShoWest editorial crunch, we were informed by our website design team at Marlin Software that **THE NET**, a leading, nationally distributed print magazine dedicated to trends on the internet, had analyzed thousands of websites in order to compile a list of **"THE TOP 100 WEBSITES OF ALL TIME."** Despite the proliferation of movie-themed info sites on the web, only four film-related websites made the final, 100 Website cut.

And guess who came in at number one.

We point this out to you partly to crow about something we're proud of, but also for a more important reason. Unlike many of the other awards **BOXOFFICE ONLINE** has grabbed in the past year, **THE NET**'s considered opinion of our editorial content demonstrated not only a shrewd and intelligent analysis of **BOXOFFICE ONLINE**'s underlying aesthetic, but an outsider's appreciation of a sampling of the kinds of materials we struggle to bring to our readership each and every month. We know from the letters and calls we receive from our readers how much **BOXOFFICE** means to you, and we're deeply grateful. It was nice to get some additional validation from a prestigious and impartial third party—one which nevertheless seems to have recognized some important points about the relationship between **BOXOFFICE** and its loyal audience.

So here, in full and verbatim, is what **THE NET** had to say in the review which accompanied its naming of **BOXOFFICE ONLINE** as the single best film content provider on the World Wide Web:

What's the most we can hope for from most film sites? A few tired reviews as impartial as a press kit, a couple of hackneyed 'star' profiles, maybe some sound bites or a few stills. Well, **BOXOFFICE**, the online version of a magazine that's been around for 75-plus years, goes well beyond those expectations. It delivers the densest collection of intelligent film writing on the Web, with readable interviews of film personalities and timely scoops on soon-to-be-released movies. Surfers who spend some time here will no doubt come away with a long list for the corner video rental.

"The site has three searchable indexes. This Just In is updated every Friday, and offers previews of upcoming films, as well as reviews of all current releases (and I do mean *all*). The Classic Review Archive includes reviews dating back to 1931. Finally, there's an archive for just the last year. The range is impressive; scrolling the list of 400 reviews in the '95-'96 archive can overwhelm even the most avid moviegoer.

"A trip to the **BOXOFFICE** Classic Archives is a study in film history. Reviewing 'Frankenstein' (1931), a correspondent wrote, 'It is one of those weird and gruesome stories that brings shrieks and ejaculations from the feminine fans.' In those days, **BOXOFFICE** included a 'Selling Seats' footnote to reviews, providing helpful promoting tips to theatre owners: 'Use large cut-outs of "The Monster" in the lobby. Arouse public curiosity by stating: "To have seen 'Frankenstein' is to wear a badge of courage."'

"An industry guide as much as a filmgoer's resource, **BOXOFFICE ONLINE** keeps the sensationalism to a minimum. Features run the gamut from actor profiles to regional updates of filmmaking internationally, from analyses of key directors to industry insider production notes. Also worth browsing are the extensive industry links to everything from popcorn popper distributors to the big Hollywood studios. It's a great read and a great resource for film buffs: intelligent, useful and on top of things, all at the same time."

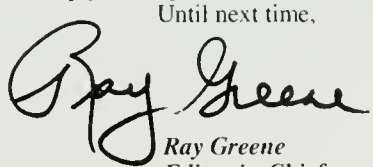
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>
> ***—from* "The 100 Best Websites of All Time," *The NET Magazine***

As you can imagine, we were pretty excited about a write-up like that. We disagree only with that reference to "the corner video rental," for an important reason: Though it might increase consumer traffic, we have intentionally organized the materials **BOXOFFICE ONLINE** contains without the slightest reference to video release dates. **BOXOFFICE ONLINE**, like **BOXOFFICE** itself, is dedicated to the art of the theatrically exhibited feature film, and nothing else.

One last piece of unfinished business has to do with the 1997 Academy Awards. As you may have figured out from our May '97 Oscar coverage, **BOXOFFICE** was once again backstage at the ceremony this year. You may also remember that we had a few choice words in these pages for the Academy's 1996 decision to deny **BOXOFFICE** Academy credentials for the first time in this magazine's long history. For the record, the Academy treated **BOXOFFICE** with great promptness and courtesy in 1997, and so we now consider the issue closed. We couldn't let that sought-for outcome pass, however, without remarking on the great outpouring of love and affection so many of you demonstrated by contacting the Academy on our behalf after last year's misunderstanding.

As we said in our June '96 Oscar editorial, we feel it's our job to be there because we are fortunate enough to act as exhibition's journalistic voice to the powers that be. Your actions on our behalf proved that point in the most powerful way possible. And not incidentally, touched all of us deeply in the process.

Until next time,



Ray Greene
Editor-in-Chief
BOXOFFICE

BOXOFFICE
JUNE, 1997 VOL. 133 NO. 6

UNQUOTE: *I aspire to be Lucy Ricardo's...pinky. She was so genius. So genius.*—**JULIA ROBERTS**

SPECIAL REPORT: CONCESSIONS '97/ NAC EXPO AND SNACK BAR UNIVERSITY

The National Association of Concessionaires' annual gala offers the perfect opportunity for our special report on the state of the concessions arts. PLUS: Our regular introductory show contents. SNACK BAR UNIVERSITY/NAC EXPO: June 2 - 5, 1997, Marriott Hotel, Anaheim, Calif. Call 312-236-3858.

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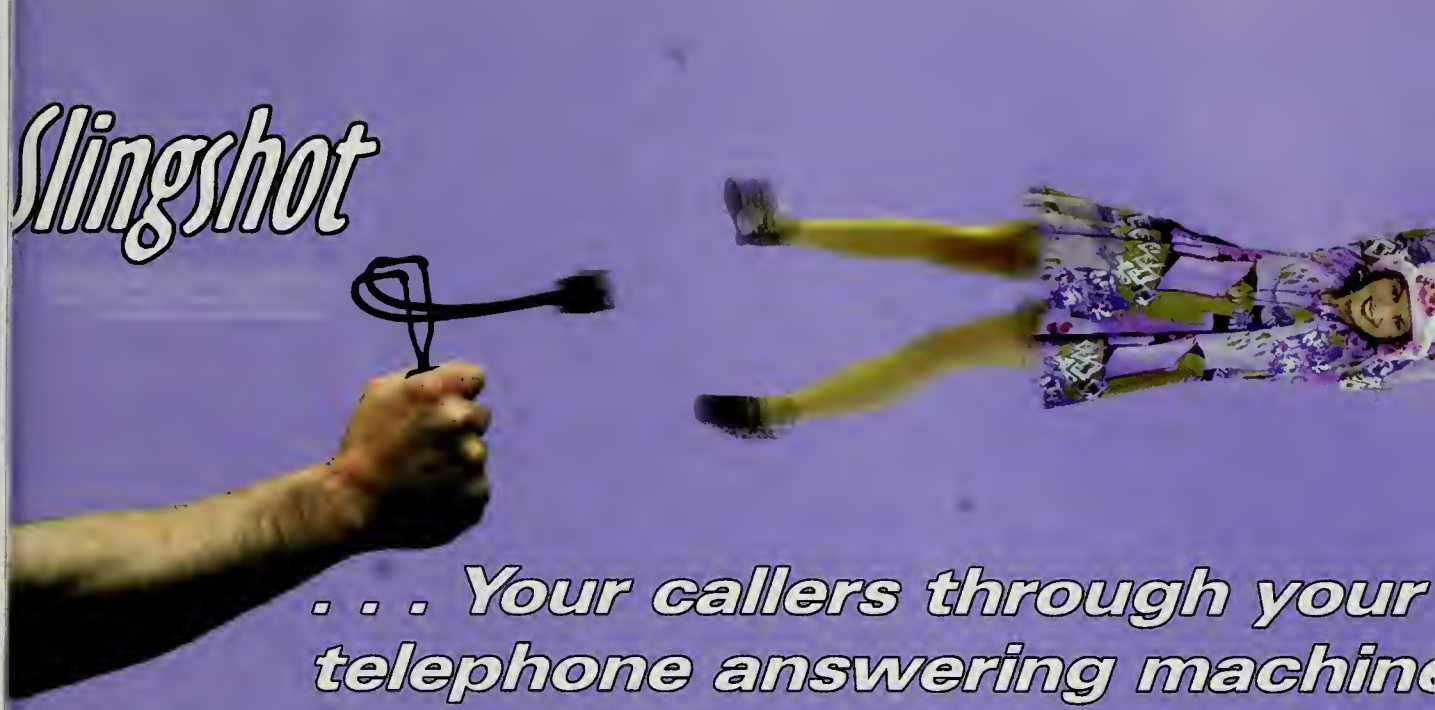
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HOLLYWOOD UPDATES

Walt Disney Studios and **Pixar Animation Studios** have agreed to jointly produce five movies over the next 10 years. The two companies first teamed on the smash hit "Toy Story," which brought computer animation to the next level with its strikingly detailed 3-D appearance. Disney and Pixar will be equal partners on the five pictures and related products, including home videos, merchandise and interactive media products. A feature called "Bugs" will be the first picture under the deal, due out Christmas 1998.

Al Pacino and his production company, **Chal Prods.**, have signed a first-look deal with **Castle Rock Entertainment.** Pacino starred in Castle Rock's "City Hall" and will star in the company's upcoming remake of "The Cincinnati Kid."

Oscar-winning writer **Michael Blake** ("Dances With Wolves") and his partner, writer/director/producer **William Morgan,** have announced the formation of a new independent film company, **Last Stand Pictures,** which will output three to five films a year. The first project for the company will be an adaptation of the Douglas C. Jones novel "Winding Stair," a courtroom thriller set on an Indian reservation in the 1890s. Blake will script the adaptation.

"Scream" scripter **Kevin Williamson** has pacted with **Miramax** to write two sequels to the satiric horror film (which has grossed more than $86 million to date) for Dimension, Miramax's horror genre banner. The film will reunite stars **Neve Campbell** and **Liev Schreiber** and director **Wes Craven.** Craven signed on as part of his new three-film deal with Miramax and Dimension. Williamson will also write a treatment for the next "Halloween" slasher flick, due for an October 1998 release.

Filmmaker **Spike Lee** ("Get On the Bus") has signed a three-year, first-look deal with **Columbia Pictures.** Under the deal, Lee will write, direct and produce films for the studio. He'll also be setting up an office on Columbia's Culver City, Calif. lot, in addition to his offices in New York, which house his production company, 40 Acres and a Mule Filmworks.

Scripter **Zak Penn,** who helped develop the story for the upcoming animated comedy "Ants" for **DreamWorks,** has signed an exclusive two-year, first-look deal with the studio. DreamWorks is currently developing his script "Fish Out of Water," another animated feature. Penn has also penned "Last Action Hero" and "P.C.U."

Disney-based Jerry Bruckheimer Films has made a deal with **Mike Sager,** a writer for GQ, The Washington Post, and Rolling Stone, among other publications. Bruckheimer and Disney's Touchstone recently optioned Sager's "The Martyrdom of Veronica Guerin," an article he wrote for GQ about an Irish journalist killed last summer. Under the deal, Bruckheimer will get first look at Sager's articles, and he'll suggest ideas to the scribe.

"The Adventures of Pinocchio" helmer **Steve Barron** has signed a two-year, first-look deal with **Jim Henson Productions** to develop family-oriented feature film and television projects. Barron's other credits include "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles" and "The Coneheads"; he also produced "While You Were Sleeping" and "The Specialist."

Under a new alliance between **Merchant Ivory Prods.** and **Capitol Films,** the team of writer-director James Ivory and producer Ismail Merchant will make films to be co-financed by the two companies. The first project under the deal will be the drama "A Soldier's Daughter Never Cries," which will star Nick Nolte (who starred in Merchant Ivory's "Jefferson in Paris"). Merchant Ivory's most recent production was "Surviving Picasso." Their alliance with the Walt Disney Co., forged in 1992, will end with the upcoming Bruce Beresford ("Paradise Road")-helmed "The Playmaker."

Phoenix Pictures has entered an agreement with **Pioneer LDC,** the entertainment division of the Japanese company Pioneer Electronic Corp., giving Pioneer exclusive distribution rights in Japan to nine of Phoenix's films over the next 15 years. Under a deal Phoenix made with Sony in 1995, Sony distributes all Phoenix films worldwide except for Japan. The first film under the Phoenix/Pioneer pact will be "Amy Foster," based on Joseph Conrad's classic romance novel, followed by Oliver Stone's Sean Penn starrer "U-Turn."

Actor/writer/director **Ben Stiller** ("The Cable Guy") has signed an exclusive two-year, first-look deal to write, direct and produce films for **Fox 2000.** Stiller made his directing debut with 1994's "Reality Bites," and he recently starred in the well-received "Flirting With Disaster." He's currently scripting for Warner Bros. an adaptation of the Budd Schulberg novel "What Makes Sammy Run," which he may also star in and direct.

Paramount Pictures and **Polygram Filmed Entertainment** are negotiating a three-year co-financing deal for 10 to 12 big-budget films. Under the terms of the agreement, whichever company originates a project will get domestic distribution rights, with the other taking foreign rights. Paramount and Polygram have teamed before on the Holly Hunter comedy "Home for the Holidays"; the recent horror thriller "The Relic"; and the upcoming Christian Slater starrer "The Flood," with Paramount distributing domestically and Polygram internationally.

DreamWorks will be opening an office in **New York** to handle East Coast distribution and marketing. The studio has signed a 10-year lease with Hiro Real Estate Co. for the 22nd floor of 650 Madison Ave. The new office will house a staff of 10.

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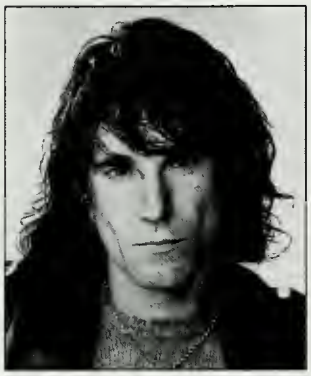
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HOLLYWOOD REPORT



DANIEL DAY-LEWIS

"Boxer" Heavyweight



TEA LEONI

Makes "Impact"



STANLEY TUCCI

"Ship" Shape

"THE BOXER" Daniel Day-Lewis ("The Crucible") will reunite with "My Left Foot" and "In the Name of the Father" helmer Jim Sheridan in this drama about a professional pugilist who returns to the ring after completing a 13-year jail sentence. He also seeks out his former lover, who has been raising her teenage son by herself. Emily Watson, hot off her Best Actress nomination for "Breaking the Waves," co-stars. (Universal)

"MUSIC FROM ANOTHER ROOM" Brenda Blethyn (recently nominated for Best Actress for "Secrets & Lies"), Jude Law ("Shopping"), Jennifer Tilly ("Bound"), Martha Plimpton ("I Shot Andy Warhol"), Jon Tenney ("Fools Rush In"), Jeremy Piven ("Grosse Pointe Blank") and Gretchen Mol star in this film about a man (Law) who's searching for his true love (Mol)—a woman whose birth he assisted when he was five years old. Charlie Peters ("Passed Away") directs and scripts. (Orion)

"THE ODD COUPLE 2" Walter Matthau and Jack Lemmon, who starred as Oscar Madison and Felix Unger in the 1968 bigscreen "Odd Couple," will reunite for a sequel in which Felix's son and Oscar's daughter get married. The soon-to-be in-laws must tolerate each other again as they drive to the desert, where the ceremony is to take place. Howard Deutch, who directed the duo in "Grumpy Old Men," will helm. Neil Simon, who wrote the original, will script. (Paramount)

"THE RED VIOLIN" Samuel L. Jackson ("A Time to Kill") and Greta Scacchi ("Jefferson in Paris") are set to star in this film that centers around a red violin, which is passed from person to person over the course of 400 years. Francois Girard ("Thirty-Two Short Films About Glenn Gould") will helm and co-wrote the script with Don McKellar. (New Line)

"OUT OF SIGHT" This adaptation of "Get Shorty" author Elmore Leonard's best-selling novel will star "Batman and Robin's" George Clooney, who will play a charming bank robber who escapes from prison and takes a female federal marshal hostage. Complications arise when the two fall in love. Steven Soderbergh ("sex, lies and videotape") will direct. (Universal)

"ARIGO" A journalist ("Grosse Pointe Blank's" John Cusack) is sent to Brazil to cover the trial of Arigo, a man being tried for witchcraft, in this drama, which is based on a true story. Alan Arkin, who co-starred in "Grosse Pointe Blank," will take a supporting role and will also direct. (Distribution is to be set)

"DEEP IMPACT" This sci-fi thriller, to be directed by Mimi Leder ("The Peacemaker"), executive produced by Steven Spielberg and scripted by Michael Tolkin ("The Player") and Bruce Joel Rubin, is inspired by the film "When Worlds Collide" and Arthur C. Clarke's book "The Hammer of God." Following the disaster film trend, it's about a comet on a deadly collision course with Earth. Endangered are Tea Leoni ("Flirting With Disaster") and Elijah Wood ("The Ice Storm"), along with the rest of the human race. (Paramount)

"PALMETTO" Woody Harrelson ("The People vs. Larry Flynt") and Elisabeth Shue ("The Saint") will star in this mystery crime thriller, which is based on James Hadley Chase's novel "Just Another Sucker," about a good guy who tries to go bad. Michael Rapaport ("Metro"), Angela Featherstone ("Con Air"), Chloe Sevigny ("Kids") and Tom Wright ("Gridlock'd") will co-star. Volker Schlondorff ("The Ogre") will helm. (Distribution is to be set)

"WRONGFULLY ACCUSED" Continuing his legacy of starring roles in action genre spoofs, Leslie Nielsen ("Spy Hard," "Naked Gun") will head the cast of another parody film, this time a send-up of "The Fugitive." Pat Proft, scripter of the "Naked Gun" and "Hot Shots!" films, will make his directorial debut on the comedy, in which Nielsen plays a man accused of murdering a wealthy porta-potty tycoon. Meanwhile, the real killer, a one-armed, one-legged man, escapes. (Warner)

"WISHMASTER" The stars of three '80s horror classics—Robert Englund (Freddy Krueger of "Nightmare on Elm Street"), Kane Hodder (Jason of "Friday the 13th") and Tony Todd (Candyman of "Candyman")—will appear in this Peter Atkins ("Hellraiser")-scripted film about an evil force called the Djinn, which grants people's secret desires in exchange for their souls. Robert Kurtzman ("The Demolitionist") will helm. (LIVE)

"SHIP OF FOOLS" Stanley Tucci ("Big Night") will write, direct and star in this comedy, which is about two actors in the 1930s who mistakenly stow away on a boat. The project will reunite fellow "Big Night" cast members Tony Shalhoub, Isabella Rossellini and Campbell Scott. Oliver Platt ("Funny Bones") also co-stars. (Fox Searchlight)

"GOOD WILL HUNTING" Robin Williams ("Father's Day") will play a therapist who tries to help a troubled young prodigy from the wrong side of the tracks live up to his potential. Matt Damon ("Courage Under Fire") and Ben Affleck ("Chasing Amy") will co-star, and also co-wrote the script. Minnie Driver ("Grosse Pointe Blank") has also signed on. Gus Van Sant ("To Die For") will helm. (Miramax)

"THE SPARROW" Antonio Banderas ("Evita") will play a Jesuit priest leading a secret mission to outer space in this film, which is based on Mary Dorias Russell's best-selling novel. Geoffrey Wright ("Romper Stomper") will direct. (Distribution is to be set)

"SPECIES 2" The space creature supermodel who gave new meaning to the phrase "tough love" in 1995's "Species" is back for more in this sequel. Natasha Henstridge returns as Sil, the human/alien hybrid obsessed with breeding—to the fatal misfortune of the mates she selects. Peter Medak ("Romeo Is Bleeding") helms. (MGM)

ET CETERA: The 18th film in UA's James Bond franchise has been titled **"Tomorrow Never Dies."** In the film, Bond (Pierce Brosnan) must stop a villainous media mogul (Jonathan Pryce) who manufactures news to change the outcomes of vital world events. Michelle Yeoh plays Bond's ally...Kristin Scott Thomas will star opposite Robert Redford in Buena Vista's **"The Horse Whisperer,"** in which a woman becomes entwined with a horse tamer after her daughter ("Home Alone 3's" Scarlett Johansson) is severely injured in a riding accident ...Parker Posey will take the title role in **"The Misadventures of Margaret,"** to which Janeane Garofalo was previously attached...Hugo Weaving ("The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert") will star in **"The Interview,"** a thriller in which a man plays cat-and-mouse with two interrogators.

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Response No. 172

JULIA ROBERTS on Fame, Fortune, Woody, Mel, and Making It to "MY BEST FRIEND'S WEDDING" *by Ray Greene*

The shriek of schoolgirl pleasure resounding through the open door of an editing room on the Sony Pictures lot is loud, full-throated, even musical. The popular (and often all too true) assumption is that filmmaking is an arduous process—as painful in its own way as giving birth is said to be, with perhaps even more opportunities for something critical to go wrong. But the work-in-progress threading its way through a flatbed editing machine in the next room must be different. From the sound of things, somebody watching those freshly-assembled images on that dimly-illuminated screen must be having the time of her life.

That someone is, of all people, Julia Roberts—superstar, accomplished actress, and national fetish object. After some jovial goodbyes and a few giddy compliments to the editing team, she hurries into the hall, that quicksilver smile playing across her lips, her moist eyes still creased with laughter. "Oh! Nice to meet you!" she says, her hand extending gracefully. "Would you mind if we did this in my car? There's a yarn store I want to get over to if it's still open! Give me a second, I just have to make the call."

In a blur of movement, Roberts disappears, her blonde, female assistant chasing at her heels like a well-trained housepet. A moment passes, just long enough to contemplate the earth-shattering news possibilities in the revelation that Julia Roberts is a closet...knitter! Almost immediately, she's back, looking crestfallen. "Wouldn't you know? They're closed. Oh well..." She brightens in an instant. "We'll just have to do it here, then."

"Here" ends up being a deserted dialogue editing room—the most comfortable private space available in what is, after all, a full-scale post-production facility, and therefore a place more amenable to work than it is to the prerequisites of a quiet chat. Roberts settles down onto the sofa amidst trim bins and editing tables filled with neatly labeled spools of what the pros call "elements"—bits of 35mm film and magnetic tape which are in the process of being assembled into a "first cut" of "My Best Friend's Wedding," Roberts' new summer comedy, and the subject of so much of the activity swirling around her.

She doesn't sit so much as splay—majestically, it's true—and she still has about her much of that quality which made America fall in love with her back in her "Steel Magnolias"/"Mystic Pizza" period. In life as on film, she perfectly embodies the awkward, Everygirl grace of the gangly duckling, newly emerged as a magnificent swan. Her trademark flowing tresses have been cut back into a more fashionable and "mature" shag, but to look at her, it's still hard to believe that the 21-year-old naif who took America by storm when "Pretty Woman" earned $178 million and became the top-grossing picture of 1990 is now all of 28. Time, as they say, flies.

She looks radiant and unchanged. The only detail indicative of the growth and the distance is her absolute mastery of the Art of the Interview. It's a skill nobody is born with, but Roberts has it down pat. She seems absolutely spontaneous and totally in control, all at the same time.

"I'm so proud of everybody in the movie," she gushes about "My Best Friend's Wedding." "Everybody worked so hard, and they were all so charming. [Supporting player] Rupert Everett is the funniest thing to ever hit the planet. Truly. I mean, so funny that there were scenes where we'd be doing stuff and I would be laughing so hard that you can't even understand what I'm saying! 'Cause I'm trying to get through the scene, but I'd just be peeing in my pants!

"I'm gonna take so much credit for this," she says, her voice gone suddenly wondering and little-girlish. "Even though—heh heh—there's no reason I should. I was actually teasing [director] P.J. [Hogan] today about all the ways in which I'm gonna take full and complete credit for the movie." She laughs, then turns mock-serious on a dime. "If it's funny. But if it sucks, it's all P.J."

You can tell by Roberts' contagious sense of accomplishment that the possibility of "My Best Friend's Wedding" sucking has never so much as entered her mind. Nor, on the basis of the film's pedigree, is there any obvious reason it should have. In addition to British character man Everett (an actor she calls "our secret weapon"), her co-stars include Dermot Mulroney as the "best friend" of the title and "The Mask's" Cameron Diaz as his too-good-to-be-true intended. The screenplay is an original by Ron Bass, who wrote the Roberts-starring "Sleeping With the Enemy," but is most famous for his Oscar-winning "Rain Man" script and for his screen adaptation of Amy Tan's "The Joy Luck Club." The director is a hot young comedy "find:" P.J. Hogan, whose uproarious Australian effort "Muriel's Wedding" was easily the most engaging knockabout amusement of 1995.

> "I don't search for specific scripts. I just look for good scripts. If they're good scripts that are funny, then terrific. If they're good scripts that are tragic, then terrific as well."

Hogan's experience with the farcical treatment of matrimonial material must have come in handy on "My Best Friend's Wedding," a film which, like "Muriel," promises to do a great deal of comedic violence to the sanctity of the marital act. "The long and short of it is that my best friend is getting married," says Roberts. "He's someone who I've known for 10 years, and we were once lovers, and then that sort of didn't come to pass. And so we're best friends, and we've been best friends forever. Upon discovering that he's getting married, I sort of realize that, 'Well, he can't marry someone else because I'm in love with him, and he should be in love with me.'"

So far, "My Best Friend's Wedding" sounds like a poignant relationship film, about a situation more than a few people could probably relate to: the closing off of romantic possibilities when those we've loved commit to someone else. But then comes the comedic kicker, accompanied by a devilish variation of that toothy grin:

"And so I set off to this wedding to destroy it, so he'll be with me."

THE BOXOFFICE INTERVIEW

SHE'S


THE ONE

Objectively, there are at least two leaps of faith required by a set-up like that. The first is the idea that Julia Roberts—one of the most sought-after women of our time—wants a guy, you know, *that* way, but he doesn't want her back. Hardly a character the average American male is going to have an easy time identifying with. "Well thank you. That's a compliment," is Roberts' no-nonsense response to that.



MEMBER OF THE WEDDING: *Roberts plays at being a bridesmaid, with Cameron Diaz.*

The other leap of faith comes from the fact that Roberts will be playing someone who is both the heroine of the piece and a character who is, well, not entirely aboveboard. Or, as Roberts says: "Oh, well she's horrible. I mean, I used to make jokes when we were working, you know, P.J. would cut, and I would turn and say, 'EVIL...has a FACE.' That's what the one-sheet will be, a big picture of me that'll say, 'EVIL...has a FACE.'"

Just how horrible is Roberts' character, Julianna Potter? Well, it's safe to say that most people who face a situation similar to Julianna's have dealt with it wistfully, perhaps by ruminating a while on "things that might have been." Julianna takes a more active approach. "A lot of times" her character is "bold-faced lying," she says. "She's soooooooo manipulative, and she's trying to be so sneaky and devious. That's why it's really a delicate balance. Because hopefully, people shouldn't hate her, they shouldn't say, 'Oh, she's horrible and terrible, and I hope someone catches her and they send her off to be banished.' But [at the same time] she does cross the line."

What mitigates all that romantic treachery is the comedy, which Roberts describes as "madcap stuff. There's a lot of physical comedy in this movie, I mean I'm not the only one who's doing silly stuff like that. We sort of push the limits of comedy to just farce, to hilarious, Lucy Ricardo stuff."

It is pointed out that that's a pretty high standard to aspire to.

"It *is* a high standard," says Roberts. "But it's also a very specific concept of things that are funny."

And Roberts is a redhead of course, which may mean she has a genetic predisposition for this sort of thing. After all, Lucille Ball, aka Lucy Ricardo, was a redhead too.

Roberts' smile goes limpid with pleasure at the analogy. "I aspire to be Lucy Ricardo's...pinky," she says. "She was so genius. So genius."

Imagine having all that fun and getting paid for it, too. For "My Best Friend's Wedding," Roberts is reputed to have been paid quite a lot: $12.5 million was the reported amount, though Roberts says that "as I sit here, I can put my hand to God and say I don't know if that's the exact number. I can tell you that you're in the right Comiskey Park of it all, but I can't truthfully tell you what the number is. Nor would I necessarily if I could remember."

To an industry watcher, twelve and a half million seems a likely figure if for no other reason than that such a sum would put Roberts just .5 million past the salary commanded by previous record holder Demi Moore for "Striptease." In Hollywood, where numbers sanctify, such details are what good agenting is all about. But Roberts, who has often taken a fraction of her market value to do work she believed in, waxes passionate on the popular obsession with scoring star salaries and film budgets like ball games, and it's hard to deny that she has a point.

> ***"I'm not, you know, running around with a little banner with my salary on it and stuff. So that's not what it's about in this scenario."***

"You know, when people walk around talking about how much they get paid and stuff like that, or if a movie costs $170 million to make, then you're making it about that, you know? But our movie has no colossal budget. And I'm not, you know, running around with a little banner with my salary on it and stuff. So that's not what it's about in this scenario. When actors do that, or when movies cost the exorbitant amounts to make, then I can understand the interest, because you're courting it. You're saying, 'Look at the money that's going on here.' But I don't sort of subscribe to that philosophy. Obviously. I don't even know exactly how much I made on this picture." She laughs. "I'll find out. I'll make a call."

Releasing "My Best Friend's Wedding" in June, the traditional month for summer nuptials, is perfectly in keeping with the film's wicked sense of fun. As a romantic comedy with "heart," "MBFW" also seems poised to become the answer to the increasingly shrill cries of "Let Julia be Julia!" which have sounded from some quarters in the last few years. As Roberts has gone about the business of expanding her range in off beat and arthouse fare like "Pret-a-Porter," "Mary Reilly," "Michael Collins" and Woody Allen's recent post-modern musical "Everyone Says I Love You," industry watchers who should know better have measured the grosses of these "niche" titles against "Pretty Woman," one of the most popular comedies of all time. Armed with such specious comparative data, some have publicly bewailed the fact that, according to certain narrow criteria, Julia Roberts has never been one to mind her place.

The argument goes like this: Roberts first achieved mega-success in "Pretty Woman," a light romantic comedy with fairytale overtones. Since that time, she has tried her hand, often with quite a bit of distinction, at an almost unimaginably wide range of roles—few of which could be comfortably fit under the genre heading of the film that made her a household name. Film pundits, who usually salivate like Pavlov's dog at the sight of a major star brave enough to rebel against a prefabricated persona, have instead repeatedly bemoaned Roberts' obvious ambition to be something more than great hair attached to a luminous smile.

This supposed preference for "dark" material purportedly has to do with Roberts' alleged difficulty in accepting her own celebrity. With the fact that she was once married and, like 50 percent of the once-married U.S. population,

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isn't any longer. With the omnipresence of paparazzi and scandal sheet journalists in her public life. Such pop-psychology from supposedly reputable journalists is the perhaps inevitable outcome of the fact that Roberts' popularity makes her the easiest headline for tabloid journalists since the heyday of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. Writers who would never dream of accepting a byline from the National Enquirer have to stand in supermarket check-out lines like the rest of us, after all.



"OUR SECRET WEAPON:" *Rupert Everett and Roberts share a laugh on the set.*

Kenneth Turan of the L.A. Times helped to launch the "Let Julia be Julia!" viewpoint in an August, 1995 mash note/commentary, plaintively entitled "Give Us Something to Smile About." The lead went like this: "The big question for Julia Roberts' career is: when is she going to realize that it's okay to smile again?" Entertainment Weekly, in its inimitable attraction/repulsion relationship with the rich and famous, went so far as to publish a "chart" last July which purported to show conclusively that the more Roberts smiles, the better her films do at the boxoffice. ("This isn't just a vague generalization," EW scribe Tom Russo solemnly intoned. "It's a fact!")

Roberts professes to be immune to such considerations. "I love all my movies," she says simply. "I don't search for specific scripts. I just look for *good* scripts. If they're good scripts that are funny, then terrific. If they're good scripts that are tragic, then terrific as well. It's really just the quality of the piece, it's not, 'Okay, let's go out and find....' 'Cause you can't do that, 'cause you'll never find it that way. It's like a needle in a haystack."

Roberts does admit that the success of "Pretty Woman" in some ways raised the bar for her where similar types of material are concerned. "For me, it's so hard," she says. "Especially to have had a romantic comedy be really successful the way 'Pretty Woman' was, because it's very difficult to then find other films of that genre that can compete with that." But the larger point, she insists, is the difficulty in finding good comedic material. "You don't want to go backwards, you want to do something that's better than what you did and different and has more to offer in some way. They're really the hardest scripts to find intact and with great quality, the sort of romantic-ish comedies. [With "My Best Friend's Wedding"], I just thought, 'Well hell! Finally! Something that's funny and fresh and has all these great relationship elements to it.'"

So Kenneth Turan should be pleased—not to mention millions of moviegoers if all goes to plan. After all, Roberts really *is* a master of light comedy—it isn't like she shouldn't be doing it just because a few curmudgeons want her to. And it won't be long at any rate until she moves back into a more "serious" role—"I mean to the point where it's shocking to me just how completely serious I was the whole movie. I'm like, 'Jesus!'"

Less than a month after "My Best Friend's Wedding" hits the bigscreen, Roberts will be at it again, this time opposite Mel Gibson in director Richard Donner's action-thriller "Conspiracy Theory." Gibson plays a paranoid anti-government loony who inadvertently stumbles onto an *actual* evil government plot; Julia is the young Justice Department lawyer who may be the cabal's unwitting target.

So what do you know? It sounds like someone finally got around to doing a screen adaptation of that popular old bumper sticker from the 1980s that read, "Just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they're not out to get you." With "Lethal Weapon" director Donner at the helm and Gibson as hot as he'll ever be following "Braveheart" and "Ransom," tagging "Conspiracy Theory" as a smash-in-the-making is among this summer's easiest calls. Among other things, "Conspiracy Theory" also makes Julia Roberts the first actress in film history to play the onscreen love interest of both Mel Gibson and Woody Allen in a single year. Which opens up all sorts of interesting lines of serious journalistic inquiry. Like: who's a better kisser?

"Ummmmmmm...," she says, drawing it out. Then she warms to the subject. "I kissed Woody more. I only did a little smooch on Mel. Just a little smooch, the way, you know, I kiss my mama or something. Just a little smooch. So I had much, you know, my kiss with Woody was a bit longer, I was able to assess more. And it was *veddy* nice. But the Mel smooch was good, you know. They're just different. It's like an apple and an orange. One's a smooch and one was more a kiss."

Making "Conspiracy Theory" was "rowdy in a completely different way from 'My Best Friend's Wedding,'" Roberts says. "Dick and Mel have made a slew of pictures together, and they've got their whole repartee, and they're big pranksters and they're very lighthearted and jovial, and both really loving and kind. So I was sort of just fascinated and enamored and a little terrified going into it. In *this* movie ['My Best Friend's Wedding'], I'm pratfalls and I'm mad and running around and doing all these things. In 'Conspiracy Theory,' I'm the straight man, all the way down the line."

Given the high profile and different market skews that "My Best Friend's Wedding" and "Conspiracy Theory" are sure to occupy, it's tempting to see Roberts' busy summer season as something of a "master plan." In contrast to the "little" movies she's lavished her talents on recently, which are created for a small segment of the audience and therefore designed to blossom and die, Roberts is very likely to prove inescapable to the average summer moviegoer, perhaps even into the early fall.

"Well, honestly, I wish there was more distance between the two. Because this is, like, over a year of my life that will come and go in a season. So it's kind of like..." She crumples in comedic anguish. "'Oh, spread it out a little bit! I worked really hard! I can't get another one out there before fall!'"

That said, is one of the two films perhaps a bit nearer to her heart?

"These are, um, I think they're both really entertaining movies," she says carefully. "Completely, utterly, completely different. [But] I have to say, if there's any lost soul in the world who I love and would send Christmas cards to, who's looking for, you know, 'I just want to go see Julia Roberts in a movie...' If there's that person in existence on the planet, then I would hafta urge them more towards 'My Best Friend's Wedding.' Just because, I mean, if you're looking for me, that's where you'd be far more inclined to find me."

She smiles, a picture-perfect parody of a little-girl-lost. "But I don't know if that person exists other than my mommy." She laughs. "If there is that person, I urge you..."

Then Julia Roberts tilts her head back, smiles that million-dollar smile, and laughs and laughs and laughs. ■

"My Best Friend's Wedding." Starring Julia Roberts, Cameron Diaz and Dermot Mulroney. Directed by P.J. Hogan. Written by Ron Bass. Produced by Ron Bass and Jerry Zucker. A TriStar Pictures Release. Romantic Comedy. June 27.

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JULY TRAILERS

Can the movie biz match last July's "ID4"-powered take? It's gonna try.

Taking dead aim on the season's July 4th weekend—and, while it's at it, the rest of the summer as well—is Columbia's "Men In Black" (see photo below), opening July 2. Although it's been a while since a Sony title had films moving aside for it, the other studios—with the possible exception of Paramount, should "Titanic" not surface later—have programmed their schedules around "MIB."

But July is hardly a one-title month. Hot on "MIB's" heels come 7/11 is another sci-fi entrant, Warner Bros.' "Contact," bearing an impressive Jodie Foster/Robert Zemeckis imprimatur. On July



18, two big movies arrive, but thanks to genre differences they don't collide: the Paramount actioner "Face/Off," pairing John Travolta and Nicolas Cage with helmer John Woo, and Buena Vista's comic adaptation, "George of the Jungle." July 25 is also a two-fer: Warner Bros.' event picture "Conspiracy Theory," starring Mel Gibson and Julia Roberts, and Columbia's "Air Force One," with leading man Harrison Ford. Although both titles are thrillers, "Conspiracy Theory" leans toward romance, while "AFO" flies into the action zone.

Of course, a date voyage by "Titanic"—post-production special effects work looms as a delaying iceberg—could cause a constellation of date changes, so stay tuned. Yet, regardless, to borrow a title from Universal's July-undated release, it looks like exhibitors are going to get a simple wish granted: a huge turnout at their turnstiles.

JULY 4

Men In Black

"The Client's" Tommy Lee Jones and "Independence Day's" Will Smith are the "Men In Black"—two government agents (named K and J, respectively) of a top-secret federal organization that handles immigration for alien beings journeying to Earth. When they discover an alien terrorist plan to destroy the planet, the Men In Black must search out and destroy the otherworldly evildoers. This sci-fi adventure comedy is based on Lowell Cunningham's Marvel comics of the same title. Linda Fiorentino ("Unforgettable") co-stars. Barry Sonnenfeld ("Get Shorty") directs; Ed Solomon (who helped write both "Bill and Ted's..." adventures) scripts; and the "Twister" team, Walter Parkes and Laurie MacDonald, produce for Steven Spielberg's Amblin production company. (Columbia, 7/2)

Exploitips: *Both Paramount (which moved its "Face/Off" to 7/18) and Fox (which moved "Speed 2" to June) have cleared the 7/2 decks for what at the moment is shaping up to be a "Titanic" battle between "Men In Black" and the James Cameron film (see P. 17). As with June's clash of the titans (avoided when "Speed 2" reswerved to 6/13, leaving 6/6 to "Con Air"), one competitor—"MIB"—will pull the action/sci-fi male demo, while the other—"Titanic," which has romantic elements—should get additional response from the distaff side. Advantage: "Men In Black." When it's a battle between space epic and period piece, the corsets lose to lasers.*

Wild America

Set in 1967 and based on the true travels of wildlife documentarians Mark, Marty and Marshall Stouffer, "Wild America" follows the young brothers as they head across country with their camera, meeting ferocious animals and interesting characters along the way. Jonathan Taylor Thomas ("Tom and Huck"), Devon Sawa, Scott Bairstow, Jamey Sheridan ("A Stranger Among Us") and Frances Fisher (also in "Titanic") star. William Dear ("Angels in the Outfield") directs; David Michael Wieger scripts; Morgan Creek head James G. Robinson produces with Irby Smith and Mark Stouffer. (Warner, 7/2)

Exploitips: *Winner of the month's invisibility award, given the attention being accorded the dreadnoughts "Titanic" and "MIB," "Wild America" is best sold to the family audience. Or so one would think; but, as shown by that demo's support of "Liar, Liar" (rather than "Turbo" and "Cats Don't Dance"), when faced with a choice between taking the tykes to pure kids stuff and enduring the two hours or taking them along to older-skewing fare adults will find more satisfying, the ones that buy the tickets (i.e., mom and dad) will often do the latter. Best bet: Emphasize the Taylor Thomas name plus the animals and aim for the single-digit age group.*

JULY 11

Contact

Based on the late Carl Sagan's novel, "Contact" stars Jodie Foster as an astronomer who discovers radio signals transmitted from outer space. As countries around the world try to decode the message, she hopes to take her rightful place as leader of the scientific investigation and the first person to make contact with the extraterrestrials. "A Time to Kill's" Matthew McConaughey co-stars as a top-level government advisor who supports her in her efforts. James Woods ("Ghosts of Mississippi"), Tom Skerritt, Angela Bassett ("Strange Days"), John Hurt ("Michael"), David Morse ("The Crossing Guard"), Rob Lowe and William Fichtner ("Albino Alligator") co-star. Robert Zemeckis ("Forrest Gump") directs; Michael Goldenberg ("Bed of Roses") adapts Sagan's novel; Steve Starkey (also "Forrest Gump") produces. (Warner, 7/11)

Exploitips: *While industry attention has been focusing on "MIB" and "Titanic," only weak signals about the approach of "Contact" have been transmitted. That's surprising because, despite her paucity of acting turns in the '90s, Foster remains an A-level star—and the Zemeckis name has to shine like pure gold in moviegoers' minds after the boxoffice of "Forrest Gump" (which in 1994 opened 7/6). Still, as a more serious sci-fi take, "Contact" will have a tussle with weekend #2 of the rowdy "MIB."*

Star Maps

An ambitious 18-year-old son named Carlos (Douglas Spain), who dreams of breaking into showbiz, jumps at the chance to sell star maps in Hollywood for his corrupt, estranged father, Pepe. But his involvement in the business, a front for prostitution, makes Carlos rethink his com-

mitment to family as well as his desire to become a silver-screen star. Efrain Figueroa, Lysa Flores and Kanner Jensen co-star. Making his feature film debut, Miguel Arteta directs and scripts; Matthew Greenfield produces. (Fox Searchlight, 7/11)

Exploitips: *Given its no-name cast and crew, "Star Maps" has the Hollywood setting as its most obvious salable element. As an arthouse entry, however, the draw of that element is diminished; performance here will ride on reviews and word-of-mouth. Also, especially in those theatres where the likes of "My Family/Mi Familia" have performed, aim for Hispanic audiences.*

JULY 18

Face/Off

John Travolta ("Michael") reteams with helmer John Woo (who directed Travolta in "Broken Arrow") in this action/thriller. But this time he's the good guy—or is he? Travolta stars as an FBI agent who trades identities with a terrorist ("Con Air's" Nicolas Cage) in order to catch him. Joan Allen ("The Crucible") and Alessandro Nivola ("Reach the Rock") co-star. Michael Werb and Michael Colleary script; David Permut ("Surviving the Game") produces with longtime Woo associate Terence Chang, Christopher Godsick and Barrie Osborne ("China Moon"). (Paramount, 7/18)

Exploitips: *Early trailers make "Face/Off" look more like a Woo-type action product, but American audiences (unfamiliar with his Hong Kong films) already voted for Woo's*



work with their pocketbooks, giving "Broken Arrow" a $71 million takeoff. The sell here, though, is certainly Travolta and his teaming with Nicolas Cage, perhaps even hotter as an action draw after "Con Air." Unless other movies move (see "Titanic," above), "Face/Off" is nicely positioned, with the key date competition being comedic and early-weekend crowds now sated with "Titanic" and "MIB" looking for fresh excitement.



TITANIC

Writer/director James Cameron ("True Lies") recreates the ill-fated 1912 maiden voyage of the luxury liner Titanic in this epic action/romance. Using historical and fictional characters, this joint-studio production (Paramount has domestic distribution rights, Fox has foreign) follows the onboard love story between aristocratic Rose ("Sense and Sensibility's" Kate Winslet) and steerage passenger Jack (Leonardo DiCaprio of "Romeo & Juliet"). Billy Zane ("The Phantom"), Kathy Bates ("Dolores Claiborne"), Frances Fisher ("Female Perversions"), Bernard Hill, Jonathan Hyde, Danny Nucci, David Warner and Bill Paxton ("Twister") co-star. Cameron and Jon Landau produce. (Paramount, 7/2)

Exploitips: *Although the "film-won't-be-ready" explanation for major-movie date moves (e.g.: "Volcano," "The Flood," "Speed 2") might have already been overworked this year, it might come into play again if "Titanic" sails for a new 7/18 berth. That date is already occupied by the same studio's "Face/Off," so it's just the sort of move that could cause a cascade of other changes. Still, studio execs might look to last year's Independence weekend opening of "ID4" against "Phenomenan," both of which did huge business, and decide that "Titanic" will skew like that Travolta title. (Of course, "Phenomenon" didn't cost a phenomenal $180+ million.) If so, exhibitors should play up the romance of the DiCaprio/Winslet pairing as much as they do the adventure element of the sinking liner. "Blasting away this 4th" could be an "MIB" catchline; here, something like "a voyage into love—and legend" would work better.*

George of the Jungle

This Disney event picture follows the comic antics of the late-'60s cartoon hero, here made carnate by "Mrs. Winterbourne's" Brendan Fraser. In this live-action adventure/comedy, George returns to the jungle in order to defend his friends against evil poachers, thereby relinquishing all the comforts of modern-day life and the love of beautiful Ursula ("The Cable Guy's" Leslie Mann). Thomas Hayden Church co-stars. Sam Weisman ("The Mighty Ducks II") directs; Dana Olsen (who wrote Fraser's "Encino Man") and Audrey Wells ("The Truth About Cats and Dogs") script; David Hoberman, Jordan Kerner, and Jon Avnet ("Fried Green Tomatoes") produce. (Buena Vista, 7/18)

Exploitips: *The Jay Ward series plays on Turner's Cartoon Network, so a tie-in with your local cable TV operator would help attract younger audiences newly familiarized with George's dumb-but-lovable ways. To pull the 40+ crowd who watched "George of the Jungle" as teens in their parents' houses during its original Saturday morning run three decades ago and now have homes of their own, a cross-promo with a local nursery—with prize winners being awarded with greenery re-genused as Watch-Out-For-That-Tree Trees—could generate amiable interest that should lead to boxoffice response. A yell-like-George contest could draw the media.*

Nothing to Lose

Advertising exec Nick Beam ("The Shawshank Redemption's" Tim Robbins) is having a very bad day when he discovers his life is a total lie. But, when fast-talking carjacker T. Paul ("Bad Boys'" Martin Lawrence) attempts to rob him, Nick turns the tables on the mugger and takes him hostage. An unlikely friendship emerges between the offbeat pair. John C. McGinley ("Hard Eight"), Giancarlo Esposito ("Fresh") and Kelly Preston ("Addicted to Love") also star. Steve Oedekerk ("The Nutty Professor") directs and scripts; Martin Bregman and Michael S. Bregman (who partnered for "Gold Diggers: The

Secret of Bear Mountain") produce with Dan Jinks for Touchstone. (Buena Vista, 7/16)

Exploitips: *Like last summer's "Eddie," this comedy has been ambling about Buena Vista's early-season schedule, and its move here seems to be targeting Lawrence's urban-audience fans—given that the studio's "George of the Jungle" will uproot suburban comedygoers two days later. Given the wide-demo support for Oedekerk's "The Nutty Professor," Robbins' presence and the films' shared genre, however, that separation might not be so clean. Given that chance, and now that New Line's black/white buddy-buddy comedy "Money Talks" has exited 7/16 for fall, perhaps Disney will decide it has everything to gain by re-moving "Nothing to Lose."*

Mimic

"Mighty Aphrodite's" Mira Sorvino and Jeremy Northam ("The Net") star in this adaptation of a Donald A. Wollheim short story as a scientist couple who use genetic engineering to save New York from a deadly disease. But their genetic dabbling leads to the threat of annihilation for Gotham's populace when something beneath the city begins to "mimic" the most dangerous predator of all: humans. Alexander Goodwin, Josh Brolin and Charles Dutton co-star; Guillermo del Toro ("Cronos") directs; Miramax co-head Bob Weinstein, B.J. Rack and Ole Bornedal (director of Miramax's "Nightwatch" and of its Danish-language predecessor) produce; and with six



you get a screenplay: del Toro, Steven Soderbergh ("Gray's Anatomy"), John Sayles ("Lone Star"), Matthew Robbins, Matt Greenberg and Peter Iliff script. (Miramax, 7/18)

Exploitips: *Once upon a time, monster movies were indie (e.g., AIP) fare; from "Jaws" through "Lost World," they've gone studio upscale. In another back-to-the-past move that hopes to repeat its "Scream" success, Miramax ventures off its usual arthouse terrain with this sci-fi thriller, so a more mainstream response can be expected here—if "Face/Off" lets it. As for the specialized crowd, the script teaming of Sayles, Soderbergh and del Toro should generate expectations of something more than a genre entry.*

LATE MOVIE MOVES...

Fall

"If Lucy Fell's" Eric Schaeffer's latest romantic comedy stars Schaeffer as Michael, a New York City cab driver who begins a passionate affair with a married



supermodel named Sarah (Amanda de Cadenet). Schaeffer directs and scripts, and he produces with Terence Michael for Capella. (Orion, 6/20 NY/LA)

Exploitips: *Despite calling Schaeffer (who here as in "If Lucy Fell" pairs himself onscreen with an uber-babe) "ever-irritating," our Slamdance reviewer (April '97) gave "Fall" a three-star review, saying that Schaeffer "has a gifted ear for dialogue and directs with style and flair" and that he "has bared everything in this sexually obsessive reworking of the beauty and the beast myth."*

Head Above Water

In this black comedy/thriller, a married couple—a respected judge (Harvey Keitel) and his young wife Nathalie ("The Mask's" Cameron Diaz)—are vacationing on a tiny island shared by Nathalie's childhood friend (Craig Sheffer). While the two men are on a fishing trip, Nathalie's ex-lover ("The Phantom's" Billy Zane) arrives; when he's found next morning naked and dead in the bedroom, the vacation begins to unravel. Frequent Kevin Costner producer Jim Wilson makes a return to directing, and he produces with John Jacobsen ("Shipwrecked"); Michael Blake ("Dances With Wolves") scripts. (Fine Line, 6/20)

Exploitips: *Held from Fine Line's 1996 slate, "Head Above Water" has an eclectic cast whose names will attract arthouse attention, with Sheffer newly prominent after "Bliss." The black comedy/thriller genre remains popular, if the film in question delivers, of course. Blake's "Dances With Wolves" credit is also a plus.*

Things I Never Told You

This bittersweet comedy/romance tells the story of a suicide hotline volunteer ("Weekend at Bernie's" Andrew McCarthy) who falls in love with a young woman ("I Shot Andy Warhol's" Lili Taylor) who calls the line by accident. Debi Mazar, Seymour Cassel and Alexis Arquette co-star. First-time filmmaker Isabel Coixet directs and scripts; Dora Medrano and Javier Carbo produce for Spain's Eddie Saeta production company and U.S. outfit Carbo Films. (Seventh Art, June)

Exploitips: *What to do when foreign-language fare isn't pulling in America, and dubbing is detested? Make your local fare (Canal Plus Spain, Catalan Films and Televisio de Catalunya funded here) in the easily accepted English language. And easily transported: "Things I Never Told You" czechmated the grand prize at last year's Prague fest. Actress Taylor is one of the reigning queens of the indie world, and the genre—romantic comedy—is an audience favorite.*

Gone Fishin'

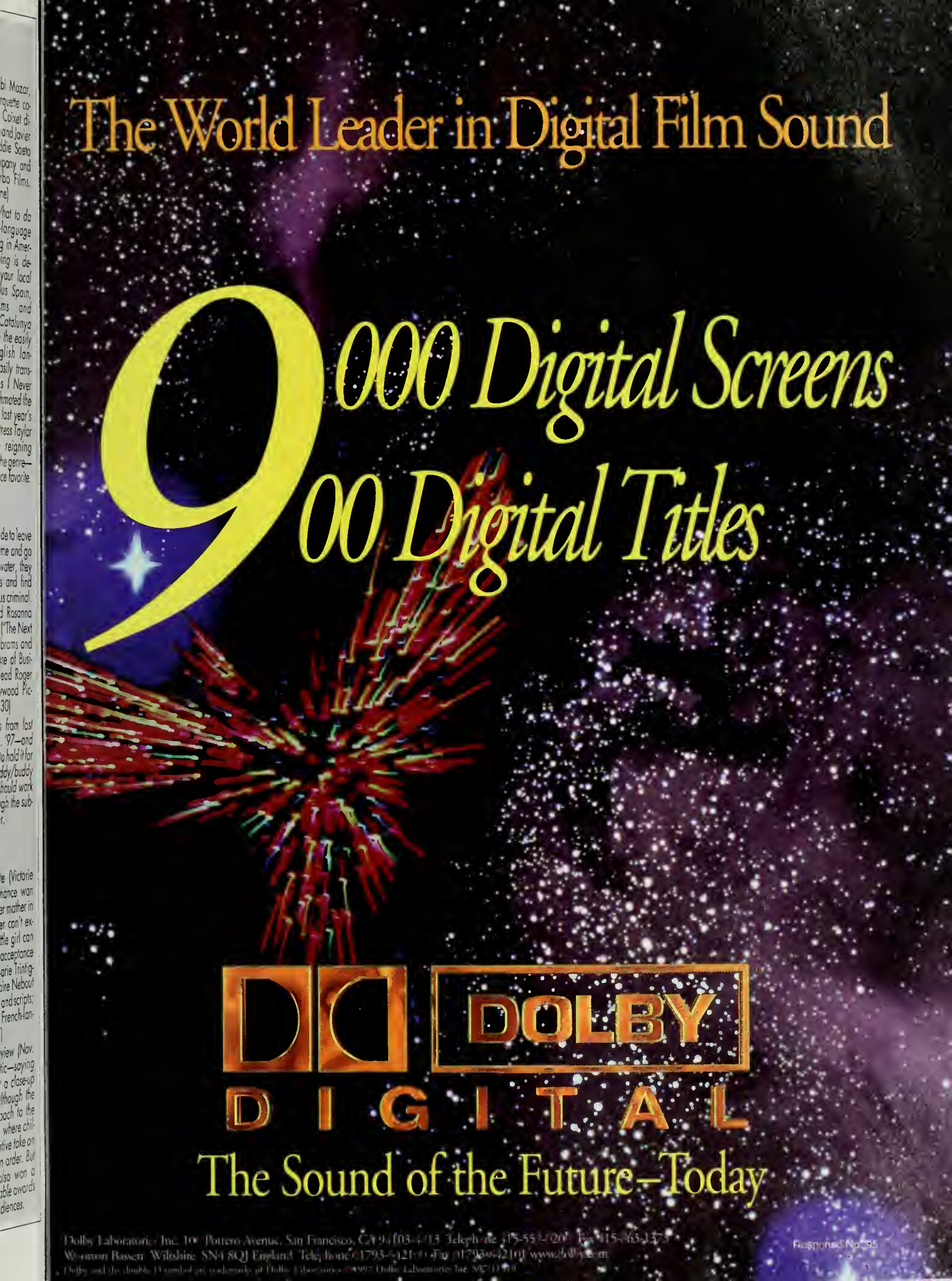
Best friends Gus and Joe decide to leave their wives and problems at home and go fishing. But, before reaching water, they meet two gorgeous detectives and find themselves tracking a dangerous criminal. Joe Pesci, Danny Glover and Rosanna Arquette star. Christoper Cain ("The Next Karate Kid") directs; Jeffrey Abrams and Jill Mazursky (the "Taking Care of Business" pair) script; Caravan head Roger Birnbaum produces the Hollywood Pictures release. (Buena Vista, 5/30)

Exploitips: *Disney held this from last summer and re-slated it for Jan. '97—and then, perhaps wisely, decided to hold it for angling season again. The buddy/buddy teaming of Pesci and Glover should work to draw diverse demos, although the subject matter might be a delimiter.*

Ponette

When four-year-old Ponette (Victorie Thivisol, whose tykey performance won Venice's Coppa Volpi) loses her mother in a car accident, and her father can't explain the death in terms the little girl can understand, she must come to acceptance of the loss in her own way. Marie Trintignant, Xavier Beauvois and Claire Nebout co-star. Jacques Doillon directs and scripts; Alain Sarde produces the French-language film. (Arrow, 5/23 NY)

Exploitips: *In a two-star review (Nov. '96 issue), our Venice critic—saying "Doillon obviously never met a close-up he didn't like"—said that, although the director's ultra-realistic approach to the material works well in scenes where children interact, a more imaginative take on childhood imagination was in order. But the fest results—"Ponette" also won a Fipresci critics prize—are salable awards that will draw specialized audiences.*


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Conspiracy Theory

This offbeat romantic thriller stars Mel Gibson as a paranoid taxi driver obsessed with conspiracy theories who believes a government attorney (Julia Roberts) is the target of a deadly intrigue. She thinks he's a nut—until she learns that, this time, he's right. Patrick Stewart co-stars. Richard Donner (Gibson's "Lethal Weapon" series) directs; Brian Helgeland ("L.A. Confidential") scripts; action honcho Joel Silver (another "Lethal Weapon" vet) produces. (Warner, 7/25)

Exploitips: *One can expect Roberts' 6/27 rom/com "My Best Friend's Wedding" (see this issue's cover story) to have refound her adoring audience, and Gibson seems to draw regardless of genre. This is star-ticket fare with star-ticket competition—namely, Harrison Ford in "Air Force One." Advantage: "Conspiracy Theory." It has two stars playing a male/female duo (to draw both genders), it's lighter fare (good for summer crowds) and Ford fans recently saw him in the similar-genre "The Devil's Own," which fell off 50 percent on its second weekend.*

JULY 25

Air Force One

Harrison Ford stars in this action thriller as the President of the United States, who has a strict policy of refusing to negotiate with terrorists. When Russian neo-nationalists hijack the prez's plane, Air Force One, with the First Lady and his child onboard with him, the President is faced with a personal life-and-death situation. Glenn Close ("Paradise Road") and Gary Oldman ("Murder in the First") co-star. Wolfgang Petersen ("In the Line of Fire") directs from an Andrew Marlowe script; Petersen produces with Armyan Bernstein ("Princess Caraboo"), Gail Katz and Jon Shestack for Beacon. (Columbia, 7/25)

Exploitips: *"The Devil's Own" lost half its opening audience on weekend #2, but it did open to $18 million. And, unlike that film's foreign theme (the IRA), "AFO" is pure red-white-&-blue in its storyline, and the central crisis—a family in peril—is one to which American audiences often respond. (Especially, as here, when the bad guy is all bad.) As long as Greg Norman doesn't make a cameo in it, "AFO" should have good legs.*

Box of Moonlight

Proper, punctual and precise electrical engineer Al Fountain ("Girl 6's" John Turturro) is in a mid-life crisis and revisits a childhood haunt only to encounter Kid (Sam Rockwell), a free-spirited eccentric who strikes a chord in Al that resonates through his life. Catherine

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A Simple Wish

Little Anabel ("Matilda's" Mara Wilson) knows her father ("Michael's" Robert Pastorelli) longs to be a Broadway actor. Wanting to help, Anabel wishes for a fairy godmother—but she gets Murray ("Mars Attacks!'s" Martin Short), the only male spellcaster, and not a very good one. Then an evil fairy godmother (Kathleen Turner) hatches a plan to rule (i.e., ruin) the world's wishes. Michael Ritchie ("Cops and Robbersons") directs; Jeff Rothberg ("Hiding Out") scripts; Sid Sheinberg produces with sons Bill and Jon for their Bubble Factory. (Universal, July)

Exploitips: *This family-fare effort has elements that could entertain both adults and children—a combination that many studio execs believe is the only way to package theatrical kiddie fare these days. In that light, "A Simple Wish" seems like the strongest entry yet to come out of Bubble Factory, despite its locking the TV tie-ins of Bubble's "McHale's Navy" and "Flipper." To maximize star wattage for those two demos, emphasize stars Wilson and Short.*

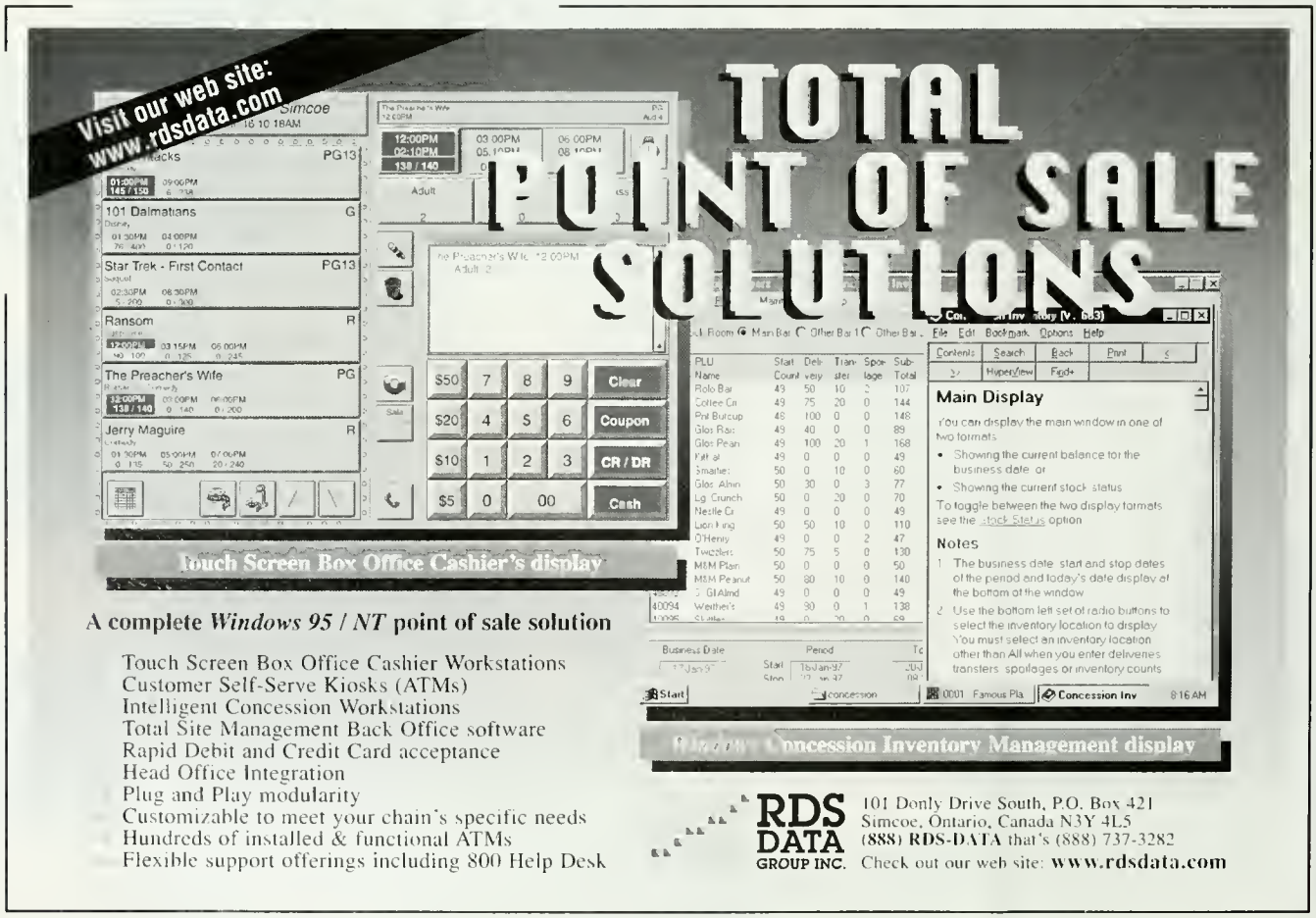
Keener ("Walking and Talking"), Lisa Blount, Annie Corley ("Free Willy") and Dermot Mulroney ("My Best Friend's Wedding") co-star. Tom DiCillo ("Living in Oblivion," which starred Keener and Mulroney) directs and scripts; Markus Viscidi and Thomas A. Bliss produce. (Trimark, 7/25)

Exploitips: *Our Venice fest critic accorded this comedy/drama a 2 1/2-star review (Nov. '96 issue), citing its agreeably "loopy tone" that, however, precluded having a clear ending: "The result is similar to a carnival ride that doesn't have a final, culminating thrill." Still, DeCillo's name will interest devoted arthousers, as will the Turturro credit.*

Good Burger

Based on a popular sketch segment from Nickelodeon's "All That" cable TV series, this buddy comedy follows two offbeat high schoolers (Kel Mitchell and Kenan Thompson, stars of "All That" and of Nick's "Kenan and Kel") who help transform a failing burger joint into a hot spot, only to find the unscrupulous manager of the competing Megaburger on their trail in hopes of stealing the recipe of their secret sauce. Brian Robbins directs; Dan Schneider, Kevin Kopelow and Heath Seifert script; Nick vets Robbins and Mike Tollin produce in association with Nickelodeon Movies. (Paramount, 7/25)

Exploitips: *"Good Burger" basically takes the slot occupied last year (7/10) by Nick/Par's "Harriet the Spy," which made $26.5 million. Given these films' modest budgets, that's a success in studio terms (boxoffice/production cost = profit), but not in terms of exhibition,*



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where boxoffice = boxoffice. "Harriet the Spy" had a book tie-in, whereas "Good Burger" has a more immediate hook: TV. Develop tie-ins with your local cable operator and a local burger joint to target the single-digit ages who think Kenan and Kel are cool.

187

Director Kevin Reynolds ("Waterworld") switches to more intimate fare with this dramatic thriller (pronounced "one-eight-seven") about a deeply committed high-school teacher ("A Time to Kill's" Samuel L. Jackson) who returns to the classroom after a long recuperation from a brutal knife attack by an unruly student. A changed man, the teacher now is willing to employ extreme measures when dealing with student problems. John Heard ("My Fellow Americans") and Kelly Rowan ("Candyman: Farewell to the Flesh") co-star. Scott Yagemann, who spent seven years as a teacher inside the L.A. public school system, scripts; "Braveheart's" Bruce Davey and Steve McEveety produce for Mel Gibson's Icon. (Warner, 7/30)

Exploitips: *Opening on a Wednesday, "187" has a two-day lead on its weekend's competition—and it might need that edge. The 8/1 slot is tentatively filled by Universal's TV adaptation "Leave It to Beaver," Fox's romantic "Picture Perfect," Paramount's sci-fi "Event Horizon" and New Line's "Mortal Kombat: Annihilation" sequel. On the plus side, that does mean that "187" has the drama genre to itself, but expect Warner to adopt a platform strategy to allow time for review and word-of-mouth strength to build.*

JULY UNDATED

Alive and Kicking

This romantic drama (aka "Indian Summer"), about endurance, style and survival, tells the story of Tonio ("Stealing Beauty's" Jason Flemyng), a dedicated dancer with AIDS who buries his emotions beneath a witty exterior. Jack (Antony Sher) is a driven AIDS therapist who eventually becomes Tonio's



lover. Dorothy Tutin and Anthony Higgins co-star. Nancy Meckler ("Sister My Sister") directs; playwright Martin Sherman scripts; Martin Pope produces. (First Look, July)

Exploitips: *Given the month's paucity of indie fare, "Alive and Kicking" can be promoted as counterprogramming for the art-house set uninterested in the big blockbusters. Expect special interest to come from the movie-supportive gay demo in larger cities. Meckler's earlier work was a Seventh Art release (i.e., small) and this film is virtually starless, so the subject matter is the sell.*

La Sentinelle

This French conspiracy drama about Cold War politics follows Mathias, son of a German border guard, who moves to France to study forensics. When he receives a mysterious package containing a shrunken human head, Mathias is drawn into an equally mysterious game of espionage as he dissects the head in search of answers. Emmanuel Salinger stars. Arnaud Desplechin makes his directorial debut. (Strand, July)

Exploitips: *As with First Look's "Alive and Kicking," this Strand release could be effective counterprogramming for the season; here the targets are fans of foreign fare, as this is the month's only Euro-language offering.*

Coffy

Pam Grier's biggest hit receives an almost 25th-anniversary reissue via Kit Parker Films. In the 1973 effort, Grier stars as a nurse who seeks revenge on the junkies who turned her sister into an addict. Booker Bradshaw, Robert DoQui and William Elliott co-star. Jack Hill directs. (Kit Parker, July)

Exploitips: *Orion's "Original Gangstas," a contemporary variation on the blaxploitation films, didn't find a solid audience, so the time for the genre might be past. But '70s nostalgia remains strong, so emphasize that hook by playing disco on the sound system and having employees dress post-mod.*

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Response No. 114

"DARK" MAN

Kiefer Sutherland takes on a new persona in New Line's "Dark City"

by Wade Major



Kiefer Sutherland and Rufus Sewell star in New Line's "Dark City."

What's in a name? Quite a lot, if your name is Kiefer William Frederick Dempsey George Rufus Sutherland. "I'm sure my father owed a lot of people money," jokes the star—better known simply as Kiefer Sutherland—of such films as "Stand by Me," "Flatliners," "Young Guns" and "The Lost Boys." "He probably said, 'I'll name my first son after you.'"

Either way, it's safe to say that, having done almost three dozen films in just 15 years, the 30-year-old has more than met the expectations of his famous name. (Dad Donald still has the advantage, with 90-plus turns onscreen.) As did his father, Sutherland has made his name with the kinds of roles that aspiring stars usually avoid: villains, miscreants and anti-heroes. With "Dark City," a New Line thriller coming in September, that might change.

"My whole desire as an actor is to keep doing different things," he says. "But I kind of wedged myself into a pattern for a while, and I wanted to break it. This seemed like the first effort to start the sidestep." Sidestep, indeed. To hear Sutherland describe it, "Dark City" promises to be little like any other film this year—or any year. Directed by "The Crow's" Alex Proyas from a screenplay by Proyas, "Kafka" scripter Lem Dobbs and David S. Goyer ("The Crow: City of Angels"), "Dark City" boasts a narrative that's already gaining a cult-like mystique.

Sutherland plays a doctor forced by an alien race to participate in experiments on human individuality in which people's memories are stripped away and replaced with artificial ones. One man (William Hurt) starts to discover the truth when his mind rejects the new memories. "It's one of the most complicated films to explain," Sutherland confesses. "The aliens are trying to find the soul, that intangible quality that makes humans individual. And they're dying. They share a common brain—they have no self-identification. If one has a thought, all eight million of them have the same thought. And their lack of individuality is killing them."

Much of what attracted Sutherland to his part was that it afforded him the chance to explore traits that audiences would least expect of him. He describes his character as "a deeply defeated, very sympathetic, frail, frightened little man. He came over with the others when they were stripped of their memories, and he is now the only human left who knows what's going on. He has had to live with the concept of their holocaust in his head. And I loved the idea of making a film about the value of the soul instead of trashing it all the time, about another society that valued our individuality. And yet it seems to be the one thing that makes us always fight."



Although they might seem bizarre and disturbing on the surface, Sutherland finds the themes of "Dark City" provocative and comforting, a shared perspective that helped ease cast and crew through what might otherwise have been a grueling shoot. "I have never been a part of a picture that was this big in scope," he says. "We had a quarter-mile river built on a soundstage along with buildings. We had 76 different sets like that."

Sutherland entered "Dark City" almost immediately after completing work on his bigscreen directing debut, "Truth or Consequences, N.M.," a project offered to him on the strength of his made-for-Showtime movie, "Last Light." But Sutherland is quick to stress the difference between it and his freshman effort.

Triumph's "Truth or Consequences, N.M."—which began a limited rollout in May—is anything but the small, intimate piece that "Last Light" was. "'Truth or Consequences,' when I read it, was more of an 'open' picture. More than that, it was like a collage of every film I'd ever loved, from 'The Getaway' to 'Freebie and the Bean' to 'Straight Time.' There were all these little stylistic things in the script that would allow me to make a film about a bunch of characters that reminded me of characters from that era, namely the '70s and early '80s."

> ***"I kind of wedged myself into a pattern for a while, and I wanted to break it."***

The story of a quartet of crooks played by Vincent Gallo ("Palookaville"), Mykelti Williamson ("Forrest Gump"), Kim Dickens and Sutherland, "Truth or Consequences, N.M." begins like any other heist-gone-awry film but then takes a left turn when the gang kidnaps an innocent couple played by Kevin Pollak ("The Usual Suspects") and Grace Phillips. As the crisis deepens, Pollak's character is attracted to his captors' violent, reckless lifestyle, horrifying his mate and jeopardizing both their lives in the process.

"Here's a guy who pretty much does everything right, has a regular life. When confronted with these people who have stripped him of his masculinity, he starts to question himself. That was something different in the piece, that it did have that sidebar. And it's a credit to Brad Mirman ["Body of Evidence"], who wrote it, that it is so balanced." Sutherland also praises cinematographer Ric Waite, first assistant director Lee Cleary and each of his actors. "We had only $8 million," he says, "and for what we wanted to accomplish that was not a lot. It's thanks to everyone who worked on it that the film looks the way it does."

Admittedly bitten by the directing bug for the long term, Sutherland doesn't intend to give up acting any time soon, particularly after his experience on "Dark City." "Someone just asked me, 'Is it hard to do a film only as an actor now?' And I said, 'No. I just made a film with Alex Proyas that I wouldn't have wanted to touch with a hundred-foot pole. That would have made my brain twitch.'"

"Dark City." Starring William Hurt, Rufus Sewell, Richard O'Brien and Kiefer Sutherland. Directed by Alex Proyas. Written by Alex Proyas, Lem Dobbs and David S. Goyer. Produced by Andrew Mason. A New Line release. Thriller. Opens Sept. 12.

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"MONEY" MAN

Actor Chris Tucker goes for comic gold in New Line's "Money Talks"

by Bridget Byrne



Chris Tucker and Charlie Sheen star in New Line's "Money Talks."

Reality" is a word Chris Tucker uses frequently. On the verge of stardom, with Columbia's "The Fifth Element" just behind him and his leading turn in New Line's "Money Talks" arriving in fall, he wants to keep his feet on solid ground.

Tucker is well known as a comedian and character actor to audiences who saw "Friday" and "Dead Presidents." His work in "Money Talks"—in which he stars alongside Charlie Sheen and Heather Locklear—could bring the 24-year-old the kind of broad recognition that carried the likes of Richard Pryor and Eddie Murphy to fame and fortune before him.

Exuding energy onscreen, Tucker comes across as sweeter off. In "Money Talks," a fast-paced action/comedy, Tucker stars as Franklin Hatchett, a charming but unprincipled street hustler who—thanks to a ratings-hungry TV reporter (Sheen) who tries to use him to break a story—is swept into an unlikely partnership that finds the duo being transformed into crimefighters. In the process, the reporter finds his plans for a weekend wedding to a rich beauty (Locklear) reduced to chaos by Hatchett's personality and run-for-your-life problems.

Tucker, who holds an executive producer credit on the movie, felt an early script was "mediocre" when he read it. But, believing it held ample opportunities for his own brand of improvisation, he oversaw a rewrite (the final credits are to Joel Cohen and Alec Sokolow, who did "Toy Story," and Vince McKewin) and brought in a new director, Brett Ratner, who has helmed numerous music videos for such artists as Public Enemy and D'Angelo.

"I knew Brett would make it cool and cut the movie quick, and he'd relate to what I wanted to do. I also knew that, like me, he would be looking to do his best," says Tucker, adding that most of the lightning-fast dialogue in the film is his own, either rewritten or improv. He describes the latter as, "What I woke up feeling, I said."

Tucker raves about Sheen, and not just because the flamboyantly high-living actor let him drive his Ferrari. "The prettiest car on earth," he says with a grin, dubbing himself and Sheen "both bad boys." Recalls Tucker, "We had a really good time doing this film, hanging out together. We came to work happy, we worked happy, we left happy. It was hard work, but it was happy work." Despite their camaraderie, Tucker stresses, "we didn't want this to be a 'buddy-buddy s—' movie. We wanted it to be more a fish-out-of-water style comedy, because both characters find themselves in worlds they are not accustomed to. It was important to us to feel, first of all, that everything was reality-based—and then fly with it."

The filmmakers create excellent visuals using a number of diverse locations in southeastern Los Angeles, including an explosive finale that takes place in the L.A. Coliseum. They also decided to rely on good tried-and-true stunting, rather than to use computerized special effects, so Tucker did most of his own running, jumping, ducking and diving. He did not, however, take a plunge from a helicopter into water—a task that was wisely left to a stunt pro.



The youngest of six children, the Atlanta-born Tucker was encouraged by his high school teachers to move his humor out of the classroom. "'It's great,' they said, 'but you need to do it on a stage!'" he says, recalling how he did just that and generated a big response while hosting a school talent show.

"Everyone said, 'Man, you was funny, you was funny, man.'" After playing some local clubs, Tucker headed west to Los Angeles, where he began doing stand-up before moving into movies.

> ***"It was important to us to feel, first of all, that everything was reality-based—and then fly with it."***

Despite his success in Hollywood, Tucker wants to keep strong home ties. "I think of Los Angeles as like a big office. I'm just working out here," he says. (Indeed, on the day he spoke with BOXOFFICE, Tucker was next headed to the airport to pick up his mother, coming to see Tucker's new house. One hopes he made it to LAX on time; though he had a good reason, Tucker arrived late for the interview, and eventually admitted he's *always* late.)

Six feet tall and slim, with faint traces of a goatee on his freshman-young face, Tucker remains an unabashed fan of Pryor and Murphy, whom he regards as major inspirations, and he also mentions the influence of Al Pacino's work. Tucker says he's determined not to be a "fly-by comedian" and has worked hard to prove he can act—that his talents aren't limited to the type of characterizations he brought to the Allen and Albert Hughes drama "Dead Presidents," to the Ice Cube comedy "Friday" and to "House Party III."

As a step in that direction, he took a key role in May's "The Fifth Element," Luc Besson's sci-fi film starring Bruce Willis and Gary Oldman. Shot mainly at Pinewood Studios in England, Tucker says, the setting "was gloomy there, and I had no friends" nearby. But the experience of working with Besson ("La Femme Nikita," "The Professional") was worth the loneliness.

Aware that his career was moving to the starring rather than co-starring level, Tucker was cautious about what movie to do after "The Fifth Element." In the end, he chose "Money Talks." "I didn't want to be pushed into some stupid little comedy," Tucker says.

"I wanted something in which I felt I would have say-so with material I could really relate to," he explains. "There must be a reality base to anything I do. It takes intelligence to make real comedy, and it takes a reality base to create all that little stuff I like to do that makes you giggle inside."

"Money Talks." Starring Charlie Sheen, Chris Tucker and Heather Locklear. Directed by Brett Ratner. Written by Joel Cohen & Alec Sokolow and Vince McKewin. Produced by Walter Coblenz. A New Line release. Action/comedy. Opens October 1.

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The Inside Scoop on the Concessions Business: Something to Chew On From 10 Industry Leaders

by Pat Kramer

RICHARD BIGGS
Director, Concession Sales
Ventura Foods/Lou Ana Foods
(Oils for concession and food service)

Career Highlights:
Since leaving the Air Force as a pilot, I have spent my professional career in the edible oil industry [margarine, cooking and salad oils and concession oils]. I have worked for such companies as Anderson Clayton Foods [later bought by Kraft], Standard Brands [now RJR Nabisco] and the last 18 years with Lou Ana Foods [now a division of Ventura Foods, LLC]. After a short time in personnel, I moved into sales/merchandising positions that included private label and national brand retail, food service, industrial, and, in 1989, concession sales.



Favorite Product:
Of course my favorite snack food is hot, fresh popcorn, preferably popped in coconut oil.

Greatest Challenge Facing Company:
To determine customers' needs and meet them profitably and promptly. My personal challenge is to keep my department focused on the needs of the concession industry.

Greatest Challenge Facing Concessions Industry: To "win back" the 80 percent of people who seldom go to the movies anymore.

MICHAEL BLOUT
National Sales Manager, Odell's
(Popcorn popping oil and toppings)

Career Highlights:
I spent 11 years in the banking industry, then the last 17 years with Odell's in my current capacity, representing the company to customers, buying the oil and overseeing the various manufacturers that we use.

Favorite Product:
Real buttered popcorn.

Greatest Challenge Facing Company:
Keeping ahead of the new innovations in the delivery system [packaging concepts for the concession stands.] As the concession stands get bigger, the packaging system that we use now is probably not adequate for the multiplexes. We're innovating by coming up with the bag in the box to get away from the one-gallon jugs.

Greatest Challenge Facing Concessions Industry: The array of choices in concession items may be an overwhelming concept for those who don't get to the theatre that often. It slows down consumers' decision making process, which slows down the serving time and then you have longer lines.

ROY GOMES
VP, Sales and Marketing
Nestle USA/Sunmark
(Non-chocolate confections)

Career Highlights:
From 1985-'87, I worked in marketing for Proctor & Gamble, and from '87 to '92, I worked for Heinz USA. Since 1992, I've been with Nestle USA. In '96, I became manager of trade marketing and sales planning. I was promoted earlier this year to vice president, sales and marketing, for Nestle/Sunmark's special markets division.



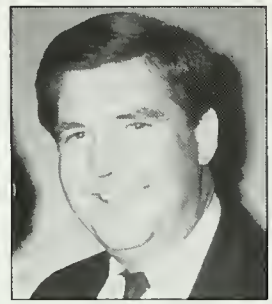
Favorite Product:
Willy Wonka's fruit-shaped Runts.

Greatest Challenge Facing Company:
Unlocking the tremendous potential of the brands this division markets.

Greatest Challenge Facing Concessions Industry: Concessions is more than just a convenience, as it's been thought of in the past. What we're going to see is a broader spectrum of choices with higher quality.

R. EVAN GORDON
Sales Consultant, Nabisco
(Gummi Savers, Snackwells, Now and Later)

Career Highlights: I have spent 24 years in the concession business, [including] a 20-year career with Coca Cola USA and the last four years as an independent consultant, primarily for Nabisco.



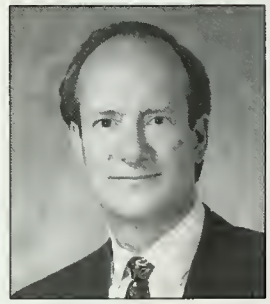
Favorite Product: Gummi Savers

Greatest Challenge Facing Company:
Developing and marketing a product that will be received openly by theatre consumers and by the moviegoing public.

Greatest Challenge Facing Concessions Industry: I think prices are too high. I understand why prices are so high in the theatre business—because of the revenue stream. However, in order to continue to attract larger groups at the concession stands, there needs to be affordable products to keep consumers in the habit of making a purchase when they go to the movies.

JOHN KRETCHMER
VP, American Licorice Co.
(Licorice confections)

Career Highlights: I come from a financial background, [in which] I spent 16 years with Price Waterhouse. Since I've been with American Licorice, the highlight has been the explosive growth of the licorice category. We've seen double-digit growth each year in all channels of distribution.



Favorite Product: Red Vines.

Greatest Challenge Facing Company:
Staying ahead of the growth curve that we've been experiencing in the licorice category. It's been a big challenge for our company to keep up with the marketplace and it's also been rewarding to accomplish that.

Greatest Challenge Facing Concessions Industry: To continue to provide superior quality and selection and to provide value to consumers.

FRANK G. LIBERTO
President/CEO
Liberto Management Co., Inc./
Ricos Products Co.
(Nachos, snack foods)

Career Highlights:

While I'm very proud of many of my accomplishments including owning and operating chains of retail snack bars and a coliseum, I guess the finest day of my life was when I was recognized by my peers in The National Association of Concessionaires (NAC) as having brought the concession industry its fourth greatest concession item—nachos—in 1977 (following popcorn in 1885, hot dogs in 1901 and carbonated beverages in 1950.) Knowing that your peers have recognized this creativity and contribution and having it evidenced by so many cash registers around the world—with nachos on the key—continues to be my greatest sense of accomplishment.



Favorite Product:

Of course, nachos.

Greatest Challenge Facing Company:

Controlling rapid growth and strategic planning to efficiently meet challenges of the technical paperless world of the future.

Greatest Challenge Facing Concessions Industry: Continuing to meet ever-changing consumer demands while at the same time not abandoning the cornerstones of successful concession operations. In that regard, remaining conscious of the consumers' threshold of retail pricing while offering excellent quality products and achieving a service level that is driven by the engine of reducing transaction time.

PAMELA MCGINNESS
Sales Manager
Promotional Management Group
(Movie graphic and custom popcorn buckets, cups, kids' trays, etc.)

Career Highlights:

I came on as controller of this company about six years ago. My first sale was to Pacific Theatres about three years ago, and it's grown from there.



Favorite Product: The collector popcorn tub.

Greatest Challenge Facing Company:

Just to produce as much product as people are ordering right now. The most important thing about our product is that it's completely dated. We're always on the hot seat. Each sale to a theatre chain is an independent sale. Every movie is a completely new sale.

Greatest Challenge Facing Concessions Industry: I think the industry is really faced with a "keeping up with the Joneses" thing. How can they get the hype, move the product, and keep their margins low? How do they make it attractive and package it, as well as make people buy it?

MARGIE MERCER
Director of Marketing, Proctor Cos.
(Design and manufacture of concession stands, concession equipment)

Career Highlights:

First of all, I grew up in the food service industry—my parents owned a restaurant. I started my career selling lumber and building products for Georgia Pacific where I learned to be a woman in a man's business. From there I went to pharmaceutical sales; I got promoted into marketing so I had both a sales and marketing focus. Next, I went to work for a medical ad agency in Manhattan.



I've been with Proctor for about two years now. This job pulls together my skills in construction, advertising, sales, and food service. Besides overseeing the marketing, I work with clients to design, manufacture and install the most effective food service and concession operation.

Favorite Product:

Designing the optimal stand to minimize transaction time.

Greatest Challenge Facing Company:

Keeping up with the demand. There is a huge boom right now in the theatre industry. We want to service all our clients as best we can but lead times are extremely short.

Greatest Challenge Facing Concessions Industry: Over 50 percent of all the patrons who enter into a movie theatre never purchase at the stand. The greatest challenge is in trying to provide supplemental offerings without impacting core products, namely popcorn and soda.

DAVID SCOCO
President, NAC
Managing Director,
Creative Concession Concepts

Career Highlights:

Prior to '91, I was the national development officer for a $300 million concession management firm in Chicago. In '91, I founded and became the managing director of Creative Concession Concepts. Since '94, I've also been President of the National Association Of Concessionaires.



Favorite Product: I would have to say delivering outstanding concession experiences to our customers at entertainment and leisure venues.

Greatest Challenge Facing Company:

To continually deliver professional and managerial solutions that meet the clients' objectives to improve performance.

Greatest Challenge Facing Concessions Industry: I think the biggest challenge for the industry is to continue to deliver excellent quality and good value to our consumers in an environment with significant issues regarding developing the labor force and efficiently employing capital assets.

ANDREW STEIN
VP, Stein Industries
(Popcorn & nacho warmers, popcorn poppers, butter dispensers; complete concession facilities; theatre lobby fixtures)

Career Highlights:

I grew up in this business, and have been working here in the family business since I was 18. [At first], I did a lot of drafting and installation work in the field. Then my duties grew. I started selling, worked with R&D, [and had] administrative [responsibilities].

I've done many duties here. Currently I run the company with my brother, Stuart Stein. We grew to new facilities that are really state-of-the-art. We do complete woodworking, sheet metal fabrication, electrical design—everything sold by our company is manufactured at our facility.

Favorite Product:

One of my favorite products is a machine we're making called the "Mr. Butter-Up Plus," which is built exclusively for Cinemex Theatre in Mexico City. It dispenses butter flavored topping, lime juice and taco sauce onto their popcorn, all portion-controlled.

Greatest Challenge Facing Company:

We're always trying to keep up with our customers' needs with the changes in the concession industry. People have gone to putting more and more food service into the cinemas than ever before.

Greatest Challenge Facing Concessions Industry: Right now, it's seeing if all these new items that are being adapted really work or make sense in a movie theatre.

CANDY MAN CAN

Norman Chesler Takes the Presidency of NAC With a Five-Step Strategy Toward Growth

by Kim Williamson



The reason I want to do this, first of all, is tradition. My father was a past president [1973-75] of the association. Our company has been involved in NAC from the very, very beginning. So there's that reason."

That's the primary explanation that Norman Chesler, president of Salt Lake City-based jobber/distributor Theatre Candy Distributing Co., gives for his eagerness to undertake his new role as president of the National Association of Concessionaires. Chesler takes the post on June 4, the third day of the annual NAC convention, this year being held June 2-5 in Anaheim, Calif. Trim, fit and ebullient, Chesler is eager to discuss his plans for NAC after the completion of the successful tenure of longtime head David Scoco.

Secondly, says Chesler, there are "professional reasons" for taking the reins of the 53-year-old organization, in that "my customers will know that I'm a professional, and that in order to remain a professional I belong to an association that keeps me educated, keeps me informed." But there's also a third explanation: the fun of it.

"I really don't look at this as a tremendous responsibility," Chesler says. "I look at it as a tremendous challenge. When you create a challenge, it's fun, it's exciting. And having no financial rewards as such to it makes it even more exciting to do. I hope that I'll be happy after my tenure as president in that I will have created and accomplished some of the goals that I've set for myself, and in that our membership will be much better off for it.

"It might sound hokey, but I think it is true that individuals must have something in their lives that's not just monetary. They also must have something that they can accomplish, that they can be proud of. So I don't see it as a responsibility—I see it as a fun challenge."

For someone interested in maximizing the fun aspects of NAC—"in order to make an association successful, we all have to enjoy it," he explains—Chesler has a clearly targeted, five-part business strategy that he wants to implement after he takes office. The key elements: NAC's certification program; member services; publication efforts; crisis management; and international growth.

"The first phase will be to revitalize our certification program," Chesler says. "That's schooling that we offer that instructs people in our industry on how to be a professional within our industry." The three most important avenues with which NAC provides training opportunities are a series of videotapes on concessions practices, which managers can use to instruct staff as the need arises; the Concession Manager Certification Program, a 3 1/2-day program offered frequently throughout the year in diverse parts of the country; and the famed Snack Bar University at the annual NAC gathering.

"We've created some excellent tools for our members," Chesler adds. "What we have to do is utilize these tools better. We have to make sure that our members, or even nonmembers, understand that NAC has these wonderful pieces of merchandise for them to use to educate their employees. Our major concern is that we want to help everyone in our industry be *professional*. It's not only that we want the public to be satisfied when they're at an entertainment experience—not only about what they're looking at and enjoying, but what they're eating. And I hope we'll be able to create more of these educational tools."

As the new century nears, NAC is considering taking its tutoring efforts online. "Another avenue we're looking into now with our programming at Snack Bar University is the Internet," Chesler says. "The electronic era is here—but where do we fit into it as an association? We know that the Internet is in its infancy and that we don't quite understand it yet. But we will understand it, and very shortly. To what extent we'll be involved in it, we don't know—as a lot of people in a lot of industries don't know yet. But we're preparing for it."

Second on Chesler's to-do list, "and just as important," is maximizing and even increasing NAC's services. "One very simple thing we might have," Chesler says by way of example, "is our own travel agency that would be available to our membership." But the new president has a wider-ranging take on member services than just hotel and airline bookings, as is made obvious by Chesler's


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essay as president-elect for this issue. *(See p. 36.)* In the belief that "membership services are at the core of what NAC is all about," Chesler plans to work with the board of directors, the executive committee and the various board committees to increase both the quality and the quantity of services to NAC members.

That's made clear in his solid support for the new publication endeavors undertaken by NAC director of communications Susan Cross, who has overseen the revamping of the Concessionaire newsletter into the four-color Concessionworks quarterly and the introduction of the biannual Concession Profession, the first magazine published exclusively for the industry. "We've already contacted members within our association and will draw upon their resources so that we can publish to our members vital information they need to know," Chesler says. "And that will be done through our publications. And we're going to add new features—as a small example, a help-wanted section. For someone in the industry who needs an employee, or for somebody who is looking for employment within the industry, we will provide a conduit—a communication system through which people can contact other people or organizations."

Chesler's fourth sector of attack is developing a crisis team. Exhibitors certainly are familiar with crises, thanks to the hit their popcorn sales took after 1994's coconut oil controversy, generated by a Center for Science in the Public Interest report. "We're going to create a crisis team that will be available to our members if, heaven forbid, they have a crisis—be it a food-borne illness, or a death within the organization, or a natural disaster like the earthquake in California, or an industry problem, such as the coconut oil controversy," Chesler says. "We admit that we did not react properly and with speed to that debate, and that will not happen to us again.

"We found out later that we had information with which we could have answered, and answered intelligently, by giving the public a better understanding of what they were eating and what were the ramifications of what they were eating. We could have given the theatres the information, which they could have posted on the wall. Because coconut oil is not so terribly bad for you, especially given the amount of popcorn a person eats at a theatre. And also it all comes down to this: that the public will eat what they enjoy, especially in an entertainment atmosphere."

Part one of Chesler's crisis management plan will be accomplished during the Wednesday morning program at the 1997 convention's Snack Bar University, when Robert M. O'Halloran, Ph.D. of the University of Denver's School of Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management, conducts a crisis communication session for attendees. As a second stage, NAC will be sending selected individuals for day training at the University of Denver "to be instructed in the proper way to handle a crisis, at least in the first phase. So we will then have resources that we can call upon, should any of our members have a crisis."

Like NATO, NAC is making a major move to go international, and Chesler wants to accelerate that action. "A lot of the supplier companies that belong to NAC are now doing business internationally," he says. "And they might even have products that they sell overseas but not in the United States. What's happening then is that international vendors desire this information—and they want to have a concessions stand that operates as effectively as we do in the United States. So they are coming to us, either at conventions or via correspondence, asking, 'How do I do this? How do I get ahold of this information?' Well, NAC wants to take advantage of this desire for information, and we have the perfect vehicle in Snack Bar University. It's very cost effective for our members, too—they have these people, their customers, coming to them to see their merchandise.

"So that's another reason for manufacturers or companies that are dealing internationally to belong to NAC. I feel that we're now one world, and we're very strongly going to try to entice the international concessionaire to belong to our association. We've already contacted people, in Europe and Australia and the Far East, and they've expressed deep desire to belong to our association."

It's an aggressive agenda Chesler has developed for NAC, but one that he thinks is not only achievable but necessary. A comment on the move into the international arena might be emblematic of his presidency's philosophy: "It's really our responsibility to take advantage of this need and offer this to our members. And so we are, and we will be."

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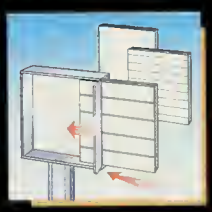
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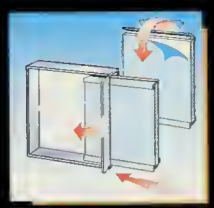
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SBU: Educational Excellence

By David R. Scoco
President, National Association of Concessionaires



Information is power, and those that don't have it will be left behind. To be successful, let alone on the cutting edge, it's vital to have the most comprehensive and current information available. As businesspeople, concessionaires and their suppliers must be current on concession issues as well as those relating to general management and marketing.

Enter Snack Bar University. For 16 years, SBU has provided NAC members and other attendees with timely, practical educational offerings in a concentrated three-day setting. For well over a decade, SBU attendees have gone home safe in the knowledge that they were taking back to their businesses information and ideas they could put to use immediately.

The quality of these sessions has been constant. Whether via a national speaker or a panel of NAC members, SBU has offered a range of educational opportunities that can't be matched anywhere in the industry. Building on that great tradition, the 1997 business sessions will cover issues relevant to all concessions professionals.

It's difficult enough to keep pace with the magazines, newspapers, journals, etc., in an effort to remain informed. But now there's cyberspace to contend with. The explosion and growth of the Internet and World Wide Web have opened another avenue in which we are expected to be proficient. But how do you find the information relevant to your industry and how can it make you more successful?

The opening session will deal with exactly that topic. "Driver's Ed for the Information Superhighway" will be exactly that—a road map for SBU attendees on how to use the Internet and World Wide Web in their businesses. Scott Helmers of the Harvard Computing Group will lead the session, and he has been hard at work researching our industry and surfing his way through cyberspace in search of information and resources. The program will consist of one large group session, as well as several smaller hands-on training sessions. These smaller sessions will allow attendees to have actual experience in accessing information on the Web.

The session will teach attendees how to find new customers, suppliers and information on the industry, and offer new ideas on how to use the Web to augment their businesses. Whether you're a Web veteran or have never ventured onto the information superhighway, we're confident you'll leave better informed.

Having the right information isn't enough if you don't know how to use it. And a crisis situation is no time to try to figure it out. Wednesday morning's sessions will be on "Crisis Communication," presented by Robert M. O'Halloran, Ph.D. of the University of Denver's School of Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management. The session will focus on developing a crisis management plan for your company. Certainly none of us wants to think about a crisis in our business. But that's precisely the point. Planning for the possibility can mean the difference between weathering that crisis intact or being destroyed by it.

The final day of SBU will be jam-packed with information. The morning begins with a session entitled "Dispelling the Myth—No Need to Promote Concessions." The session will be led by Jack Leonard, formerly of General Cinemas and a former NAC president. The program will focus on ways to promote and market your concessions using a variety of tools.

Following that will be two concurrent sessions, one of which will be on "Alcohol Awareness Programs," presented by Phil Blavat of Miller Brewing and David Tomber, CCM, of Multiplex. The session will include info on programs dealing with this vital topic.

To close out the educational portion of SBU will be the popular "Segment Breakout Sessions," in which attendees from various segments and venues participate in an interactive session relevant to their particular operations. Many attendees say that this environment provides some of the best practical information they could receive about concessions.

So that's it. Timely, practical educational offerings in a concentrated three-day setting, just like we promised, and just like we will continue to deliver at SBU. And that's a promise.



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Back to the Future

By Norman Chesler
President Elect, National Association of Concessionaires



What holds true for the past holds true for the future....

As I prepare to assume the presidency of the National Association of Concessionaires on June 4, I am mindful of the tradition of the office within the association and within my family. My dad was president of NAC from 1973 to 1975. The main emphasis in 1973 was membership services. The same holds true in 1997.

Membership services are at the core of what NAC is all about, and the benefits of NAC membership are great. We've always had a tradition of providing members with a variety and breadth of products and services designed to assist them in becoming more successful.

High on this list is Snack Bar University/Expo '97, held this June 2-5 in Anaheim, Calif. This annual convention and trade show is the highlight of our year, bringing together the leaders in recreational and leisure-time concessions for all types of venues. SBU was conceived as an educational conference specifically for the concessions industry, and education is still the main focus. This year's business sessions are alone worth the price of admission.

The session on the Internet will provide information on how you can use this technology in your business. I'm very excited about this chance to give our members hands-on training in accessing the World Wide Web. The crisis management session will focus on a topic many don't think about. There are many types of crisis situations in business, and this session offers the opportunity to craft a crisis management plan for your business. Thursday's sessions focus on concessions—how to creatively promote your concession stand; alcohol and draft beer awareness training; and the popular Segment Breakout Sessions.

The Expo Trade Show brings the world of concessions right to your door, showcasing all types of products and services. This two-day show enables the attendee to do "one-stop shopping" for all their concessions needs. It's a definite "don't miss" show and a valuable addition to NAC.

Apart from SBU, there are many other forms of education available from NAC. Our highly rated Concession Manager Certification Program provides comprehensive training on how to successfully manage your concessions operation, no matter what venue you're in. The video training tape series is a terrific way to teach the basics to your front-line staff. And the Regional Meeting Series brings a high-quality, low-cost seminar out to members across North America.

And those are just the educational benefits! This year is a very exciting one for our publications, the communication to our membership and to the industry at large. Our traditional membership newsletter has received a new name, Concessionworks, and a bright, snappy four-color design that is already getting great reviews from our members. But we're not stopping there. This spring we roll out Concession Profession, the only trade magazine specifically for concessions. This magazine, which will be published twice a year, will provide feature articles, industry news, and advertising opportunities, all in a four-color format. These two publications will mean that NAC members will receive a quality, colorful publication every other month!

But it's not just the tangible benefits that make membership in NAC so valuable—and profitable. The networking within our association membership is one of the greatest benefits. Obviously, there are wonderful opportunities at SBU/Expo—in business sessions, at social functions, on the trade show floor. But there are also chances at regional meetings and at other industry events to connect with other NAC members.

One of the things I love about NAC is being able to pick up the phone and get information, a product referral, or an answer to a question from a fellow member. If I don't know who to call, I simply contact the NAC office and they put me into contact with the right person. Our members are such a valuable resource—because they come from such a variety of facilities, venues and companies, they represent a broad base of contacts. With e-mail and the Internet, new technology connects us like never before.

If it seems like I'm overstressing our membership benefits, you're right—I am. They're the backbone of this association, and many of our own members don't know what's available to them. So I'll just keep telling them.

I think the benefits to NAC membership are great. But we're not resting on our laurels. As the new president, I'll be working with the Executive Committee, Board, and Board Committees to increase the quality and quantity of services to our members. A lot of ideas are under discussion, including a way to connect our members and companies with available employment opportunities. We're going to keep expanding into the international market, bringing our concessions professionals together from around the world.

There are many opportunities, and many challenges. In order to make an organization successful, tradition is important, and tradition will be carried on.



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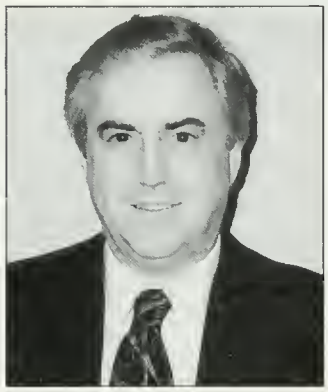
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The Force of Diversity

By Charles A. Winans
Executive Director, National Association of Concessionaires



When I tell people I work for an association that represents the concessions industry, I usually follow that statement with a short list to explain—"...like hot dogs, candy, popcorn, ice cream...." The people I'm talking to invariably get wistful looks on their faces, and I can see they're thinking about crunching on some hot buttered popcorn or a candy bar. The response is almost always, "That sounds like fun."

I then begin to explain that the National Association of Concessionaires represents concession operators in all types of facilities—"like stadiums, arenas, movie theatres, zoos, amusement parks, colleges and universities, convention centers, and so on." I continue by noting that we represent not only the operators but also the suppliers to the industry—the ones that make the food and beverage products, the equipment manufacturers, popcorn processors, brokers, jobber distributors, architects and consultants. By this time, their eyes have usually glazed over and I know I've lost them in the explanation.

It is precisely this broad definition of our membership that makes it so difficult to explain—and so wonderful to be a part of. The diversity of our members makes it challenging, yet the focus for all is the same: making concessions successful and profitable.

As the executive director of NAC, I am fortunate to be surrounded by staff and board members who strive to build upon the commonalities and celebrate the diversity. It is an ongoing challenge for all of us to choose the best ways to educate, train and inform our constituency.

I'm particularly proud of our accomplishments recently, and those to come in the near future. Most of these relate to our most important service—communicating to our membership. Last year our Marketing/Membership committee, under the leadership of Bruce Proctor, developed a plan to recruit new members to NAC through a membership recruitment video that could be sent to potential members and used at industry gatherings. After approval of the plan, the committee led the production of the videotape, which has been receiving great response. The video also won two prestigious awards, one from the American Society of Association Executives, and the "Telly Award" for business videos.

The success of this project led us to look at our other communication vehicles for our membership and the industry at large. After a lot of discussion and planning, we decided to make major changes to both of our association publications. The member newsletter known as The Concessionaire has been the first to undergo a metamorphosis. The name has been changed to Concessionworks, and it has received a major redesign, using four-color photos and bright graphics. The first issue, published in March, included feature articles, industry and association news, and practical tips for our members, who have been giving it rave reviews.

Next up is our new magazine, Concession Profession. As important as concessions are to the recreational and leisure-time industry, there is no industry magazine that specifically focuses on concessions. We felt a $9 billion industry deserved one. Concession Profession will be published twice a year and will include feature articles, industry news, and advertising opportunities. The fall issue will include the NAC membership directory in membership copies.

We are very excited about these major changes to our communication efforts. In a

time when many associations are cutting back their publications to members, we are not only increasing our frequency and size but also putting considerable resources toward content and design. And, although this is a significant expansion in membership services, we are embarking on this without an increase in dues. In fact, we haven't had an increase in dues for nearly a decade. We are proud of the fact that we continue to give our members a variety of education, communication and networking benefits while keeping dues at a very reasonable cost.

Providing publications, as well as other benefits that meet the needs of our diverse membership, is not easy. But we continue adding, changing and refining our services so that we can best represent and provide for our members. We are fortunate to have a board of directors and active committees that devote considerable time and energy into making NAC the best association it can be. Their leadership and direction have kept NAC on a path that puts our members first.

At every Snack Bar University there is an attendee who makes a contact, learns a tip or simply makes a friend of someone in another aspect of the concessions field that they would have met nowhere but at SBU. And that's what makes diversity so great. Collectively, we are a force to be reckoned with.

An association is only as good as its members. If that is true, then NAC is great. In our diversity are strength and depth. At every Snack Bar University there is an attendee who makes a contact, learns a tip or simply makes a friend of someone in another aspect of the concessions field that they would have met nowhere but at SBU. And that's what makes diversity so great. It's not about who isn't a part of our small aspect of concessions; it's about who we are collectively. And, collectively, we are a force to be reckoned with. And, to paraphrase that popular series of movies this year, I guess NAC is "the keeper of the Force."

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GLOBAL GOODIES

Movie snacks are a universal mainstay. But in some countries, hot buttered popcorn and Raisinettes take a backseat to dried squid and chicken feet

by Susan Lambert

Ahhh. An afternoon at the movies. Settling down in those plush red seats—with cupholders of course—ready to embark on two hours of adventure-romance-drama-laughter-tears. Tantalized with the shared experience of enveloping darkness and the shimmering light of the screen that will transport us to places unknown. Of course, none of it would be complete without a trip to the snack bar, tempted by the culinary delights of all those concessions. So sit back and indulge: crunch down on that tasty dried squid, wash it down with a popular Guarana soda, and what movie experience would be complete without that perennial favorite—sugared popcorn. Sugared popcorn?

Indeed, as the cinema market continues to expand throughout the globe, and as many stateside chains move beyond their borders attempting to bring the ultimate American theatre experience to a world audience, exhibitors find that stocking their concession stands requires a mix of traditional, typically "American" snacks and drinks alongside local favorites and food that would seem somewhat unique, if not downright unsavory, to domestic palates.

In fact, according to Tim Warner, president of Cinemark International, the number one snack food for movie theatres isn't our beloved popcorn, sugared or salted, but chicken feet. "Chicken feet in China—number one in the world." Warner explains, "They have such a huge attendance and that's the most popular snack food in China." Cinemark International has theatres throughout South America, including Mexico, El Salvador, Chile, Brazil and Peru, and it recently opened the Movix theatre in Kobe, Japan, in a joint venture with Shochiku. Warner says that before Cinemark moves into a location, it does local market studies to find out specific tastes of the area to adapt its concessions stands and CineCafes to the marketplace. But that wasn't always the case. "When we first went into Mexico, we did go in with just our U.S. products. We really made a point of it, and our concession sales reflected it because the market just didn't respond. We were forced to adapt very quickly to local tastes. It is essential that you do your local market research and then adapt your concessions to the individual country's taste." For example, bringing nachos into Mexican theatres may seem like a perfect match. Not so, says Warner. "They weren't really aware of what the product was because it's more of a Tex-Mex/U.S. thing."



DELICIOUS IN ANY LANGUAGE: *Yogen Fruz (frozen yogurt) is offered at National Amusements' Maipu, Chile site; patrons can select different fruits to be blended in with the non-fat frozen treat.*

Each country requires special consideration. In Chile it's sugared popcorn. Many locations require a wider variety of drinks, including coffees, teas and beers along with the standard sodas. Warner adds, "In Peru there's a drink called Inca Cola which is extremely popular. In Brazil there's a local soda, Guarana, that rivals Coke in that market, and it's very important that you sell both products." Also in Brazil, a cheese bread-like pastry is very popular with coffee, and Halls cough drops, of all things, are a favorite. That item surprised Warner. "They're sold as a concession item in all the concession stands. I'm sure we would never think of selling cough drops in the U.S." Warner adds that coffee is a huge seller all over South America. "It's almost as mandatory that you have the coffee available as it is the soft drinks." And each country has a different way of serving coffee. "In Peru, it's almost like a syrup. Coffee is served very strong throughout South America, but in some places you almost have to serve it on a spoon."

In the United States, concessions are traditionally a high-yield operation. Is that so with overseas theatres? Warner says yes and no, depending on the market. "We're finding similar or even higher cents per person in Japan." But Cinemark's Mexico and South American sites typically do about 50 to 60 percent of the business its United States theatres do. Warner attributes much of that to a lack of habit. "In most of the South American countries that we have gone into, the existing theatres did not have concession operations, or if they did they were very limited. So it does take a while to establish the habit, and you do have to build the audience for it."

Pickled squid is particularly popular in Cinemark's Kobe theatre. Other theatre snacks include dried squid and rice crackers. Warner hasn't yet sampled the squid, but he has tried the sugared popcorn and South America's popular Inca Cola and Guarana sodas. "The two soft drinks are sensational. In fact, I think the drinks would be well received in the U.S."

Dana Wilson, director of corporate communications for National Amusements, says there isn't a dramatic difference between what moviegoers like to eat at the movies in Chile and what United States audiences enjoy, with the exception of the sugared popcorn. The chain's Showcase Maipu theatre features sweet and salty popcorn as well as a popular frozen desert: Yogen Fruz. Wilson says it's one of the foods the company definitely wants to bring to the United States because it's so popular in Chile. Yogen Fruz is a non-fat yogurt blended with a choice of fresh fruit. Fruit choices in-

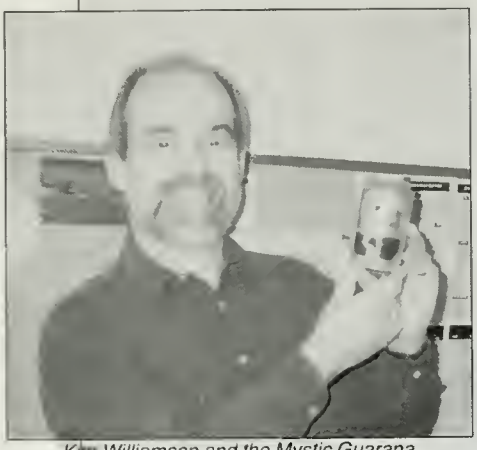
clude: raspberries, blackberries, mulberries, pineapples, mangoes and bananas. Says Wilson, "It's very popular. And in Chile they have such beautiful fruit. It's wonderful."

According to BOXOFFICE European correspondent Melissa Morrison, most Czech cinemas don't sell any concessions, but when they do, it's beer, wine, candy and chips. Prague's first multiplex, the Galaxie, keeps customers happy with ham-flavored popcorn and a full bar. Wallace Theatre Corp. has theatres in American Samoa, where favorites include a rice cracker called Mochi Crunch and the ever-popular dried squid. Polynesian theatregoers enjoy packaged betel nut, which is slightly narcotic and flavored with limes. The British like their sodas served warm, and they heartily indulge on both sweet and salty popcorn in fairly equal amounts.

AMC Entertainment International offers both sweet and salty popcorn at its AMC Arrabida 20 in Porto, Portugal, but wound up cutting back on the salt flavoring for Japanese audiences at the AMC Canal City 13 in Fukuoka. Gary Thyer, managing director of international operations, say it's because the Japanese audiences prefer a blander-tasting popcorn. AMC has also found the Japanese are not prone to indulge in the huge American-size containers. "We stepped down our drink and popcorn sizes with the thought that at some point [as moviegoing and concessions habits grow] we'll probably introduce larger sizes." Thyer says accommodations to the foreign marketplace have been minor. "Because we're bringing an American experience to these countries, we pretty much go off the American product and 'localize' it." AMC's expansion plans include Festival Walk 11 in Hong Kong and a 24-plex outside Barcelona, Spain. In each site, Thyer says, AMC thoroughly researches the location. "We do a lot of meetings, talk to as many local people as possible and get some market research going. Each market has a uniqueness that you need to address." Much of the research includes time spent in existing local theatres, finding out the good, the bad and the tasteless.

So although the flavor of the popcorn in Buenos Aires might seem bizarre to audiences from Kansas and the idea of squid and sequels isn't appetizing to teenagers in Seattle, think what audiences in Bangladesh could possibly think of Sour Patch Kids or Jujubees. So sit back, enjoy the movie and pass the chicken feet—yum.

GUARANA: THE BOXOFFICE *TASTE TEST*



Kim Williamson and the Mystic Guarana.

From out of the misty, mysterious plains of the Rain Forest comes GUARANA, an extremely popular Brazilian soft drink that, according to Cinemark's Tim Warner, outsells Pepsi there, and sells almost as well as Coke.

After carving our way through the Brazilian jungle with a machete (actually it was more like a letter opener) and locating the sacred temple (actually, the U.S. Post Office's Hollywood Branch), a sample of this legendary nectar was bestowed upon us by the Ancient Brazilian Gods (okay, so Cinemark sent us one). Would our Americanized palates be ready for so magical a draft? Well, yes and no...

RAY GREENE: BOXOFFICE Senior Editor Christine James, your reaction to this beverage from Brazil?

CHRISTINE JAMES: First off, I'm very glad that there are no crickets or squid in it. My first reaction is that it smells exactly like Easter-egg dye. I agree with Susan that we should have refrigerated it first, but other than that, it's kind of like a combination of cream soda and Slice.

GREENE: Thumbs up, thumbs down, thumbs sideways?

JAMES: I would say thumbs sideways. It might be more thumbs up if it had been cold.

GREENE: Would you like to refrigerate yours and try again later?

JAMES: No, because then it will lose its carbonation.

GREENE: It's just so difficult, boldly going where no man has gone before. What does this wonderful beverage product tell you about the people of Brazil?

JAMES: Deep down we're all the same?

Our intrepid Editor-in-Chief climbs into his canoe and paddles down the Amazon to the office of Associate Editor Susan Lambert, who has chained herself to a tree in protest against Rain Forest deforestation. He hands her a cup of Guarana and...

SUSAN LAMBERT: Smells like a Lifesaver.

GREENE: Alright, Susan, give it a try. Honest reaction, what do ya think?

LAMBERT: It almost tastes like a watered-down soda, Coke or Pepsi kind of thing, with a hint of fruity flavor. Orange is too strong—it's um, it's like if you left a Lifesaver in a can of soda and it fizzled away, it wore it out.

GREENE: Do you think this product has any future if it is imported into America?

LAMBERT: (*trying to be polite*) Ah, as kind of a specialty item, I guess.

GREENE: What does it tell you about the people of Brazil?

LAMBERT: They like their soda.

GREENE: Thank you for those apocryphal comments. Anything else?

LAMBERT: No thanks.

Meanwhile, BOXOFFICE *Managing Editor Kim Williamson has been strapped by a tribe of angry native peoples to two pillars in a crumbling local temple, where he awaits ritual slaughter and the ripping out of his entrails, which are to be used to predict the outcome of* BOXOFFICE*'s 1998 Barometer Star Poll. Not surprisingly, Mr. Williamson is his usual chipper and well-dressed self...*

GREENE: So what do you think, Kim Williamson?

WILLIAMSON: It's rather good. It has a sweet, yet alcoholy-aroma of NyQuil, yet it goes down rather smooth.

GREENE: That was good. And what does the popularity of this product tell you about Brazil, or does it tell you anything?

WILLIAMSON: They need more Dr. Pepper (*laughs*). Susan told me the folks who sent it thought it was especially sweet, but it's not that sweet. It's smooth, sweet and likable.

Snapping into Indiana Jones mode, BOXOFFICE *Editor-in-Chief Ray Greene liberates Williamson and helps him to escape the restless locals by using the corkscrew in his Swiss Army knife in novel and unspeakable ways. He and Williamson swim upstream, where they rescue Susan Lambert as she is about to be devoured by nameless, multi-colored reptiles. Our courageous explorers return to Christine James' desk, where Greene celebrates a job well done with a taste of the mystic Guarana.*

GREENE: (*sniffing*) The smell reminds me of my Dad's aftershave when I was a kid. Old Spice. It does have kind of the aroma of like a fruity wine or a brandy or something. You can tell there's like real fruit in here. So now to taste it, with the proviso that I don't generally drink sweet things.

(*He sips.*) To me it tastes like one of those strange kinds of fruity watered-down things that you get in art-house cinemas where all the people are trying to stay svelte. I think it's fine for what it is, I don't know if it will be my personal preference, but what can I tell ya, I'm a Diet Coke man. And as to what it tells me about the people of Brazil, boy do they like their fructose down there. Guess if you live in a country that exports a lot of fruit, this is the kind of stuff you drink. I don't know if it will work in the States, but somebody oughtta give it a try.

The sun sinks slowly in the Hollywood sky, and we bid aloha to the intrepid staff of BOXOFFICE*—spanning the world, so you don't have to.*

IN*VEND*TIVE SOLUTION

As Concessions Offerings Grow, Vending Machines Could Help Reduce Lines and Increase Profits *by Pat Kramer*



C.T. Four Distributing's Silver Screen air-popped popcorn vending machine.

Wally Helton, Mann Theatres' vice president of concession operations, says, "In the theatres, we have a motto: 'If the doors are open, we're popping corn.' There's nothing like the smell of popcorn to right the senses!"

But if popcorn stimulates the appetite of moviegoers, long lines can have the reverse effect. That's why many theatres are now turning to vending machines to offer patrons quicker sales, or in some instances, a different selection of snacks.

Helton notes, "I think that the place for vending machines in this industry is for additional points of sale, where a customer that just wants a candy bar and doesn't want to wait in line at the concession stand has the opportunity to purchase a candy bar or soda through a vending machine. It's never meant to take over and become the concession sales part of our business."

While oil-popped popcorn is still the preferred choice among moviegoers, Mann Theatres has recognized that some of its patrons prefer the option of helping themselves. For those people, Mann Theatres last year installed air-popped popcorn vending machines at some of its Los Angeles theatres. Distributed by C.T. Four Distributing of Fresno, Calif., the Hollywood Pop "Grand Popper" delivers air-popped popcorn in just 90 seconds, with a variety of interesting flavors. At just 108 calories per 32 oz. cup (toppings are an additional 112 calories), C.T. Four owner Teresa Block says it provides a choice for the health-conscious moviegoer.

> *"If people walk into a theatre lobby and we've got all the kids we could possibly have behind the concession stand but it's just one of those 'Star Wars'-type weekends, an additional vending machine is helpful."*

Describing how it works, Block says, "A patron puts money [the competitive price of $2] into the machine, and the popcorn drops into the popper where they can watch the cup fill up before them." With the push of a button, the customers can choose their favorite flavor: butter, white cheddar or caramel, which is then mixed in by an automatic stirrer.

Recently, C.T. Four introduced its "cadillac" air-popped model: the "Silver Screen." Larger than the Grand Popper, the Silver Screen holds more popcorn and more cups and is fully computerized. It also offers customers more choices of flavors: butter, Jalapeno (mild and spicy), cheddar, banana cream pie, strawberry cream pie, barbecue, caramel, caramel fudge, chocolate hazelnut, vanilla and pizza pizzazz. With very little

maintenance required, the machines enable theatre owners who buy them to hold onto their profits, says Block. For most customers, though, C.T. Four leases the vending machines, providing full maintenance and restocking of the popcorn and paying those clients a share of the profits. With the opportunity present for the theatres to put their logos on the vending machine's cups, Block sees the enterprise as an appealing supplement to standard popcorn sales.

Although Helton notes that air-popped corn contributes to only a small share of overall concession sales, he believes it provides a useful alternative to waiting in line. "We had a market segment that we weren't hitting, or if we were hitting it, we were dedicating an entire serving station area to air popped. When you're trying to accommodate the masses and only 5 percent are going for the air popped, it just made sense to offer [the vending machines]. It was the freshest way to go, too—instead of getting air popped popcorn that was being popped the day before and supplied by our concession supplier, people could watch it popping right before their eyes."

Block acknowledges that air-popped corn has gotten a "bad rap" from previous attempts to market it. "Some of the theatres had tried air popping it in the morning, then it was put in to a bin. With air popped, you can't do that. It doesn't stay very well; it gets stale very fast. With our air popped, it uses no oils, and with the variety of flavors, it reaches out to the public."

Helton sees the value in terms of both profits and customer convenience: "If people walk into a theatre lobby and we've got all the kids we could possibly have behind the concession stand but it's just one of those 'Star Wars'-type weekends, an additional vending machine is helpful." Besides air-popped corn, Mann Theatres also use vending machines for Pepsi's 20-ounce "Quick Slam," selling drinks in plastic bottles which can be brought into the theatres.

While Mann is devoted to selling Pepsi products, the United Artists Theatre Circuit is using vending machines to bolster their Coca-Cola sales. Bruce Taffet, executive vice president of UA, says 80 percent of the 400-theatre circuit now has Coke vending machines in the back corridors by the auditorium, where they don't conflict with high-traffic concessions areas. Says Taffet, "We found that putting our Coke concessions in the back corridors, some of our customers—people who are in a hurry as well as our teenage market—tend to use them. [Teens] happen to think it's not real cool to go up to a concession stand; they usually hang out by our Coke vending machines in the vestibule or corridors on the way to the theatre auditoriums."

As evidence of the successful strategy, he points to a survey done on the Proteus network (a high-definition satellite TV link within UA theatres that polls patrons and gathers statistical information). "We can link 60 theatres or as many as we want and do surveys or introduce new product lines. We found that some teenagers enjoy the look of the Coke bottle—the 20 oz. plastic contour bottles. From the test that we did, we found that we had some definite incremental sales from the vending machines that were not cannibalizing sales from concessions. It was definitely increasing."

With its success at using vending machines for the full line of Coke products, Taffet says UA is now moving forward with bulk candy vending, which allows the customer who doesn't want to make a large candy purchase or who wants to taste a few different brands of candy a chance to do so without waiting in line.

Taffet's vision is for a row of candy dispensers, varying in height and color, artistically arranged so as to catch the eye along the back wall by the Coke machines. Says Taffet, "It's location, location, location. We have to make sure that we put the vending machines in the right areas so they draw on the right customers that we need them to."

"The place for vending machines in this industry is for additional points of sale, where a customer who doesn't want to wait in line can purchase a candy bar or soda through a vending machine. It's never meant to take over the concession sales part of our business."

While the future of concessions in America remains geared to the sale of food and drink, over in the United Kingdom the UCI theatre circuit is leading the way for new vending uses. Just before Christmas, it began a pilot program designed to test the marketing of food and drink along with different combinations of merchandise. Vending Intelligence, the vending machine manufacturer UCI is working with, is headquartered stateside in Culver City, Calif.

Tony Brinsley, general manager of Vending Intelligence, U.K., says, "UCI Cinemas contacted us and decided to install hot drinks, snacks and merchandising, with the emphasis on soundtracks. We contacted Gardner Merchant [a company that provides vending services to large organizations], then earmarked five sites at which we tried vending services as well as selling over the counter."

At each site, snacks, hot drinks (such as coffee and tea) and candy are sold beside vending machines stocked with soundtrack merchandise. Three sites use CD vending machines (two of which are converted snack machines). Although the company initially stocked the machine with soundtrack CDs only, Vending Intelligence has since expanded the merchandise, at the circuit's request, to include Top 40 artists as well as some bargain price selections.

Pete Folger, president of Vending Intelligence, affirms that the machines can be used for many different types of merchandise. "Anything can be dispensed in the machines, including a VHS box, a pager, CDs, audio cassettes, T-shirts, softcover books or video games. Currently [in England], we're dispensing items that can be purchased after the performance as a memento."

Despite Vending Intelligence's efforts to provide alternate sources of income for exhibition circuits, the company has received little response at this time. Says Folger, "It's ironic that England is a little behind us in architecture but may be a little ahead of us in unattended vending of merchandise." He adds, "We'd like to see someone step up to the plate and try it."

UA's Taffet says vending merchandise is something his circuit is not aggressively pursuing at this time. However, at Mann Theatres, Helton is considering branching out in that direction, although he comments, "We have to be careful that we don't violate our lease," referring to several competing retail music stores in the area of Mann's theatres.

His idea for vending merchandise is more along the lines of clothing: "We found a company to pack a T-shirt or painter's cap into the double-CD sized compartments. We're trying to get more of the merchandise lined up before we just get a machine and vend CDs or soundtracks out of it. Our preference would be to own the machine and get various types of merchandise, using Los Angeles as the test market. I want to be able to do something different and unique, and this method of folding movie-related T-shirts into a double CD looks kind of interesting."

As exhibition continues to find itself in an increasingly competitive arena, vying for its share of the entertainment dollar, savvy theatre owners must keep up with the changes in audiences' tastes and make convenience a priority. A vending machine could be the mechanical employee exhibitors have been hoping for—and one who's never late and doesn't require lunch breaks or overtime. You just have to know how to push its buttons.

SMUGGLERS BLUES

How Big a Problem is Food Smuggling to the Concessions Industry?

by Jon Matsumoto

It could have been a small bag of peanuts, a canned soft drink or even a container of fried chicken.

Whatever the item, it's likely that most regular filmgoers in North America have smuggled food into a movie theatre at least once.

Of course, theatre chains don't like their customers bringing in outside snacks or meals. Their objections range from the obvious (it cuts into their own concession business) to the not quite so obvious (it increases cleanup duties for their employees).

Most theatre chains have policies prohibiting food smuggling. Toronto-based Cineplex Odeon has signs posted at all of its facilities clearly stating this rule.

Yet when push comes to shove, a number of these theatres say they aren't about to get militant to enforce these policies. Ticket takers or ushers won't search bulging handbags or oddly shaped clothing items, nor will they patrol the auditorium looking for violators. Marci Davies, vice president of marketing and communications for Cineplex Odeon, says the company's employees will not utter a word even if they smell a Burger King Whopper and an order of fries wafting from a patron's suspicious looking backpack.

"It's really the kind of thing where we ask people not to bring things in but we don't search people or harass people," states Davies. "We don't confiscate food. It's a customer courtesy."

"We're attuned to customer service," concurs Fred Gable, vice president, concessions for Loews Theatres. "We're not there to harass people. If people bring something in, we're not the police and we're not going to jump on somebody. We think too much of our customers."

Davies points out that if a customer is spotted walking into an auditorium eating a non-theatre food item, he or she will be asked to consume it in the lobby. But it seems film patrons need only be discreet in order to get away with enjoying their contraband while viewing a film.

AMC is one theatre company that has a particularly liberal food policy. It allows customers to bring in outside food if it's similar to what's available at the concession stand.

> *"We're not there to harass people. If people bring something in, we're not the police and we're not going to jump on somebody. We think too much of our customers."*

"We take a little different tack than most circuits," says Phil Pennington, vice president, concessions for AMC. It seems that if an argument were going to be made for customers bringing outside food or beverages, it would be because the theatre didn't offer the items the patron prefers. But Pennington explains that by only allowing outside food that's comparable to what's sold at the concession stand, AMC helps protect against patrons smuggling in products that can be offensive or even dangerous to other customers.

Loews' Gable agrees that this can be a problem, citing Chinese food and hoagies as types of items that have an odor that might be distasteful to some and distracting to others.

"There are some foods that are more malodorous than others. Someone could walk in with [an item] that would give off a real pungent odor that would disturb other people," says Gable.

Pennington adds that greasy food items can stain theatre chairs, which increases cleanup costs. Plus, there's additional litter to be picked up after screenings. According to Gable, smugglers aren't particularly conscientious about disposing of their own food wrappings. "We don't mind picking up our own merchandise," Gable states. "But when you have to pick up other things brought in, it's a little disturbing."

There is also a safety issue involved in theatre circuit food policies. Bottles and cans, exhibition executives agree, can cause significant harm. There's the potential of these containers being thrown at the screen or at other patrons during a film presentation. Broken glass on the floor of a darkened auditorium can also lead to serious cuts, Davies points out.

"[The presence of outside food] also raises insurance questions," adds Gable. "There have been cases where somebody has slipped on a product which [a theatre] didn't sell."

There's no way to quantify just how severe a problem food smuggling is for theatre circuits. Cineplex Odeon's Davies and Pennington of AMC don't feel there's been an increase in such behavior. Conversely, Loews' Gable believes smuggling has gotten

worse in recent years. He says the growth in non-theatre food wrappings and containers left behind in theatres is evidence supporting this claim.

Some circuits have attempted to ease the flow of food smuggling by becoming more consumer friendly. Clearly, there are some patrons who simply do not appreciate the food items being offered at movie theatres. In an attempt to appeal to health-conscious customers, Cineplex Odeon now offers trail mix, bottled water and several types of fruit juices.

"Over the years, as the population has gotten older and the demographic mix of the moviegoing public has changed, we have altered the offerings accordingly," reveals Davies. "Recently, we introduced a very wide coffee program, featuring our own brand of Cineplex coffee, which has been incredibly successful for us. We've got premium ice cream products in most of our locations. It gives us an opportunity to serve people who aren't traditional popcorn and soft drink customers."



GRAB BAG: *While the incidence of food smuggling is impossible to chart, it's been found to occur within all demographics, but most predominantly with teenagers.*

Loews has also broadened its menu, which now includes such items as buffalo wings and french fries. In a few theatres, the company has experimented with coffee bars and lobby seating with tables. Cafes can be found within concession areas at some Cineplex Odeon theatres as well.

AMC has also experimented with different food items. The chain has added such products as bottled water and bulk candy. But Pennington reveals that the traditional core items sell the best. "[In order of popularity] it's number one, soft drinks; number two, popcorn; number three, candy. After that it's hot dogs and nachos," he says.

Pennington says that AMC did experiment with trail mix, but that it didn't prove to be a "panacea." Pizza was also dropped from the menu. Problems keeping this item fresh contributed to its downfall, he states.

A number of theatres have introduced value pack programs. Taking a cue from various fast food restaurants, Loews and Cineplex Odeon combine various items on the menu and then offer them at a lower price than what they would cost if bought individually.

"The combo offerings make your selection a lot easier," says Davies. "So you can order combo [number] one and that might be two drinks, one large popcorn and one candy bar or two drinks, a popcorn and a nacho. Those offerings tend to change on a quarterly basis."

AMC has a special value deal for children but not adults.

Many theatre circuits have added larger sized containers for some of their menu items such as soft drinks and popcorn. These servings provide the customer with a better value on a per-ounce basis.

But Davies isn't convinced that expanded menus and value deals are enough to stop the dedicated food smuggler.

"You can buy a pack of M&Ms at a convenience store and it's a lot less expensive than buying them at a theatre," she comments. "If you're prone to that sort of economizing, I don't think expanded offerings will [make a difference]."

For the majority of food smugglers, smuggling is most likely financially motivated. There's no getting around the fact that theatre food, even with a value pack reduction, is often more expensive than what it would cost if purchased at the grocery store.

Theatre chain executives defend their concession prices by pointing out that they are no higher than those found at other entertainment venues such as sports stadiums and theme parks, adding that concession revenue is a vital part of keeping their theatres economically viable. Pennington states that food sales account for about 30 percent of AMC's earnings. For Cineplex Odeon the figure is about 25 percent, according to Davies.

"I don't think consumers have an adequate appreciation for the economics of our business, like how much it costs to rent a film and how much it costs to build the theatres we're building today," says Pennington.

So just who are the main offenders when it comes to food smuggling in movie theatres?

To Gable, it's difficult to single out one group for blame. He says the transgressors range from teenagers to families with children to senior citizens.

But Pennington says a study conducted by Coca-Cola in 1995 pegged teenagers as the most frequent moviegoing food smugglers.

"Something like 17 percent of that age group was smuggling something in every time they came in," he reveals.

Pennington attributes this pattern to the idea that teenagers have the least amount of disposable income. Teens usually finance their moviegoing experience out of their own often limited allowances or earnings.

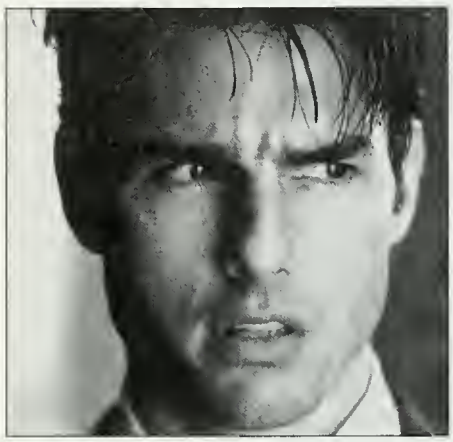
Families with young children are the biggest buyers of theatre food products, while senior citizens are neither heavy consumers nor heavy smugglers. Pennington says these observations were supported by the Coca-Cola study.

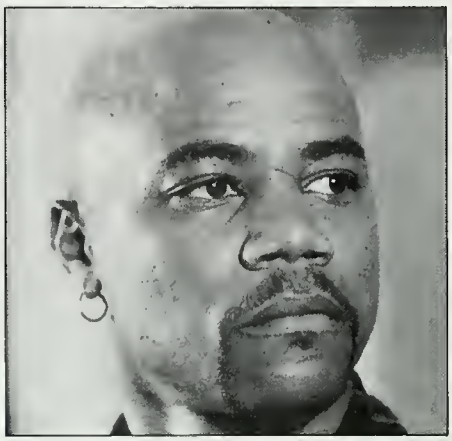
Gable, Pennington and Davies all believe that buying certain food items at the theatre will always be a part of the movie viewing experience for many customers. Indeed, it would be difficult to smuggle in popcorn that can match the taste of a bucket of the fresh, hot-buttered variety available at a theatre concession stand. And there are many consumers—particularly in the snack happy, couch potato American culture—who undoubtedly still prefer convenience over savings.

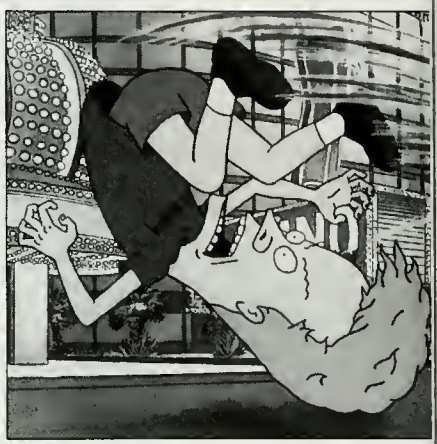
"People enjoy seeing a movie on a big screen with a lot of other people," observes Gable. "There's a big difference between watching a movie on TV and watching a movie in a theatre. The comedy seems funnier and the action seems more intense. Part of that experience is having a really good [theatre-made] tub of popcorn, a soda and something to munch on as you're watching a movie."

"There are some foods that are more malodorous than others. Someone could walk in with [an item] that would give off a real pungent odor that would disturb other people."

"MAGUIRE" NEGOTIATES WIN/WIN; "BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD" SUCK (Heh-Heh)







Who'd have thought that an energetic love story about a frantic sports agent finding his heart would not only capture audiences and reviewers alike, but also spark the most overused catch phrase of the year? With the exception of golden boy Tom Cruise in the lead, "Jerry Maguire" was practically a sleeper hit that surprised almost everyone with its off-season success. But supported by Oscar-winning Cuba Gooding Jr., "Maguire" brought in the cash (domestic receipts near $150 million and still going) and easily won both the Most Popular and the Best Film categories in BOXOFFICE's Fall '96/Winter '97 Blue Ribbon Poll.

"Ransom" kidnapped second place with 162 points, while the family puppy-fest "101 Dalmatians" collared third place with 101 plus 14 points (115 points). "The First Wives Club (with 78 points) and "Michael" (with 65 points) filled the fourth and fifth spots respectively. The comedy/horror film "Scream" scared up 64 points to take sixth place. The final four include "Space Jam" at number seven (62 points); "Star Trek: First Contact" at number eight (51 points); the explosive "Dante's Peak" at number nine (43 points); and "Evita" at number ten (28 points). The films in this category ranged from hard-edged thrillers to raucous comedies and proved to exhibitors that whether it be puppies, papas, agents, ex-wives or earth-bound angels our movie heroes come in all shapes and sizes.

Several of the Most Popular awardees also appear on the Best Film list, including "Jerry Maguire" at number one (141 points); "Ransom" at number three (107 points); "Michael" at number six (42 points); "Dante's Peak" at number seven (38 points); "Evita" at number eight (34 points) and "Scream" at number nine (31 points). Other films on the Best Film list were multiple Oscar-winner "The English Patient" at number two with 112 points; Miramax's Australian import "Shine" at number four (54 points); the controversial "The People vs. Larry Flynt" at number five (43 points); and "The Ghost and the Darkness" at number 10 with 29 points.

The results of the Worst Film category were proof that even if a film rakes it in at the boxoffice, exhibitors don't necessarily think much of it. The animated "Beavis and Butthead Do America" may have brought in over $62 million domestically, but it easily topped the Worst Film slot with 84 points. As Dale Haag of Cooper Theatres Mall Cinema in Hays, Kan. queries, "How can a movie like 'Beavis and Butthead' make so much money?"

In contrast, high expectations and low returns landed more films into the Worst Films department: Tim Burton's "Mars Attacks!" took the number three spot with 60 points while "Turbulence" shook in at number four (51 points) and the Arnold Schwarzenegger comedy "Jingle All the Way" jangled into the number five spot (50 points); Wacky comedies that weren't funny didn't fare much better: John Leguizamo's "The Pest" (68 points) bothered exhibitors enough to nab the number two slot; and "Meet Wally Sparks" plugged into the number six position (46 points). "Booty Call" (with 35 points) and "Dear God" (with 32 points) came in at number seven and eight while ninth place was a three-way tie between "Beautician and the Beast," "Bogus" and "High School High" (each with 31 points). Although Tim Veno of Carmike Cinemas in Connellsville, Pa. commented that there were "too many bad movies to choose from" many exhibitors felt overall it was a good seasonss. An exhibitor from Kings Drive In Theatre in Armona, Calif. summed it up best by saying, "I had thought that 1996 would be a record boxoffice year. Now it begins to appear that 1997 will surpass it. The releasing companies seem to have mastered the art of release patterns and excellent promotion and advertising."

Most Popular Film

Title	(Points)
1. Jerry Maguire *	(236)
2. Ransom *	(162)
3. 101 Dalmatians *	(115)
4. The First Wives Club *	(78)
5. Michael	(65)
6. Scream	(64)
7. Space Jam	(62)
8. Star Trek: First Contact	(51)
9. Dante's Peak	(43)
10. Evita	(28)

* = *gross of over $100 million*

Best Film

Title	(Points)
1. Jerry Maguire *	(141)
2. The English Patient	(112)
3. Ransom *	(107)
4. Shine	(54)
5. The People vs. Larry Flynt	(43)
6. Michael	(42)
7. Dante's Peak	(38)
8. Evita	(34)
9. Scream	(31)
10. The Ghost and the Darkness	(29)

Worst Film

Title	(Points)
1. Beavis and Butt-head Do America	(84)
2. The Pest	(68)
3. Mars Attacks!	(60)
4. Turbulence	(51)
5. Jingle All the Way	(50)
6. Meet Wally Sparks	(46)
7. Booty Call	(35)
8. Dear God	(32)
9. TRIPLE TIE: Beautician and the Beast, Bogus, High School High,	(31)

★★★★★ OUTSTANDING
★★★★ VERY GOOD
★★★ GOOD
★★ FAIR
★ POOR
(no stars) BOMB

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B.A.P.S. R-92
Breathing Room R-91
Cadillac Ranch R-90
Cats Don't Dance R-92
Double Team R-92
8 Heads in a Duffel Bag R-90
Inventing the Abbotts R-91
McHale's Navy R-89
Murder at 1600 R-89
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The 6th Man R-92
Sprung R-88
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Turbo: A Power Ranger Movie ... R-92
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BERLIN EXPRESS

Long-lead reviews from the German film festival

by Melissa Morrison

LUCIE AUBRAC ★★★

Starring Carole Bouquet and Daniel Auteuil. Directed and written by Claude Berri. Produced by Pierre Grunstein. A Renn S.A. production; no stateside distributor set. Drama/romance. French-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 106 min.

This taut, finely hued story is about the Aubracs, husband-and-wife members of the French Resistance—and that's about all it is. Writer/director Claude Berri ("Germinal") doesn't have much to add to the already full-to-bursting oeuvre of WWII Resistance films. The Aubracs were brave, the Nazis were cruel; that about sums it up. As a love story, the film has more heft.

While Raymond Aubrac ("The Eighth Day's" Daniel Auteuil) works to undermine the German occupation of France in the traditional ways, such as blowing up trains (a spectacular opening sequence) and attending secret meetings, his wife Lucie ("Grosse Fatigue's" Carole Bouquet) isn't content to just tend the hearth. She's up for spiking a traitor's jam with cyanide, if necessary. But what really rousts her formidable will is not love for France but love for Raymond. When his arrest by Vichy police threatens to conflict with the anniversary of their first lovemaking, Lucie storms into the state prosecutor's house and threatens him. The sheer intensity of her glare does the trick. The latter half of the film concerns a pregnant Lucie's machinations to rescue Raymond from a Nazi death sentence.

Auteuil, of the squashed nose and searching eyes, is the more emotionally grabbing of the pair. Bouquet's stern beauty makes her determination convincing, less so her passion. Her expressionless face saps several scenes of their power. Plotwise, a hint at what "Lucie Aubrac" could have been comes when Raymond comments on his life with Lucie amid the Nazi terror: "It's a terrible thing to say, but I can't help being happy." A film that explores the ambivalence of living in heaven at home and hell beyond the front door—now that would have been truly interesting.

(Note: October Films had made an at least oral agreement to acquire North American rights for $1 million but has since said it was nixing the pact. Paris-based Renn has filed a $10 million breach of contract suit.)

CONVERSATION WITH THE BEAST ★★★★

Starring Armin Mueller-Stahl, Robert Balaban and Katharina Bohm. Directed and written by Armin Mueller-Stahl. Produced by Rudolf Steiner. A Rudolf Steiner TV-Film production; no stateside distributor set. Comedy/drama. English- and German-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 96 min.

In his directorial debut, German actor Armin Mueller-Stahl (who played a Nazi in "The Music Box") takes on Hitler and comes up with this black comedy that manages to maintain its precarious balance between the bizarre and the morbid. Mueller-Stahl plays the man himself, a 103-year-old wacko who's trying to convince the world via a fumbling American historian, Dr. Webster ("The Last Good Time's" Robert Balaban), that a double took the bullet in that bunker with Eva Braun. This Hitler lives in a dungeon-like Berlin apartment with a perpetually young Teutonic wife, Hortense (Katharina Bohm), and a yappy dog named Jimmy. The dubious historian interviews Mr. Hitler about his entourage of doubles (one for each day of the week), his hatred of women (he says his weakness for them is why he lost the war), and the "magic" that keeps him alive, despite numerous suicide attempts.

One of the delicious ironies developed is that Hitler's special hell is not death but an eternal life in which he is a nobody. As star, writer and director, Mueller-Stahl pulls off this hat trick with aplomb. His aged Der Fuehrer torments Dr. Webster with slingshot pranks and then bursts into rages at being kept, literally, in the dark. The actor conveys the charisma that the real man had; the writer doesn't overreach for big statements; and the director keeps an odd commentary on one of history's most analyzed evildoers from dissipating into nonsense.

Among the highlights: a flashback in which a Hitler double, a frustrated actor, entertains the newlyweds with Hamlet's soliloquy, showing his frustration with his single successful role; and a scene in which Hitler auditions incognito for a Hollywood film about his life and is deemed too unnatural. It seems Charlie Chaplin got the glory Hitler thought he himself deserved.

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FEST REVIEWS

THE KITCHEN ★★★★1/2

Starring Yasuko Tomita and Jordan Chan. Directed and written by Yim Ho. Produced by Raymond Chow and Yakichi Osato. A Harvest Crown Ltd. production; no stateside distributor set. Drama. Chinese-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 124 min.

Yim Ho's screen adaptation of Banana Yoshimoto's book weaves a kind of sensory spell in this story of grief and love, using poetic images, humor bordering on the surreal, and the lovely face of actress Yasuko Tomita as its charms. When Louie (Jordan Chan), a trend-overloaded hairdresser in Hong Kong, first meets Aggie (Tomita), she is almost catatonic over the loss of her last living relative, her grandmother.

The film watches Aggie revive under the care of Louie and his transsexual mother (and father), Emma (played by actor Law Kar Ying). Plot advancement seems less important than impressionistic scenes that sometimes overlap each other like wavelets. The story's power builds as the separate elements of the three characters' lives gradually entwine. This accumulative effect more than compensates for the movie's weaknesses, which primarily are a slow start and a sometimes awkward interaction among the players.

FOUR DAYS IN SEPTEMBER ★★★

Starring Alan Arkin, Pedro Cardoso and Fernanda Torres. Directed by Bruno Barreto. Written by Leopoldo Serran. Produced by Lucy Barreto. A Miramax release. Drama. Portuguese-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 105 min.

The stunning timing of this film during the Berlin fest, while hostages of Peru's Tupac Amaru movement languished in Lima's Japanese embassy, should have elicited a frisson of recognition among audience members. It didn't. The story of

SPECIAL FORMATS

WHALES ★★★

Narrated by Patrick Stewart. Directed by David Clark, Al Giddings and Dr. Roger Payne. Written by Dr. Roger Payne, Mose Richards and Dr. Leighton Taylor. Produced by Christopher Palmer and David Clark. A National Wildlife Federation/Destination Cinema/Zephyr production. Documentary. Unrated. Running time: 44 min. Format: IMAX.

Never before have so many of these elusive mammals been captured on film as in the beautifully documented IMAX presentation "Whales." Co-director and DP Al Giddings ("The Abyss," "The Deep") brings his expertise in underwater photography to this film, creating elegant shots of these large but elegant creatures of the sea.



A tranquil scene from the IMAX-format documentary "Whales."

It's also a film rich in historical and scientific data. Over the course of eight years of research (two devoted to filming), the moviemakers joined the Whale Conservation Institute's research vessel, the Odyssey, on whale-sighting trips to Alaska, Newfoundland, California, Patagonia, Hawaii and Columbia. In the process, they were fortunate enough to be able to film a variety of species: humpbacks, rights, orcas (killer whales) and the largest of all, the blue whales.

The footage is quite amazing: whales breaching the water with their monstrous tails, hunting in groups (they assemble in a circle to trap fish), swimming in their deep-water habitats, and migrating to Alaska from Hawaii (where a female humpback teaches her newborn calf survival skills). Despite the presence of cameras, the whales are documented with as little human interference as possible.

And, although it's difficult to gauge exactly how large these creatures are without a visual point of comparison, they appear graceful and weightless in their acrobatic leaps into the air, balancing their tails in a handstand as they ride the wind. The mournful "songs" of the whales are also recorded, although it's hard to say whether the sounds they make are actually "songs." The "singing" can be heard as the whales hunt, interact with mates, challenge competition and navigate on their annual migrations.

To generate their footage for "Whales," the filmmakers had to camp out on boats and wait for their subjects to appear; with the revealing "Whales," their patience has paid off.—***Pat Kramer***

FEST

Brazilian young people who engineered the kidnapping of American ambassador Charles Elbrick ("Mother Night's" Alan Arkin) in 1969 to protest the policies of their country's military regime is indeed well told by Bruno Barreto ("Carried Away"); but its immediacy—the connections with larger themes that make a good movie a great one—is missing.

Most of the time, the Producoes Cinematograficas LC Barreto production comes off as a very well-made and well-acted TV cop drama set in a tropical locale. In at least one way, that's good: The kidnapping operation is rendered thrillingly. But the kidnappers are a collection of types: a humorless rebel leader (Fernanda Torres); a zealot-in-training (Calo Junqueira); an innocent destined to be hardened by experience (Claudia Abreu). Even Arkin as Elbrick is ever-stoic in the face of execution, although there's a nice touch in the respectful relationship that develops between the ambassador and some of his tormentors.

What the film lacks in depth, however, it makes up for in breadth: Instead of focusing solely on its collection of idealistic rebels, notably the film's linchpin, Fernando (Pedro Cardoso), the plot takes time to consider the event's other aspects, such as the personal toll being a torturer takes on a military cop (Marco Ricca) investigating the kidnapping, as well as the opinions of Fernando's friends from the old days, who believe there are less violent methods of change. The film also isn't content to end with the resolution of the kidnapping; the rebels are seen in an epilogue showing what happens after their initial glory fades.

THE RIVER ★★★1/2

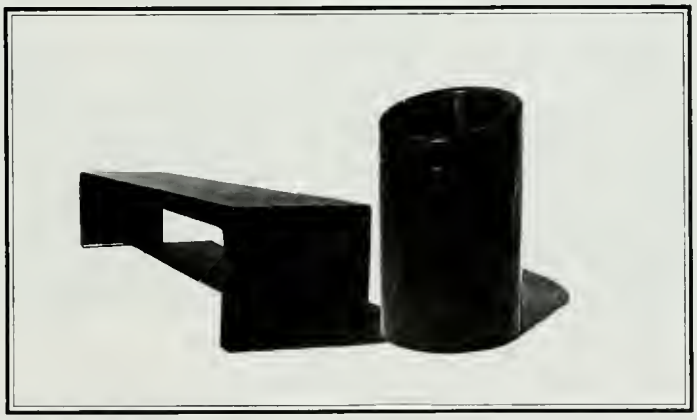
Starring Lee Kang-sheng and Miao Tien. Directed by Tsai Ming-liang. Written by Tsai Ming-liang, Yang Pi-ying and Tsai Yi-chun. Produced by Chiu Hu-ping. A Central Motion Picture Corp. production; no stateside distributor set. Drama. Chinese-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 115 min. Won the Silver Bear.

Of the films screened in competition at the Berlin fest, "The River" ("He Liu") was one of the few that attempted to create the scope and scale worthy of recognition as an enduring and important film. Yet in that attempt it succeeds only partially. Its story: The young Xiao-kang (Lee Kang-sheng) is roaming around Taipei when he happens upon a movie being shot. The director asks Xiao-kang to play a corpse floating in a polluted river; Xiao-kang agrees, not having anything better to do.

Soon after, he's seized by mysterious and seemingly incurable pain. Meanwhile, his father, also drifting, is plagued by a ceaseless water leak from an upstairs apartment. The ennui and tedium with which Xiao-kang and his parents endure life is echoed in the film's extended shots of characters doing next to nothing and in the absence of a musical soundtrack. Even the impact of the shocking denouement is muffled by the film's deadening tone.

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FESTIVAL REVIEWS

THE SOONG SISTERS ★★★

Starring Maggie Cheung, Michelle Khan and Vivian Wu. Directed by Cheung Yuen-ting. Written by Alex Law. Produced by Raymond Chow. A More Team Intl. production; no stateside distributor set. Drama. Chinese-language; English subtitled. Not yet rated. Running time: 147 min.

A trio of Chinese stars play real-life sisters who each embody a facet of 20th-century China: Ai-ling (new Bond girl Michelle Khan), the banker's wife, representing capitalism; Ching-ling ("Irma Vep's" Maggie Cheung), the first lady of modern China's founder, representing communism; and May-ling ("The Pillow Book's" Vivian Wu), the wife of Chiang Kai-shek, representing nationalism. "The Soong Sisters'" ambitious scope—the film spans 1900 to 1949—means its political points must be spelled out in capital letters. Political intrigues that affected the largest nation in the world occur here as controversial marriages and sibling rifts.

The movie succeeds better as a lavish soap opera, with the camera pausing lovingly on the Chinese scenery and the dewy stars. One possible reason: Hong Kong director Cheung Yuen-ting said she was forced to cut scenes featuring Chiang (Wu Hsing-kuo) before China's censors would release the film. What's left is a gorgeous movie, if not a great one.

THE STUNT WOMAN ★★★

Starring Michelle Khan and Samo Hung. Directed by Ann Hui. Written by Chan Man-Keung and Chan Kin-Chung. Produced by David Lau and Catherine Hun. A Daca Entertainment production; no stateside distributor set. Chinese-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 95 min.

With Jackie Chan's ascendance in Hollywood comes this film, a commentary on the Hong Kong action genre that's itself an action film. The hard-working Michelle Khan (who co-starred in Chan's "Supercop" and lately has reverted her name to Michelle Yeoh) is Ah Kam, an aspiring stuntwoman who fights on-the-job injuries and ganglike rivalries with other stunt crews to carve out a living. Structured in three acts, the film focuses as much on Ah Kam's personal life as it does on hyperreal stunts, including a cool one in which a bar fight is interspersed with similar violence playing on one of the bar's video games.

She also quits her job for the man in her life and becomes a surrogate mother to her murdered mentor's son. Both elements—action and plot—have a carnivalesque artifice, but the herky-jerky ride is fun. A side note: Director Ann Hui apparently kept the cameras rolling when Khan was injured performing a stunt—footage that, Chan-like, plays under the credits.

GENEALOGIES D'UN CRIME ★★

Starring Catherine Deneuve and Michel Piccoli. Directed by Raoul Ruiz. Written by Raoul Ruiz and Pascal Bonitzer. Produced by Paulo Branco. A Gemini Films production; no stateside distributor set. Suspense. French-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 113 min. Raoul Ruiz was awarded a Silver Bear for lifetime achievement.

Catherine Deneuve seems to choose film projects on the basis of how her character subverts the actress's image as a glacial beauty and Gallic icon. That would explain the appeal for her of this strange project, in which she plays two roles: a losing lawyer investigating a psychoanalyst's murder, purportedly by the victim's nephew; and the twisted psychoanalyst, in flashbacks.

"Genealogies of a Crime" begins on a dark and stormy night to appropriately menacing music. The rest has all the suspense of a game of Clue. Its fun comes instead from sly digs at psychoanalysis; e.g., those involving two professional archenemies, Georges ("The Party's" Michel Piccoli), who steals silverware, and Christian (Andrzej Seweryn), whose fastidiousness begs for his own therapy. There's also some theme about reincarnation and revenge from beyond the grave. Whatever. The best to be said for Deneuve's dual roles is that she looks fabulous in her Yves St. Laurent.



Response No. 202

FESTIVAL REVIEWS

VIVA EROTICA ★★

Starring Leslie Cheung and Karen Mok. Directed and written by Derek Yee and Lo Chi Leung. Produced by Raymond Chow. A Film Unlimited production; no stateside distributor set. Comedy. Chinese-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 97 min.

The opening scene is certainly attention-getting: struggling filmmaker Sing and his girlfriend, pixiesh May (played by pop star Karen Mok), having enthusiastic sex that parodies the kind of soft-core porn that Sing is about to lower himself to direct, complete with rain that looks great on writhing, naked bodies—except the pair are indoors at the time. The jokes appear regularly but with varied success in this take on the filmmaker-struggles-to-keep-his-vision-amid-money-grubbling-producers subgenre.

In this case, the location is Hong Kong's movie mill. Co-director Derek Yee makes a brief appearance as a director who commits suicide after his latest work, "A Streetcar Named No Wheels," nosedives at the boxoffice. Although the effects here are cheesy and the plot is choppy, "Viva Erotica's" characters are appealing; for example, Mango (Shu Qi, a Chinese Jennifer Tilly) is a twinkie actress who delivers her lines in the film-within-a-film's obligatory rape scene with the urgency of a bureaucrat working unpaid overtime.

TERRITORIO COMANCHE ★

Starring Cecilia Dopazo and Imanol Arias. Directed by Gerardo Herrero. Written by Arturo Perez-Reverte, Salvador Garcia and Gerardo Herrero. Produced by Javier Lopez Blanco and Gerardo Herrero. A Tornasol Films S.A. production; no stateside distributor set. Drama. Spanish-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 90 min.

Version 4,381: Successful TV broadcaster (Cecilia Dopazo) goes to a war zone and must prove her mettle to hard-bitten male colleagues (Carmelo Gomez and "The Flower of My Secret's" Imanol Arias) while aghast at battle's atrocity. Includes lines like: "They don't even sell panties here—they sell horror." Objects blow up. She has an affair with a seasoned correspondent, their bodies lit by an exploding shell...the imagery! The camera moves dispassionately across the bodies of the recently dead and then upon one the cameraman recognizes...he can't film!

What distinguishes this collection of cliches is that the war in question is in Sarajevo, where the bodies of the dead in their graves have barely begun decomposing. Using recent events to illustrate some truths about the media and war has resulted in one of the worst examples imaginable: A real tragedy becomes moved even further into the realm of fiction in the passive perception of those who see it.

LE JOUR ET LA NUIT (no stars)

Starring Alain Delon, Arielle Dombasle and Lauren Bacall. Directed by Bernard-Henri Levy. Written by Jean-Paul Enthoven and Bernard-Henri Levy. Produced by Eric Dussart, Denise Robert, Jacques de Clerq and Alfonso Gomez-Arnau. A Les Films Du Leudemain production; no stateside distributor set. Drama. French-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 112 min.

French celebrity-philosopher Bernard-Henri Levy's latest attempt at cinema might not have detonated like a methane bomb if he had positioned it differently. He should have pitched it, instead of as a metaphorical exploring of a man's spiritual death and resurrection, as a "Gilligan's Island" remake.

There's the Skipper (a grizzled Alain Delon), a burned-out writer retreated to a Mexican beach; Ginger ("Celestial Clockwork's" Arielle Dombasle), a starlet eager to land the lead in a film based on the writer's first novel; the professor (Xavier Beauvois), a sullen seismologist and part-time rebel leader about as convincing as a bamboo transceiver; Mrs. Howell (Lauren Bacall), a well-dressed rich lady around a lot but rarely involved; and MaryAnn (Julie Du Page), who's ignored in favor of the more glamorous actresses but who has a pointless nude scene anyway. All that's missing is a tiny boat named the Minnow.

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BOXOFFICE REVIEWS

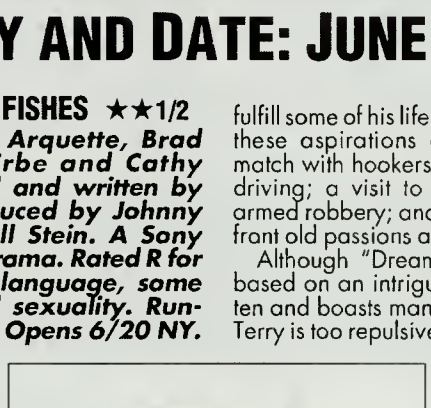
June 1997

DAY AND DATE: JUNE 20

DREAM WITH THE FISHES ★★1/2

Starring David Arquette, Brad Hunt, Kathryn Erbe and Cathy Moriarty. Directed and written by Finn Taylor. Produced by Johnny Wow and Mitchell Stein. A Sony Classics release. Drama. Rated R for pervasive strong language, some drug content and sexuality. Running time: 96 min. Opens 6/20 NY.

Within about the first minute of the audience's introduction to Terry ("johns'" David Arquette), he has his pants around his ankles and is using binoculars to watch a neighboring couple's sexual encounter (which, to Terry's disappointment, is aborted before it begins). It's not exactly an endearing first impression, but it instantly reveals the lonely and pathetic life Terry leads and helps explain his suicide attempt that follows shortly after.



David Arquette stars in Sony Classics' "Dream With the Fishes."

Terry tries to muster the courage to jump off a bridge; his appointment with death is postponed, however, when a young man named Nick (Brad Hunt)—coincidentally, the gent that Terry had been spying on earlier—intervenes. Nick, who has only a few weeks to live due to an unnamed fatal condition, offers to help Terry end it all in a less painful way if Terry will help him fulfill some of his lifelong fantasies. Among these aspirations are a nude bowling match with hookers; dropping acid while driving; a visit to an aquarium; naked armed robbery; and a return home to confront old passions and demons.

Although "Dream With the Fishes" is based on an intriguing idea, is well written and boasts many humorous moments, Terry is too repulsive and Nick is too much of a jerk for the audience to care about the fates of these two people. An interesting character study, the film would have been more memorable had the protagonists been more likable. Also, given Nick's live-on-the-edge personality, one would expect more meaningful or even just more interesting lifelong fantasies than doing things in the buff. The absence of a wide variety of wild activities underserves the thematic construct.

Cathy Moriarty has a fun role as Nick's cool ex-stripper aunt, and Kathryn Erbe is strong as Nick's long-suffering girlfriend, whose hard exterior barely disguises her vulnerability. And, despite their repellent roles, both Arquette and Hunt do great jobs in fleshing out their characters; as the more charismatic, commanding and off-kilter Nick, Hunt is a standout.—***Christine James***

SPRUNG ★★★1/2

Starring Rusty Cundieff, Tisha Campbell, Joe Torry and Paula Jai Parker. Directed by Rusty Cundieff. Written by Darin Scott and Rusty Cundieff. Produced by Darin Scott. A Trimark release. Romantic comedy. Rated R for some strong sexuality and language. Running time: 90 min.

Packed with humor, wild sex and romance nicely wrapped with a message, this "romantical" comedy shatters urban stereotypes by taking them to the extreme without being offensive. Reality and humor are used to colorize circumstances and the resulting consequences for two different classes of folks.

Law-clerk Brandy (Tisha Campbell, of Fox TV's "Martin") and photographer Montel (writer/director Rusty Cundieff) are in love and about to move in together. Feeling their friends are making a big mistake, golddigger Adina ("Tales From the Hood's" Paula Jai Parker) and womanizer Clyde (Joe Torry, also from that Cundieff movie) plot diabolical and downright "ignant" tricks to sever the duo's romantic tie.

Cundieff and Campbell look good together, and their relationship is so perfect the story unfolds like an urban fairytale. "Sprung" also has a great supporting cast. With each film topping his last, Cundieff could soon merit comparison with A-list directors. Moviegoers springing for "Sprung" will find its mental and visual twists worth the investment.—***Dwayne E. Leslie***

VOLCANO ★★★

Starring Tommy Lee Jones, Anne Heche, Gaby Hoffman and Don Cheadle. Directed by Mick Jackson. Written by Jerome Armstrong and Billy Ray. Produced by Neal H. Moritz and Andrew Z. Davis. A Fox release. Action/drama. Rated PG-13 for intense depiction of urban disaster and related injuries. Running time: 105 min.

The cliche movie-review phrase "a roller-coaster ride of a film" comes to mind here, not only because of the adrenaline-pumped way the plot races over peaks of mounting dangers and valleys of humorous repartee, but also because it's the sort of movie you are exhilarated while watching. But when it ends you wonder, "Is that it?" With today's astounding SFX, a finale that's anything short of the movie theatre itself blowing up is bound to be considered anticlimactic. But in "Volcano's" case the build-up markedly exceeds the payoff.

Tommy Lee Jones stars as Mike Roark, head of Los Angeles' Office of Emergency Management, who realizes L.A. is in danger from beneath. After advising several precautions that are ignored by the predictably short-sighted, self-concerned higher-ups, Roark seeks out the advice of spunky expert geologist Dr. Amy Barnes ("Donnie Brasco's" Anne Heche), who soon deduces that volcanic activity may be afoot.

A decimation of cultural monuments that filmgoers have so enjoyed in such films as "John Carpenter's Escape From L.A." and "Independence Day" ensues, but some serious mayhem also transpires. As Roark takes charge in a race-against-time scenario, the film keeps a harrowing pace, even despite an out-of-place subplot involving an altruistic emergency room doctor and despite messages about racial harmony. But the action, the effects and tough-as-nails

REVIEWS

Tommy Lee provide a worthwhile thrill ride—even if the last drop wasn't as big as you thought it would be.—*Christine James*

McHALE'S NAVY ★

Starring Tom Arnold. Directed by Bryan Spicer. Written by Peter Crabbe. Produced by Sid, Bill and Jon Sheinberg. A Universal release. Comedy. Rated PG for action/violence, mild language and innuendos. Running time: 108 min.

The Bubble Factory seems to be producing movies using the Savoy model, in which each new release is even worse than the one that preceded it. Thus, in the wake of "Flipper" and "The Pest," arrives sinking-ship "McHale's Navy," a comedy based on the 1960s TV series. There is one laugh, and several good explosions. But boomers familiar with the fitfully comic but always comradely-toned small-screen series will quickly realize that both the tone and usual narrative flow of the original have here become so much flotsam, with director Bryan Spicer ("Mighty Morphin Power Rangers") and scripter Peter Crabbe ("Car 54, Where Are You?") tracking their own Polaris. One might suggest a compass check.

Not satisfied with one new tone, Spicer launches a flotilla, making adjacent scenes—of Bond-like action, family emoting, popeyed comedy and little-kids flickery—feel as if they're doing battle in some cinematic Guadalcanal. Rather than worry about his story reaching shore, Crabbe acts like a Wolf Pack raider, intent on sending his narrative to the bottom. As for military reality, a screen image that reads "aquire [sic] target" says it all.—*Kim Williamson*

MURDER AT 1600 ★★★

Starring Wesley Snipes, Diane Lane, Alan Alda, Daniel Benzali and Ronny Cox. Directed by Dwight Little. Written by Wayne Beach and David Hodgin. Produced by Arnold Kopelson and Arnon Milchan. A Warner Bros. release. Thriller. Rated R for sexuality, violence and some language. Running time: 106 min.

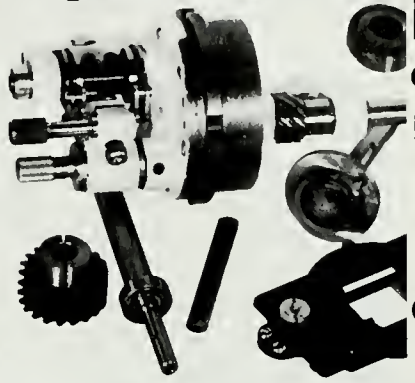
More cartoonlike, and more entertaining, than Clint Eastwood's "Absolute Power," Dwight Little's "Murder at 1600" originally was set to open ahead of that Castle Rock film before Warner Bros. pushed it back, in what could be interpreted as a favor to its resident screen legend. But, with a winning performance by Wesley Snipes as an honest D.C. cop unraveling a White House murder coverup, this Regency production more than holds its own against Eastwood's muted, muddled take on governmental corruption.

With the added metaphorical nuance of centering the story on an African-American cop whose tenacious devotion to duty is all that stands between the Republic and chaos, "Murder at 1600" has a ballsy, up-yours

PREVIOUSLY REVIEWED MAY AND JUNE RELEASES

"Bliss" ★★★★: Triumph, 5/16 ltd; see May 1997.
"Brassed Off" ★★★1/2: Miramax, 5/23 NY/LA, 5/30 top 10; see March 1997.
"Broken English" ★★★: Sony Classics, 5/2 NY; see April 1997.
"Brothers in Trouble" ★★★★1/2: First Run, 5/14; see Sept. 1996.
"Children of the Revolution" ★★★: Miramax, 5/1 NY/LA, May exp; see May 1997.
"Color of a Brisk and Leaping Day" ★1/2: Artistic License, 5/2; see April 1996.
"Commandments" ★★★1/2: Gramercy, 5/2 ltd; see April 1997.
"The Designated Mourner" ★★1/2: First Look, 5/2 NY; see May 1997.
"Different for Girls" ★★: First Look, June; see Feb. 1997.
"Fall" ★★★: Orion, 6/20; see April 1997.
"Fetishes" ★★★: Cinema Village, 5/9; see April 1997.
"For Roseanna" aka "Roseanna's Grave" ★★★: Fine Line, 6/18 NY; see March 1997.
"Gabbeh" ★★★: New Yorker, 6/27 NY; see Feb. 1997.
"Gray's Anatomy" ★★: Northern Arts, 5/9 LA; see April 1997.
"Guantanamera" ★★★1/2: CFP, 5/16 ltd; see April 1997.
"Intimate Relations" ★★: Fox Searchlight, 5/9 ltd, 5/16 & 5/23 exp; see Sept. 1996.
"The Leading Man" ★★★: Legacy, May; see April 1997.
"Leo Tolstoy's Anna Karenina" ★★1/2: Warner Bros., 5/2 exp; see May 1997.
"Love Serenade" ★★1/2: Miramax, 6/20 NY/LA; see Aug. 1996.
"Love! Valour! Compassion!" ★★★1/2: Fine Line, 5/16 NY/LA/SF; see March 1997.
"Mondo" ★★★1/2: Shadow, 5/23; see March 1997.
"Mouth to Mouth" ★★★1/2: Miramax, 6/6 NY/LA; see Sept. 1996.
"nowhere" ★: Fine Line, 5/9 NY/LA; see May 1997.
"The Pillow Book" ★★★: CFP, 6/6; see July 1996.
"Ponette" ★★: Arrow, 5/23 NY; see Nov. 1996.
"Ripe" ★: Trimark, 5/2 NY, 5/9 LA; see Jan. 1997.
"Rough Magic" ★★: Goldwyn, 5/30; see April 1997.
"Shall We Dance?" ★★★1/2: Miramax, 5/16 NY/LA, 5/23 & 5/30 exp; see May 1997.
"Shiloh" ★★★★: Legacy, 5/23 exp; see April 1997.
"Temptress Moon" ★★★1/2: Miramax, 5/2 & 5/9 exp; see May 1997.
"Timothy Leary's Dead" ★★: Strand, May; see May 1997.
"The Tit and the Moon" ★★1/2: Strand, June; see Nov. 1995.
"Truth or Consequences, N.M." ★★: Triumph, 5/2 NY/LA, 5/9 exp; see May 1997.
"Twin Town" ★★1/2: Gramercy, 5/9 NY, 5/16 LA, 5/30 exp; see May 1997.
"Ulee's Gold" ★★★★: Orion, 6/13 NY/LA; see April 1997.
"Underworld" ★: Legacy, 5/9 ltd; see April 1997.
"The Van" ★★: Fox Searchlight, 5/23 ltd, 5/30 exp; see Aug. 1996.
"When the Cat's Away" ★★★★: Sony Classics, 6/20 NY; see Feb. 1997.

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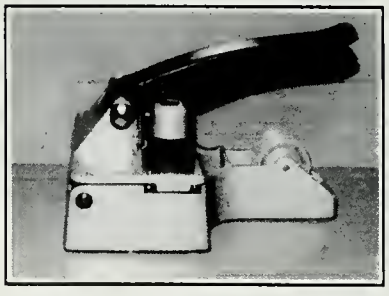
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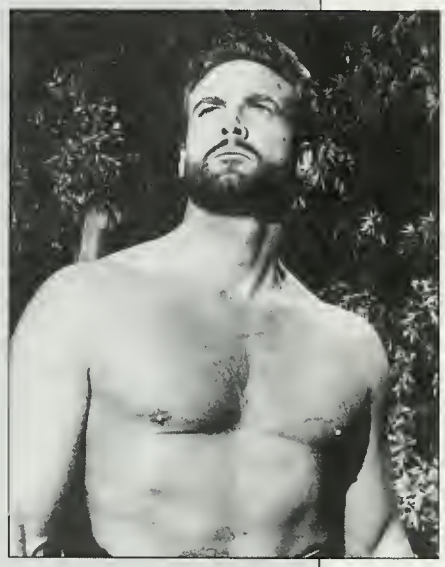
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Response No. 443

FLASHBACK: *MAY 18, 1959*
What BOXOFFICE *said about...*

HERCULES

[This June 27, Buena Vista makes a cartoon of the mightily thewed man/god with its 35th animated film, "Hercules." But we thought we'd travel back four decades to see what BOXOFFICE *thought of the live-action costume drama that in July 1959 Warner Bros. imported to the States. This Italian production (filmed in 1957 under the title "Le Fatiche di Ercole") starred bodybuilder Steve Reeves, who also played the hero in "Hercules Unchained" and went on to star in such spectacles as "The Last Days of Pompeii." Alan Steel took over for "Hercules Against Rome" and "Hercules Against the Moon Men" (in Cromoscope!). After a two-decade break, the Italians relaunched the saga with another bodybuilder, Lou Ferrigno, with the early 1980s' "Hercules" and "Hercules II."]*



An elaborately staged and splendidly photographed costume spectacle packed with hair-raising adventures of the comic book variety, this Italian-made picture produced by Federico Teti is ideally suited to the fast playoff of saturation bookings, where the youngsters and action fans will "eat it up," or for the drive-ins. Joseph E. Levine, who had tremendous success with "Attila," also an Italian action spectacle, is planning a colossal exploitation campaign to launch this film for its summer showings, and the mass public is sure to make it a boxoffice hit. But, because sophisticated patrons might scoff at the early De Mille-type lavishness and pageantry, key city first runs should be bypassed. The only selling name is Steve Reeves, a handsome "hunk of man" who was Mr. Universe and whose weight and chest and waist measurements are played up as much as are Marilyn Monroe's. Reeves, who plays the title role, will never win any acting awards, and Sylva Koscina and some of the other Italian players are less than adequate—except visually. Director Pietro Francisci concentrates on the storybook action. Magnificently shown in Dyaliscope and Eastman Color. Starring Steve Reeves, Sylva Koscina and Fabrizi Mioni.

EXPLOITIPS

Joseph E. Levine's big selling campaign includes radio, TV and magazines, as well as Vaughn Monroe's RCA Victor recording of the title song. Publicize Steve Reeves.

CATCHLINES

Immense and Immortal Was Hercules' Strength—Like the World and the Gods to Whom He Belonged...Steve Reeves, Handsome Mr. Universe, in a Role That Takes Advantage of His Strength and Courage.

attitude toward entrenched authority that audiences will find refreshing. Still, the movie would have been far more disturbing if all the government honchos weren't such caricatures of evil or ineffectuality. Ludicrously overblown thriller music by Christopher Young works against Little's sharply paced direction. Snipes' thoughtful, droll performance again shows his impressive range, but he's not allowed even a glimmer of sexual chemistry with white leading lady Diane Lane, playing a Secret Service agent who gradually becomes his ally. As a result, Lane is stuck on one dour-and-haggard note.—*Joseph McBride*

8 HEADS IN A DUFFEL BAG ★★1/2

Starring Joe Pesci, Andy Comeau and Kristy Swanson. Directed and written by Tom Schulman. Produced by Brad Krevoy, Steve Stabler and John Bertolli. An Orion release. Comedy. Rated R for language. Running time: 95 min.

Halfway between the laugh-meter results for its "Dumb & Dumber" and "Kingpin," this latest effort from producer Brad Krevoy and Steve Stabler's MPCA mines the sporadic gold nugget from its gumbah-comedy terrain. The story, provided by debut director Tom Schulman (Oscar winner for his "Dead Poets Society" script), follows a mob bagman (Joe Pesci, lowkey for him)—his consignment: eight heads—as he travels to Mexico to retrieve the duffel bag that holds them, accidentally in the hands of medical student Charlie (ineffective newcomer Andy Comeau). Comic catastrophe occurs.

Or is meant to occur. One person discovering heads in a bag might be funny, but the audience quickly adjusts to that peculiar scenario and goes looking for new laughs. Not until David Spade ("Black Sheep") comes on the scene as a college chum do matters really perk up. Had this abrasive actor been paired against the abrasive Pesci, "8 Heads in a Duffel Bag" might have had real spark. As is, it's a modest diversion that delivers only a half-full (or half-empty) load of comic cargo.—*Kim Williamson*

REVIEWS

ANACONDA ★★

Starring Jennifer Lopez, Ice Cube, Jon Voight and Eric Stoltz. Directed by Luis Llosa. Written by Hans Bauer and Jim Cash & Jack Epps, Jr. Produced by Verna Harrah, Leonard Rabinowitz and Carole Little. A Columbia release. Adventure/horror. Rated PG-13 for intense adventure violence, and for brief language and sensuality. Running time: 90 min.

Every preconceived notion audiences might have about "Anaconda" is correct. This supposed serpentine shocker features doomed adventurers wading through murky water while a deadly snake nears and "Jaws"-like music throbs. Supporting characters die in a predictable sequence; there's a bad guy with a foreign accent, and the requisite romance of handsome hunk with shapely babe.

But scary this movie isn't. The faux serpent looks wholly unrealistic as it zips through water and air like a Saturday morning cartoon character. And such schlocky touches as its penchant for regurgitation are more gross (and funny) than frightening. Director Luis Llosa ("The Specialist") shot the film in Brazil, and the tropical setting imbues it with much-needed authenticity and cinematic richness. Llosa advances the story at an absorbing clip that never bores the audience, and he wisely eschews any high-minded discourse about good and evil. As cheesy, predictable horror flicks go, "Anaconda" squeezes considerable life from its limited aspirations.—*Ian Hodder*

CADILLAC RANCH ★

Starring Christopher Lloyd, Suzy Amis and Caroleen Feeney. Directed by Lisa Gottlieb. Written by Jennifer Cecil. Produced by J. Todd Harris and Harvey Kahn. A Legacy release. Comedy. Rated R for language and some nudity. Run time: 103 min.

Playing onscreen like a low-rent "Thelma & Louise," with three sisters on the run from a sadistic lawman, Jennifer Cecil's first screenplay exhibits neither the flair nor the feminism that fueled that 1991 movie. In their place, Cecil gives her grown women a terminal father fixation that proves a poor engine to drive the plot.

This BMG Independents effort—produced by "Denise Calls Up's" J. Todd Harris—should have been a showcase for actresses, but it turns into an emoting fest. The blame appears to lie less with director Lisa Gottlieb ("Across the Moon"), who at

REVIEWS

least keeps matters moving, than with Cecil, whose script approach is to give the actors lots to blab about. Black-and-white flashbacks repeat ad nauseum. Only sexy Amis shows some winning fire.—*Carole Glines*

BREATHING ROOM ★1/2

Starring Susan Floyd and Dan Futterman. Directed by Jon Sherman. Written by Tom Hughes and Jon Sherman. Produced by Tim Perell. An Arrow release. Romantic comedy. Rated R for language and some sexuality. Running time: 90 min.

The lame humor and artificial characterizations in "Breathing Room" undercut the film's intended truth and poignance. Perhaps if the roles were not so cute and arch in their imbecility, or so eager to please the audience, Jon Sherman's well-meaning romantic comedy might have charmed; as is, aimless and forced riffs combining the influences of Woody Allen and Albert Brooks (and even Alan Alda) try too hard.

Lead actress Susan Floyd has an appealingly perky personality—if not much warmth or spontaneity—as a single New Yorker whose relationship with her live-in boyfriend (a bland Dan Futterman) is falling apart. They decide to separate for a month as a test; the balance of the film consists of ambling, contrived dialogues with relatives, friends and potential lovers as the couple try to find love and happiness elsewhere. Predictably, they don't, and most of the conversations are of the ersatz group-therapy variety, delivered by enthusiastic amateurs who act as though they had the IQs of rabbits.—*Dale Winogura*

THAT OLD FEELING ★★★

Starring Bette Midler, Dennis Farina, Paula Marshall and Danny Nucci. Directed by Carl Reiner. Written by Leslie Dixon. Produced by Leslie Dixon and Bonnie Bruckheimer. A Universal release. Comedy. Rated PG-13 for language and sex-related material. Running time: 105 min.

Thankfully not the "First Wives Club" redux one might expect, "That Old Feeling" instead celebrates the firepower of a reignited old flame, here actress Lilly (Bette Midler) and author Dan (Dennis Farina) as a divorced couple who reunite at the wedding of daughter Molly (Paula Marshall).

Lilly and Dan agree to part ways, but they soon realize "that old feeling" is still there and end up in bed again. Spurned spouses discover the infidelities; the paramours escape to be alone. What follows is a hit-and-miss combination of humorous hijinks and predictable romantic entanglements. It seems that Lilly, Dan and Molly have all married cartoonishly unlikable spouses, which conveniently frees them for other pursuits. Lilly and Dan push their (annoyingly) uptight daughter towards a rough-around-the-edges but good-hearted paparazzo (Danny Nucci). Meanwhile, the cuckolded counterparts engage in increasingly preposterous behavior. It's all goofy, but adequately amusing, thanks mostly to scenery-chewer Midler.—*Christine James*

THE SAINT ★★1/2

Starring Val Kilmer, Elisabeth Shue and Rade Serbedzija. Directed by Phillip Noyce. Written by Jonathan Hensleigh and Wesley Strick. Produced by David Brown, Robert Evans, William J. MacDonald and Mace Neufeld. A Paramount release. Rated PG-13 for action violence, brief strong language, some sensuality and drug content. Running time: 117 min.

"The Saint," based on the popular novel series (by Leslie Charteris) that inspired a Roger Moore-starring TV show, follows the whirlwind adventures of the James Bond-like character who uses the names of Catholic saints as his aliases. In this incarnation, Templar (Val Kilmer) is hired by a Russian billionaire and wannabe czar, Ivan Tretiak ("Broken English's" Rade Serbedzija), to steal a cold-fusion formula.

His target: a beautiful and hopelessly romantic scientist, Emma Russell ("Leaving Las Vegas'" Elisabeth Shue, in her most charming Catholic schoolgirl outfits). But Templar's perfect plan goes awry when the devil-may-care playboy finds himself falling for Emma. Soon the Russian gangsters, led by Tretiak's son Ilya (Valery Nikolaev), are after both of them as the Soviet Union races to the brink of another revolution.

It's easy to see why the enigmatic Kilmer picked The Saint—given its opportunities to mix a dashing leading man franchise with a character who gets to dress up and play-act a variety of extreme disguises—over the rubber-encrusted Batman. It was a good move. The chemistry between Kilmer and Shue sparks the first part, but the film fizzles under the weight of a plodding, frustrating mess disguised as a plot. The script is a mixed bag of pseudo-politics, intriguing ideas and romantic mishmash. Noyce has a certain flair for creating tension and inventing a lot of sound and fury, but he lacks the light touch that "The Saint" needs.—*Susan Lambert*

INVENTING THE ABBOTTS ★★

Starring Liv Tyler, Joaquin Phoenix, Billy Crudup, Jennifer Connelly and Joanna Going. Directed by Pat O'Connor. Written by Ken Hixon. Produced by Ron Howard, Brian Grazer and Janet Myers. A Fox release. Drama. Rated R for sexuality and language. Running time: 105 min.

It's 1957; the Abbotts are the richest family in a small Illinois town and have three beautiful daughters. Jacey ("Sleepers'" Billy Crudup) and Doug Holt ("To Die For's" Joaquin Phoenix) are much lower on the social scale; they live with their widowed mother ("Article 99's" Kathy Baker), a teacher. Jacey is obsessed with the Abbotts; he believes the girls' strict father (Will Patton) became rich from a patent of the Holts' dead father, so Jacey aims to get even by becoming involved with the uninhibited middle daughter Eleanor ("Mulholland Falls'" Jennifer Connelly) and later Alice ("Wyatt Earp's" Joanna Going), the eldest. Less social, Doug is slow to realize that Pam ("Stealing Beauty's" Liv Tyler), the youngest Abbott, is in love with him.

Period detailing sharply contrast the lives of the Holt and Abbott families, and this re-creation of the repressive atmosphere of that era is far more successful than is Ken Hixon's script (based on a Sue Miller story). The young actors all give strong performances. But director Pat O'Connor ("Circle of Friends") has given this film a very slow pace yet still manages to include every romantic movie cliche.—*Ed Scheid*

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Response No. 68

REVIEWS

DOUBLE TEAM ★★★★

Starring Jean-Claude Van Damme, Dennis Rodman and Mickey Rourke. Directed by Tsui Hark. Written by Don Jakoby and Paul Mones. Produced by Moshe Diamant. A Columbia release. Action/adventure. Rated R for nonstop action violence. Running time: 93 min.

Jean-Claude Van Damme, the workhorse Kickboxer/Romancer, has accomplished something bright, wild and unusual. By starring in their films, he has assisted three famed Hong Kong directors to enter the American market: John Woo with "Hard Target," Ringo Lam with "Maximum Risk" and now Tsui Hark with "Double Team." That alone is a feat of merit and significance. And in his latest "double teaming"—or triple-teaming, if one includes media name/NBA player Dennis Rodman, who co-stars—Van Damme has facilitated a piece of cinematic poetry for his global audience.

In his first stateside production (shot in Europe with an international crew), Tsui has retained a good portion of the style he's famous for—and he's extended it. With the help of cinematographer Peter Pau (Woo's "The Killer"), Tsui uses complex camera and lab work: reverse zooms, step printing, different film speeds, kaleidoscopic angles, and closeups. Edited by Bill Pankow ("Maximum Risk") and containing split-second edits, "Double Team" never stays still. It's one of the fastest collages of storytelling images to surface in an American film and contains an amusement park sequence of pure speed, color and image. As in a poem, the line ends don't meet to form a sentence, but the meaning is clear.

Though the plot leaks, the three leads bail it out. Also of note is a stunningly swift and adept martial arts fight sequence with action choreographer Xin Xin Xiong. Extra connective tissue is provided in this Mandalay/One Story effort by a smart and eclectic score by Gary Chang.—***Karen Achenbach***

THE 6TH MAN ★★★1/2

Starring Marlon Wayans and Kadeem Hardison. Directed by Randall Miller. Written by Christopher Reed and Cynthia Carle. Produced by David Hoberman. A Buena Vista release. Comedy. Rated PG-13 for brief language and some innuendos. Running time: 108 min.

When brothers Antoine ("Vampire in Brooklyn's" Kadeem Hardison) and Kenny Tyler ("Don't Be a Menace's..." Marlon Wayans) played basketball as kids, they had dreams of making it to the NCAA finals. Before they have a chance to make their fantasy a reality, Antoine dies. Confused and alone, Kenny—and his Washington Huskies teammates—must fight on. But, in response to a wish Kenny makes, Antoine's ghost appears, ready to help the team.

"The 6th Man's" underlying story deals with learning to say goodbye to someone who you really love and who you thought would always be there. As the narrative unfolds, the emotional bond between brothers is both demonstrated and tested. In a nice character-arc payoff, when the natural-born leader of the two, Antoine, goes too far, Kenny is forced to take charge. For many of the roles, the filmmakers found it easier to teach real players how to act rather than teach actors how to play ball, and their gamble pays off. Also, compared to many sports films, "The 6th Man" has a lot more competition scenes, and they are effectively portrayed.—***Dwayne E. Leslie***

B.A.P.S. ★

Starring Halle Berry and Martin Landau. Directed by Robert Townsend. Written by Troy Beyer. Produced by Mark Burg and Loretha Jones. A New Line release. Comedy. Rated PG-13 for brief strong language. Running time: 87 min.

Even with gold teeth, prehensile fingernails, whipped cream blonde hair and a squeeze-tight orange plastic jumpsuit, Halle Berry is beautiful. Beyond that, "B.A.P.S." (Black American Princesses) is amateurish and silly. What is meant to be a funny fairytale trip about the quest for a pot of gold, following two Georgia waitresses (Berry and Natalie Desselle) who take high hopes to Hollywood, stumbles through scenes. The jokes generate no laughs, leaving the actors looking foolish.

Oscar winner Martin Landau ("Ed Wood") and Ian Richardson ("Brazil") are trapped in character cliches. The heart of the story (about how cross-cultural encounters can be worthwhile) only presumably underlies Troy Beyer's script. At the helm, director Robert Townsend ("Meteor Man") has made a film for which the adjectives "inert," "unfocused" and "foolish" do battle for the descriptive crown. Together, they combine to make this film B.A.D.—***Bridget Byrne***

CATS DON'T DANCE ★★★

Voices by Scott Bakula, Jasmine Guy, Natalie Cole, Ashley Peldon, Kathy Najimy, John Rhys-Davies, George Kennedy, Rene Auberjonois, Hal Holbrook and Don Knotts. Directed by Mark Dindal. Written by Roberts Gannaway, Cliff Ruby, Elana Lesser and Theresa Pettengill. Produced by David Kirschner and Paul Gertz. A Warner Bros. release. Animated. Rated G. Running time: 75 min.

The latest from producer David Kirschner ("The Pagemaster") has a number of marketable elements to attract families and children: a wonderfully overrealized Golden-Era Hollywood setting, a pleasing (at times fabulously so) palette, six tuneful Randy Newman songs, a zing-bing narrative flow, and attractive leads (no hunchbacks here). The late Gene Kelly even helped design sparkling choreography.

On the downside, "Cats Don't Dance" isn't as personal a film as Kirschner's "The Pagemaster," and that takes away from its (however feline) humanity. Although its 1939 Tinseltown setting and occasional caricature appearances (Gable, Davis et al.) and its gotta-be-a-star wishes will be familiar to adults, children might be a bit lost.

"Cats Don't Dance" is released with an eight-minute, G-rated Looney Tune short, "Pullet Surprise." The Foghorn Leghorn starrer from Chuck Jones Prods. doesn't add anything to the Warner cartoon canon, and as always the vocal stylings of Mel Blanc are much missed.—***Kim Williamson***

TURBO ★1/2

Starring Jason David Frank, Johnny Yong Bosch, Nakia Burrise, Catherine Sutherland, Blake Foster and Hilary Shepard Turner. Directed by David Winning and Shuki Levy. Written by Shuki Levy and Shell Danielson. Produced by Jonathan Tzachor. A Fox release. Action. Rated PG for non-stop fantasy action violence. Running time: 100 min.

It's not a sequel or a continuation of an episode of the #1-rated children's TV show. "Turbo" is just what its subtitle says: "A Power Ranger Movie." The only link is that it has all the show's Power Rangers.

After a turbo-charged credit sequence, the film quickly downshifts audience enthusiasm. Perhaps parental complaints about violence are the cause, but this "Turbo" is an hour old before the rock-em sock-em begins. In its place are lots of rock music, fireworks-frill teleportations, a morphing scene and giant-headed aliens. In the first film, the zords were shiny and had a liquid-metal look; this time, they're just wannabe turbo cars with no special weapons. A climactic Mega-Turbo Zord battle scene looks like excess footage from the small-screen show. This "Turbo" arrives running on empty.—***Dwayne E. Leslie***

TOUCH ★1/2

Starring Bridget Fonda, Christopher Walken, Skeet Ulrich and Tom Arnold. Directed and written by Paul Schrader. Produced by Lila Cazes and Fida Attieh. An MGM release. Comedy/drama. Rated R for some sexuality, language and a scene of violence. Running time: 97 min.

A mess of religious satire, semi-serious theology, black comedy and romantic drama, "Touch" never develops its provocative ideas. Using some of his Calvinist upbringing, in which people are either predestined for salvation or not, writer/director Paul Schrader (last heard from with 1992's "Light Sleeper") has resurfaced with sloppy storytelling and loose craftsmanship that turn his thesis into a bland gruel.

In a story of fake and real faith healing, a central conflict between materialism and spirituality isn't dramatized with sincerity or insight. Instead, Schrader piles on offbeat cinematic touches, elliptical transitions and dialogues that drone toward aimlessness. His cold, cerebral approach to characters fails to define them in any meaningful way.

In dealing with matters of true vs. bogus faith, Schrader is trying to make a personal statement, using Elmore Leonard's book of the same name as a springboard. But, unlike Schrader's best films ("Hardcore" and "Patty Hearst"), he doesn't strike a balance between realism and stylization, or take enough chances in examining complex human behavior.—***Dale Winogura***

REVIEWS IN BRIEF

LICENSED TO KILL ★★★1/2

Directed, written and produced by Arthur Dong. A Deep Focus release. Documentary. Unrated. Running time: 79 min.

A grim, sober and succinct glimpse into diseased human minds, "Licensed to Kill" does not judge the seven convicted criminals candidly interviewed here. Instead, it urgently tries to understand the causes of their illegal act: gay bashing.

Without narration or facile commentary, filmmaker Arthur Dong—who directs, scripts, produces and edits—insightfully and sensitively examines how fear and self-hatred can make a killer. His film's devastating impact is enhanced by a vivid use of video for the interviews, courtroom proceedings and police investigations. The work's one major flaw: gratuitous gory shots of victims at crime scenes, which serve only to bludgeon the point. Still, a more honest and ruthless study of homophobia has not been made yet.—*Dale Winogura*

TANGO FEROZ ★1/2

Starring Fernan Miras and Cecilia Dopazo. Directed by Marcelo Pineyro. Written by Aida Bortnik and Marcelo Pineyro. Produced by Claudio Pustelnik and Katrina Bayonas. A Tara release. Drama. Spanish-language; English subtitles. Unrated. Running time: 108 min.

Ferocity and passion are key ingredients missing from a plodding and listless biography of the popular Argentine rock singer Jose Alberto Cruz (aka Tango) from the late 1960s to his untimely death in 1972. As portrayed by Fernan Miras, this would-be rebel mainly mopes about, has impersonal sex with his girlfriend (Cecilia Dopazo), talks aimlessly about nothing in particular, and endures dreary prison life with a friendly cellmate whose dialogues are even more numbingly self-important than are Tango's.

Even mental-hospital scenes lack their intended sense of cruelty and injustice because of the languid and downbeat moviemaking. The existential despair and disconnected dramatic structure of the writing are compounded by the uninspired vision and monotonic rhythm of Marcelo Pineyro's direction. —*Dale Winogura*

KIDS OF SURVIVAL ★★★1/2

Starring Tim Rollins. Directed and produced by Daniel Geller and Dayna Goldfine. A Geller/Goldfine release. Documentary. Unrated. Running time: 87 min.

Inspiring and affecting but not overly manipulative, "Kids of Survival" (subtitled "The Art and Life of Tim Rollins & K.O.S.") sensitively deals with personal and financial problems of education and how today's youth can be empowered by a caring, compassionate teacher. Tim Rollins' class of 10 teenagers in a South Bronx school is scrupulously depicted in matter-of-fact cinema verite as they work together to create unique paintings, using classic works of literature like Stephen Crane's "The Red Badge of Courage" and George Orwell's "Animal Farm" as artistic inspiration and canvas.

The difficulties of teaching such troubled and/or learning-impaired children are squarely confronted by directors Dan Geller and Dayna Goldfine, with occasional visits to their subjects' homes. They make the vital therapeutic connection between art and life with uplifting perceptions, but the video technique they employ tends to be a bit too prosaic to reach into the souls of these special people. It's a small flaw, but a significant one.—*Dale Winogura*

A TRUE AMERICAN ★1/2

Starring Dwight Martin, Juvencio Gonzalez Jr. and Garnet Miller. Directed, written and produced by Paul Roberts. A Roberts Cinema release. Thriller. Unrated. Running time: 99 min.

Poor production, editing and acting clouds this otherwise interesting micro-budget spy thriller. In a feature film debut for the writer/director/producer, Paul Roberts has assembled a cast of unknowns to portray a group of high-level CIA analysts who meet to decide how to handle a life-threatening situation involving widespread radioactive contamination of the food chain.

The tale could be compelling, but—with a budget of a mere $25,000—Roberts has skimped on some important production necessities. "A True American" is a B movie, though it aspires to more.—*Pat Kramer*

Review Digest

Story-type key: (Ac) Action; (Ad) Adventure; (An) Animated; (C) Comedy; (D) Drama; (Doc) Documentary; (F) Fantasy; (Hor) Horror; (M) Musical; (My) Mystery; (R) Romance; (Sat) Satire; (SF) Science Fiction; (Sus) Suspense; (Th) Thriller; (W) Western.

TITLE/MPAA DISTRIBUTOR	RUN TIME	GENRE	REVIEWED IN ISSUE	BOXOFFICE	VARIETY	H. REPORTER	L.A. TIMES	N.Y. TIMES	USA TODAY	AVERAGE	TOTAL BOXOFFICE $*
5 Excellent 4 Very Good 3 Good 2 Fair 1 Poor											
Absolute Power **R** (Col)	*122*	Th	5-97	3	3	3	3	2		2.8	48.6
Anaconda **PG-13** (Col)	*90*	Adv	6-97	2	2	3	3		3	2.6	16.6
B.A P.s **PG-13** (NL)	*87*	C	6-97	1	2	1	2	2	2	1.7	6.4
Cats Don't Dance **G** (WB)	*75*	Ani	6-97	3	3	3	2	3	2	2.7	3.0
Chasing Amy (Mir)	*105*	D	4-97	3	3	4	4	3	3	3.3	0.4
Dante's Peak **PG-13** (Uni)	*108*	Ac D	4-97	4	2	3	2	2	3	2.8	64.1
The Devil's Own **R** (Col)		AcD	5-97	2	3	2	2	3		2.4	35.6
Donnie Brasco **R** (TS)	*121*	D	4-97	3	3	3	3	4	5	3.5	41.2
Double Team **R** (Col)	*93*	AcAd	6-97	4	3	2	3	2	2	2.7	8.4
The English Patient **R** (Mir)	*159*	R	1-97	3	3	4	4	4	4	3.7	73.0
Evita **PG** (BV)	*136*	Mus	2-97	4	4	2	2	3		3.0	49.7
Grosse Pointe Blank **R** (BV)	*107*	C	5-97	4	4	3	3		3	3.4	6.9
Inventing the Abbotts **R** (Fox)	*105*	D	6-97	2	3	2	2	2	2	2.2	4.3
Jerry Maguire **R** (TS)	*138*	D	2-97	4	4	2	3	4	4	3.5	148.2
Jungle 2 Jungle **PG** (BV)	*105*	C	5-97	2	3	3	3	2	2	2.5	51.0
Kama Sutra (TM)	*115*	D	1-97	2	2	2	2	3		2.2	2.3
Kolya (Mir)	*111*	D	12-96	3	4	4	4	4		3.8	3.3
Leo Tolstoy's Anna Karenina **PG-13** (WB)	*108*	D	5-97	2	2	3	2	2		2.2	0.2
Liar Liar **PG-13** (Uni)	*86*	C	5-97	3	4	4	3	3	3	3.3	120.0
Lost Highway **R** (Oct)	*135*	D	2-97	4	3	3	2	3	3	3.0	3.5
love jones **R** (NL)	*110*	R C	5-97	3			2	3		2.8	11.0
Michael **PG** (NL)	*105*	R C	2-97	3	2	3	4	3		2.6	93.8
101 Dalmatians **G** (BV)	*103*	C	2-97	3	3	3	2	2		2.6	135.8
Paradise Road **R** (Fox)		D	5-97	2	3	3	3		2	2.6	0.1
Prisoner of the Mountains **R** (Ori)	*99*	D	2-97	4	4	4	4	3		3.8	0.5
Private Parts **R** (Par)	*109*	C	5-97	3	4	4	4	3		3.7	40.3
The Saint **PG-13** (Par)	*117*	Ac	6-97	2	2	2	2	2	2	2.0	31.4
Scream **R** (Mir)	*111*	HorC	2-97	3	2	3	3	2		2.5	88.8
Secrets and Lies **R** (Oct)	*142*	D	7-96	4	4	4	4	4		4.0	11.6
Selena **PG** (WB)	*127*	D	5-97	3	3	3	3	2	3	2.8	30.5
Shine (FL)	*104*	D	4-96	5	5	4	4	3	3	4.0	35.0
The 6th Man **PG-13** (BV)	*108*	C	6-97	3	3	3	3	2	2	2.7	11.2
Sling Blade **R** (Mir)	*140*	D	11-96	4	4	4	4	3		3.8	19.8
Smilla's Sense of Snow **R** (FS)	*127*	D	5-97	2	3		2	3	4	2.8	2.1
That Old Feeling **PG-13** (Uni)	*105*	C	6-97	3	3	3	3	3	3	3.0	10.1
Touch **R** (MGM)	*97*	C D	6-97	2	2			3		2.3	0.3
Turbo: A Power Rangers Movie **PG** (Fox)	*100*	Ac	6-97	2	2	3	3	2		2.4	7.2
Vegas Vacation **PG** (WB)	*95*	C	5-97	2	2	2	2	2	2	2.0	35.0
Waiting for Guffman **R** (SC)	*82*	C	11-96	3	3	3	4	3	4	3.3	1.5
When We Were Kings **PG** (Gra)	*88*	Doc	2-97	3		3	4			3.2	1.7

** Total boxoffice, in millions, as of April 15, 1997*

NATIONAL NEWS

OCTOBERFEST FOR UNIVERSAL; LIVE STILL KICKING; TRIMARK R.I.P.?

Universal Pictures will acquire a majority interest in **October Films**, ending much speculation about the future of the well-regarded indie. The deal not only gives Universal the specialized division it's been looking for, but strengthens October's position on the international front and provides some very deep pockets to reach into. October, valued at about $40 million, is privately held by a group of Wall Street investors. Its recent critical and commercial successes with "Secrets & Lies" and "Breaking the Waves" made it a hot property. The deal, which resembles the Disney acquisition of Miramax some years back, provides for continuing autonomy for October's executives. October will maintain its headquarters in New York and continue to acquire, create, market and distribute its films theatrically, both domestically and internationally. Universal will control video distribution, television rights and other ancillary markets on October's films.

The agreement ends an attempt by a Boston-based investment firm, Bain Capital Partners, to create a three-way merger among Live Entertainment, October Pictures and Trimark Holdings that would have resulted in a $200 million mega-indie. It remains to be seen whether Bain will try for a two-way merger since it appears to have agreed to acquire **Live Entertainment**—in the midst of a long-running IRS audit—for $93 million. Live chairman Roger Burlage reportedly had preferred a refinancing proposal of Canyon Partners, a Los Angeles-based investment partnership; under Canyon, Burlage would have run Live on its current business plan, which is to further develop a production and distribution arm. Interestingly enough, Burlage once ran **Trimark,** which has seen its stock, literally and figuratively, fall in recent months. Stock prices went from $6.25 in January to $3.37 in April. Early-year release "Meet Wally Sparks" bombed badly at the boxoffice, taking in just $4 million on an outlay by Trimark estimated at $15 million to $20 million for acquisition and P&A. Insiders say Chase Securities, Trimark's lead banker, has been seeking a buyer for the indie, which is valued at $45 million, including debt.

INDIE MINORS FOR MAJORS

A recent study led by John Nendick, a partner in Andersen's Global Communications and Entertainment Group, emphasized the positive for the future of independent films. The study showed the independent film industry was strong and getting stronger, saying that independents would continue to flourish under relationships forged with large companies and studios that look to the smaller, outsider companies for product. Plus, the studios view the indies as a talent "training ground"—much like the way baseball uses minor leagues to nurture talent for the majors. The study noted that 48 percent of 1996 releases were independent films, but it also acknowledged the increase in overall releases made it harder for a small film to find and, more importantly, build on its audience because the turnover rate in theatres is so high.

INDIES, INDIES EVERYWHERE AND NOT A DROP TO DRINK

In preparation for our August Independent/Specialty Market film report, this edition of National News takes a fast look at a growing and rather disturbing trend among some fixtures in the specialized film scene. Despite the recent triumph of specialty movies at the Oscars and a flood of press on the renaissance of independent film, many of the less fortunate companies and/or studio divisions devoted to the creation of "niche" titles are having an increasingly hard time gaining market share. This is having the expected effect, with some major suppliers of recent years feeling the pinch and even teetering on the edge of collapse.

Here's a fast, quick snapshot of major recent developments:

THE LION POUNCES

Desiring to increase its Wall Street appeal, MGM has agreed to acquire **Orion Pictures, Goldwyn Entertainment** and **Motion Picture Corp. of America** from John Kluge's Metromedia Entertainment Group. The $573 million price represents a cash payment of $373 million (coming from MGM's co-owners, Kirk Kerkorian's Tracinda Corp. and Australian broadcaster Seven Network) and $200 million in debt assumption. The buy bolsters MGM's library holdings—which, as a primary asset in Hollywood valuations, would make an expected stock offering by the studio more attractive. MGM owns the United Artists titles, but the company under Kerkorian's first reign sold all pre-1987 MGM films to Ted Turner. Metromedia's library adds 2,200 titles to MGM's 1,559-film vault. Metromedia retains control of the Landmark arthouse circuit.

SONY TERMINATES TRIUMPH

While other studios are looking to create or acquire indie arms, Sony Pictures Entertainment will be shutting its down. After four years of operating it, Sony will dissolve low-budget arm **Triumph** once the current slate of films are completed. Sony president and COO John Calley said the move was strategic rather than financial and was intended to focus energies on Columbia and TriStar. Born during former president Peter Guber's tenure, Triumph has had an uneven boxoffice record. President of Triumph since 1993, David Saunders said the division should not be shut down, insisting every Triumph movie has ultimately made its money back and then some after video and TV revenues were counted. He is expected to remain at Triumph until 1998, when the last six Triumph films in the works will be released. Triumph's latest releases are "Truth or Consequences, N.M." and "Masterminds."

CUTS AT CASTLE ROCK

The ripple effect of the Time Warner/Turner merger continues. The latest boat to be tossed is **Castle Rock Entertainment,** which will lay off all but 40 to 55 of its 117 employees. The cuts were expected and come in departments that have overlapping responsibilities with Warner Bros., the Time Warner arm that next year begins distributing Castle Rock productions, which will average five films annually.

Turner Broadcasting System bought Castle Rock three years ago and beefed up the staff. It was readying the company to be part of a new studio Ted Turner was aiming to create by combining Castle Rock, New Line and the now-defunct Turner Pictures. Castle Rock production president Liz Glotzer will remain in her post. Likewise, feature and TV development will be unaffected, as will any development deals actors and directors have with Castle Rock. The company's domestic distribution deal with Sony Pictures Entertainment expires this year. Currently, Castle Rock's foreign distribution is handled through joint ventures with overseas companies: Concord in Germany, UGC in France and Rank in the UK.

NEW LINE NOT FOR SALE

In a related Time Warner story, the media giant has finally, after many talks and much effort to find a buyer for **New Line Cinema,** taken the company off the market. This comes despite Ted Turner's reported desire to sell and the clear indication that New Line chairman Bob Shaye won't settle for anything less than full autonomy. Though the company will be staying with Time Warner for now, talks have begun with banks to arrange off-balance production financing in order to keep New Line costs off the Time Warner books.

Under the original New Line/Turner deal, New Line was guaranteed independence. Not so with Time Warner. Both New Line and Castle Rock still officially report to Turner, but with $500 million needed to make its upcoming slate of films—including the big-budget sci-fi extravaganza "Lost in Space," set for an April '98 release—New Line needs cash. If provided by Time Warner, Warner Bros. co-chairmen Bob Daly and Terry Semel might be able to call the shots at the former indie.

New Line might have looked better to buyers if Shaye were willing to return to making the lower-budget films that first put New Line on the map, but Shaye prefers a range of budgets. Turner, who acquired New Line in 1993 for $570 million, wanted to sell for a high price (up to $1 billion). New Line's recent track record and Turner's desire to turn a profit seemed to have combined to make it impossible for New Line to find a buyer.

But the situation remains fluid. New Line's upcoming slate includes "Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery," "Boogie Nights" and "Mortal Kombat: Annihilation"—all of which are contenders for breakout success.

PACIFIC OVERTURES

NOTES FROM THE PACIFIC RIM *by Susan Lambert*

LEAD STORY: CHINA OPENS THEATRE DOORS TO FOREIGN INVESTMENT

BEIJING—China wants to update its theatres and reinvigorate its cinema-going audience, but according to Zhou Ming, an official of the Film Industry Administration, the country can't afford to go it alone. That is why the notoriously closed country is taking the first steps toward inviting foreign investors to have a piece of local development. The government says it will soon publish foreign investment guidelines and is looking to bring in outside money to support the country's struggling domestic film industry. In the past, the Chinese government has avoided foreign participation and been leery of imported films—seen as dangerous propaganda—to the degree of allowing only 12 films per year into the country for general circulation. According to existing laws, local cinemas must show Chinese-made films on at least two-thirds of their screens. The government has no plans to change that limitation at the moment, and foreign investors will be limited to minority stakes in properties. Many companies, eager to get a foothold in the vast underscreened market that is China, are encouraged by the move, saying that it's a small step in the right direction. China will be offering an opportunity to invest in several urban markets: Beijing, Shanghai and Western Chongqing. Mike Conners, a Motion Picture Association spokesman based in Singapore, says some foreign companies are already investing in cinemas through local Chinese companies. Hong Kong-based Lark International Enterprises plans to open an eight-screen multiplex on the mainland in July as part of a deal it has with United Artists Theatre Circuit. Also, Singapore-based Singapore Technologies Industrial Corp. and Golden Harvest Multiplex are partnering to build Shanghai's first multiplex, a 1,300-seat sixplex.

MORRIS LEAVES FFC, HOYTS EXPANDS ABROAD

SYDNEY—John Morris, chief executive of the Australian Film Finance Corp. (FFC), has decided to leave the agency on June 30 when his contract expires. The FFC is Queensland's principal funding agency, and during Morris' eight-year term it invested in such films as "Shine," "Strictly Ballroom" and "Muriel's Wedding." FFC chairman Bob Campbell praised Morris for successfully steering the corporation through its third government review, which confirmed the success of FFC's direct subsidy to the film industry. It is speculated that FCC will look for Morris' replacement at other state film agencies or even within its own ranks. One possible candidate is FFC senior investment manager Catriona Hughes.

In other Australian news, Hoyts Cinemas, which is expanding its international presence, has promoted two executives. Neil Pentecost, operations manager for New South Wales and Queensland, headed to Santiago, Chile in May to become general manager of Hoyts' new operation there; and Hoyts executive Stuart McInnes now moves to London as general manager of operations in the United Kingdom and Europe.

HONG KONG PRODUCERS FACE CHINESE CENSORS

HONG KONG—Hong Kong producers and directors are breathing a little easier these days now that it looks like China may allow studios to release two versions of their films: one for distribution in Hong Kong and one for mainland theatres. The managing director for Media Asia Group, Ma Fung-kwok, hopes it is a sign that artistic freedom will be protected in Hong Kong when it reverts to Chinese rule on July 1. Ma Fung-kwok is a member of the Beijing-based Provisional Legislature that will take over from Hong Kong's elected body when the transition occurs. Chinese authorities regularly practice censorship on mainland films through a committee of a dozen or so bureaucrats, which must approve all films before distribution. Ng See-yuen, chairman of the Hong Kong Film awards and managing director of Seasonal Film Corp., recently produced a controversial historical drama "The Soong Sisters" (see review, this issue). A story of the powerful wives of three Chinese leaders, it also had to gain approval of a separate committee of historians. Ng See-yuen is pleased that, although there were cuts made to satisfy the censors, many controversial scenes survived intact. But another Hong Kong producer, Manfred Wong, says he has faced difficulties gaining approval by Chinese authorities to film his script "Wind and Cloud" on the mainland because the film follows an anti-hero and Beijing doesn't like the ambiguity of the story.

TEMASEK REAPS GOLDEN HARVEST

SINGAPORE—A signing ceremony was held in April to celebrate the creation of a US$30 million film fund company, GH Pictures Limited, which will invest in films produced in China. The agreement is between Hong Kong's Golden Harvest (through World Media Group Ltd.); Citicorp Capital Asia Ltd.; and Television Corporation of Singapore/Temasek Holdings Limited. GH Pictures will support movie production projects approved by the Peoples Republic of China and the Ministry of Radio and Film TV, and all movies produced by the fund will be distributed through Golden Harvest Films. Golden Harvest chairman Raymond Chow says the company plans to tap international capital and resources to help support China's film industry. Lee Cheok Yew, CEO of Television Corporation of Singapore, says the venture is a natural development for TCS after 15 years of producing TV serials, specials and movies.

VIETNAM GUARANTEES INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY PROTECTION

HANOI—An agreement was reached in late April between Vietnam and the United States that for the first time guarantees protection of intellectual property in Vietnam. MPAA head Jack Valenti hailed it as a tremendous development in the war against piracy. The piracy of movies and videos, along with books, musical recordings and video games, threatens the potential for U.S. exports in Vietnam with an estimated $50 million in trade losses each year. Vietnam is one of the fastest-growing markets in the world.

The agreement is considered a good step toward improved U.S.-Vietnam trade relations, but in order for Vietnam to become a member of the World Trade Organization it still must adopt a number of international conventions, including the Bern Convention, that protect intellectual property and other trade.

DO YOU HAVE AN EXHIBITION-RELATED NEWS ITEM ABOUT THE ASIA-PACIFIC MARKET? E-MAIL SUSAN LAMBERT IN CARE OF boxoffice@earthlink.net

EXHIBITION BRIEFINGS

MUVICO'S MEMPHIS BELLE

Muvico Theatres plans to build what will be the largest multiplex in Memphis, Tenn. The state-of-the-art complex, set to open in late 1998, will have 23 auditoriums as well as a 400- to 500-seat IMAX 3D theatre. The cinema will offer stadium seating, digital sound systems, wall-to-wall curved screens, gourmet concessions and specially designed seats created for Muvico, which feature moveable armrests and lumbar support for added comfort. Muvico currently operates 61 screens throughout Florida, with 117 screens in various stages of development throughout the southeastern United States, the Caribbean and South America.

EVERYTHING'S COMING UP ROSEVILLE FOR UATC

United Artists Theatre Circuit has opened the Olympus Pointe 12 Theatre in Roseville, Calif. "We feel the Roseville community has been underserved by the exhibition industry in providing a quality motion picture experience," says Neal Pinsker, vice president of operations for the Western District. "The residents of Roseville will now experience the power of THX sound, digital processing, wall-to-wall screens, cupholder armrests and exemplary customer service." The Olympus Pointe 12 features DTS and SDDS, with THX in two auditoriums; automated ticketing; wheelchair seating dispersed throughout all auditoriums; assistive listening devices; and a state-of-the-art video wall in the lobby that plays coming attractions.

DICKINSON GIVES OKLA. PATRONS MOORE FOR THEIR MONEY

Dickinson Theatres is constructing a 12-screen theatre in Moore, Okla., in what is the first of several Oklahoma builds the circuit is planning. The Moore 12 will feature giant wall-to-wall screens, stadium seating, high-back rocker seats with cupholder armrests, and Dolby, DTS and SDDS sound systems. A centrally-located computerized boxoffice will facilitate both same-day and advance ticket sales.

METROPOLITAN'S DESERT OASIS

Metropolitan Theatres Corp. will add 32 screens in the Coachella Valley, a desert region in California, according to Bruce Corwin, the circuit's president. "Never before has Metropolitan undertaken an expansion project of such magnitude," says Corwin. "We are extremely excited for our desert patrons, who will now have the opportunity to truly experience the finest our industry has to offer in film presentation. All of our new facilities will offer stadium seating and state-of-the-art projection and digital sound." With previously announced expansion plans, including a 10-plex in Calexico, Calif., Metropolitan will operate 77 screens in the Coachella and Imperial Valleys, bringing the chain's total count to 151 screens throughout California and Colorado.

NATIONAL AMUSEMENTS UPS MASS IN MASS.

National Amusements is increasing its Showcase Cinemas in Revere, Mass. by expanding it to 18 screens and 5,800 seats, making it the largest cinema complex in New England. The renovated cinema will have multiple boxoffices with 12 or more ticket-selling stations; a full-service customer service center; a cinema store selling movie merchandise; a video wall showing trailers; and an entertainment center with video games.

ON THE MOVE

Roger Eaton, president of **Hoyts Cinemas Corp. USA and Latin America,** announced that **Alan Johnson,** formerly senior vice president of operations and marketing, has been appointed chief operating officer for all of the U.S. In his new position, Johnson, who joined Hoyts a year ago, will be responsible for film, construction, operations and marketing...The board of directors of **Ballantyne of Omaha Inc.,** manufacturer and marketer of **Strong International**-brand motion picture projection systems and theatrical follow spotlights, has announced that president and chief executive officer Ronald H. Echtenkamp will become vice chairman of the board. Succeeding Echtenkamp as president and CEO will be **John P. Wilmers,** currently executive vice president of sales and a board member. Additionally, **Ray F. Boegner,** vice president of sales, has been promoted to senior VP of sales...**Digital Theater Systems** has named **Dan Slusser** as vice chairman and chief executive officer. Slusser recently served as VP of MCA Inc., senior VP and general manager of Universal City Studios Inc. and chairman of the Universal Facilities rental division...**James C. Naify** has been named senior VP of film for **Century Theatres.** He will report to **David Shesgreen,** who was recently promoted to executive VP of corporate development and programming...**Jack Johnston** has joined the sales team of **Cinemeccanica U.S. Inc.,** manufacturer and distributor of projectors, consoles, lamphouses and sound products. Johnston has 20 years of sales experience in the industry, having previously held positions at Christie and ORC...**MBK Construction Ltd.,** a top theatre builder, has appointed **Donald E. Porter Jr.** director of project support services. Prior to joining MBK, Porter spent 15 years with Kitchell Contractors as manager of support services.

SHOWMINDER

Remember to save the following dates: **NAC Expo,** June 2-5, Marriott Hotel, Anaheim, Calif. Call 312-236-3858...**Theatre Historical Society of America 28th Annual Conclave,** Salt Lake City Embassy Suites, Utah. Call (801) 546-1840...**Cinema Expo,** June 29-July 2, RAI, Amsterdam. Call 212-246-6460...**Mid-Atlantic NATO Seminar-Reunion,** July 10-11, Harbor Court Hotel, Baltimore, Md. Call (757) 722-5275...**Australian Movie Convention,** August 13-16, Royal Pines Resort, Gold Coast, Australia. Call 61 733565671...**ShowSouth,** August 19-20, Callaway Gardens and Resort, Pine Mountain, Ga. Call (770) 455-8988...**ShowEast,** Oct. 20-23, Trump Taj Mahal, Atlantic City, N.J. Call 212-246-6460...**CineAsia,** December 3-5, Singapore International Convention and Exhibition Centre. Call 212-246-6460.

CLARIFICATION

In the article "Palace Guard" (April 1997), BOXOFFICE incorrectly stated that Mann Theatres owns the Village and Bruin Theatres in Westwood, Calif. Charles Skouras, president of National Theatres for many years, obtained the theatres in the 1930s, and they are still owned by the Skouras family. Mann Theatres has been a tenant since 1973.

CONCESSIONS EXTRA: LOEWS FLUSH WITH ICEE SLUSH



Coca-Cola-owned National ICEE Corp., manufacturer of ICEE frozen carbonated beverages, has announced that Loews Theatres (formerly Sony Theatres) has agreed to introduce ICEE at all of its theatres. According to ICEE, Loews conducted taste tests with other frozen carbonated beverage brands, the results of which affirmed ICEE's popularity with consumers. Additionally, ICEE cites a research study in which 40 percent of teens surveyed mentioned ICEE by name as a drink they would buy. Among ICEE's marketing initiatives are new promotional cup designs, an updated logo (still featuring ICEE's polar bear mascot), and tie-ins with sports, entertainment and educational properties. Popular with the kids are Bear Paw Points, which are available on ICEE cups and can be redeemed for ICEE merchandise such as caps, T-shirts and beach towels.

Q&A: NAC REINVENTS PUBLICATIONS

Susan Cross, director of communications for the National Association of Concessionaires, tells Boxoffice about the complete revamping of the NAC's two publications. With new features, more information and an attractive new design, Cross believes Concessionworks and Concession Profession will both be valuable tools to everyone in the concessions industry.

Boxoffice: The NAC has reworked its quarterly newsletter, and is starting a new biannual magazine. What are these publications going to be like?

SUSAN CROSS: This all came about because we did a readership survey, and we asked our members what they wanted in our publications. They told us they wanted more, and they wanted it to be snappier and brighter. The newsletter used to be called *The Concessionaire*, and it was basically a two-color [newsletter with] information about the NAC. The frequency has changed from time to time—it was a monthly, then it was quarterly, then it was a bimonthly. We've changed the name to *Concessionworks*, and it's now a quarterly four-color publication. It includes information about the association and our members, as well as feature articles on topics that our members are interested in. The first issue just came out in March.

Boxoffice: What are some of the articles that appeared in the first issue?

CROSS: The first issue had an article about the Internet and the World Wide Web, and how you can use it in your food service or concessions business. Another article deals with Generation X in food service—how that particular age group is impacting the food service and concessions industry, both from a front-line perspective and from a management perspective.

Boxoffice: What else is contained in the newsletter?

CROSS: There was information on the convention, the trade show, registration forms; there's a product section for new products; there's a news brief section that talks about some of the things that are going on in the industry; there was an article on one of our members [Bruce Proctor of Proctor Cos.] receiving the Bert Nathan Memorial Award at ShoWest. There's a page called "Fast Facts" that has trivia items. Every issue tells you who the new members are, information on people who have changed positions or gotten promotions or have news going on in their company. Each issue also has a spotlight, where we take a member and give him a 20-questions kind of thing. It's really fun. It's a combination of fun and information.

Boxoffice: Tell me about *Concession Profession*, the biannual magazine.

CROSS: *Concession Profession* takes the place of *Insite*, which was a yearly trade journal we started I believe in 1980. It came out annually and included our NAC membership directory, as well as some feature articles and information about the association. But it didn't really have an identity, and it changed from year to year and it didn't really have a focus. So we decided to do away with *Insite*, and instead of doing a yearly trade journal/membership directory, we would do a biannual magazine that would have some consistency, that would have an identity in the industry. The spring issue will have a lot of information about our convention in it, as well as a number of feature articles and columns. The fall issue will include the membership directory, so we will keep that component of it, but it will be more magazine-oriented, and it will have a definite style and design that will be consistent. There's no magazine in food service at all that focuses specifically on concessions, and we thought that was a niche that we could fill, and fill well.

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Response No. 40

INTERNATIONAL NEWS BRIEFS

EUROVIEWS

European News Notes *by Melissa Morrison*

LEAD STORY: LONDON MERGES FILM FESTIVALS

LONDON—An upstart challenger to the established London Film Festival (LFF) has changed tactics and joined forces with its rival to create a premier film event in the English capital. The nascent London Film '97 festival will merge with the LFF, Europe's largest noncompetitive festival, which takes place November 6-23. The elder fest will eventually take on some elements of London Film '97's concept: competitive screenings and the possible addition of a related market. The two organizations, joined by the producers group PACT (Producers' Association of Cinema and Television), will discuss plans to make the 1998 LFF a competitive, "A"-status one. Plans for the London Film '97 festival and market were announced in February by Sheila Whitaker, who had earlier been fired as the head of the LFF.

As originally planned, Whitaker's festival would have occurred in early October and would have showcased 120 to 150 movies from American studios and major international directors, just as the LFF does (although somewhat fewer than the LFF's 180). The new-and-improved festival echoes another evolving industry event: The pre-Mifed London Premiere Screenings will also occur in the fall (October 13-17), its timing placing it significantly just before the Mifed (International Film and TV Film Documentary Market) screenings in Milan, Italy (October 19-24). Previously, the London pre-Mifed screenings were more informally organized but have gradually gained importance for film buyers and sellers. This year, at the urging of UK sales companies, the screenings will be coordinated by, and resulting deals facilitated through a central liaison office. (Also on the market front, the late-summer Venice Film Festival has announced plans for the Venice International Film Market, meant to prime the palate for the main dish of Mifed.)

MEDIA II SHOWS DISTRIBS THE MONEY

BRUSSELS—A new program by MEDIA II, the audiovisual program of united Europe, will encourage foreign-film distribution in member countries by rewarding films for foreign admissions. The organization has earmarked US$12.8 million for the plan, which may begin as early as the fall. Depending on the size of the country in which the film screens, the movie will earn from US$.38 to US$.51 per ticket sold, with the advantage going to sales in smaller countries. (The limit will be 1 million admissions and the money will be returned in the form of a credit account to be used for the distributor's next film.) The program announcement accompanied news from the Paris-based International Federation of Film Distributors' Associations (FIAD), which showed that admissions for European films in countries other than the movies' home countries had dropped precipitously. In 1995, only 26.3 million foreign admissions were recorded, compared to 40.1 million the previous year—a decline of one-third. MEDIA II also announced a new screenwriters' training program, North By Northwest, to be organized by Britain's First Film Foundation, the Dutch Maurits Binger Film Institute, and Denmark's The Script. The training course will bring American "script doctors," led by David Howard, to Europe this summer and fall to advise their budding Continental counterparts.

MUCHO MULTIPLEXES

ATHENS—Greece now boasts its first multiplex, the Finns are waiting for theirs, and all of Spain will be under construction through the next year. In a suburb of Athens, the US$28.5 million Village Centre debuted in February, sporting 10 screens and an entertainment center. The cinema is the result of a joint venture between Australia's Village Roadshow and the Greek Vardinoyannis oil conglomerate. The Athens 'plex is the first of three Roadshow plans for the capital city, with four others scheduled for other towns. Finland will get its first of three Helsinki multiplexes constructed by Kino-Palatsi-Sandrews-Metronome, a collaboration among a Swedish-Danish exhibition partnership and a pair of Finnish producers. The projects include building a 1,900-seat cinema and refurbishing an existing one, the Maxim and Formia.

Finally, in Spain, Warner Bros., the pay-TV company Sogecable and the Portuguese media group Lusomundo Filmes plan to collaborate on 20 multiplexes, some with up to 16 screens, in the next four years. The first project is an eight-plex scheduled to open this summer in Zaragoza.

GREGORY'S OLD LADY

EDINBURGH—Director Bill Forsyth is postponing his much-anticipated sequel to 1981's "Gregory's Girl" in protest of the state film agency's funding procedures. He has charged the Scottish Film Fund (which determines what projects receive designated funding) with favoritism, saying that it funds its board members and other close associates at the expense of nonmembers. Forsyth joined the fund's production panel in September, but resigned in protest in January. At the time, he was in preproduction on the "Gregory" sequel, for which the fund had allotted US$1.6 million (before his appointment). Forsyth says he will seek alternatives and will likely postpone the film until 1998. A week after Forsyth's resignation, the Scottish production company Palm Tree Productions filed a similar complaint with the country's Office of Fair Trading and the European Commission, and the Scottish Arts Council announced it would undertake its own independent investigation. Soon after, John McGrath, the producer of "Carrington," resigned in protest of Forsyth's accusations. In an effort to defend the fund's integrity, McGrath said he would refuse a US$1.7 million fund grant to his production "The Silver Darlings," and said he would not request funding for his production of Kazuo Ishiguro's "A Pale View of Hills." McGrath praised the panel members as professional and fair.

DO YOU HAVE AN EXHIBITION OR FEATURE FILM RELATED NEWS ITEM ABOUT THE EUROPEAN MARKET?
CONTACT MELISSA MORRISON IN CARE OF THE PRAGUE POST AT: NA PORICI 12, 115 30 PRAGUE 1, CZECH REPUBLIC
email: tomelis@bohem-net.cz

Q&A: MARIANNE SAGEBRECHT GETS JURY DUTY

As the industry winds down from the Cannes Film Festival, where a jury's blessing can lift an otherwise obscure film into the international spotlight, earning it a few million dollars in the process, **BOXOFFICE** *probes the mind of a frequent juror. German actress Marianne Sagebrecht has done jury duty at several festivals, most recently in Berlin at the 1997 Berlin Filmfestspiele. Best known to Americans for her role in 1988's "Bagdad Cafe," she's also appeared with John Malkovich in Volker Schlondorff's "The Ogre." Sagebrecht's latest project—playing Sophia Loren's "little, round" sister in "Soleil"—showed at Cannes, screening out of competition.*

BOXOFFICE: What criteria do you use when you're judging a film?

MARIANNE SAGEBRECHT: For me it's very important that I try as much as I can to be with the audience. When I'm with the audience, I know exactly what the film does to the audience, how it influences the audience, what it is and how it is. And then, of course, I'm a woman. One thing is totally scaring me about all films out now. More and more in the last three years, female characters are changing completely. It looks like someone wants to tell us, leave the kitchen, take the gun and be like the man—be a soldier yourself. I think it's extreme.

BOXOFFICE: Do depictions of women affect your judgment of a film in competition?

SAGEBRECHT: Definitely. It's all very personal. What I believe—my philosophy, my religious beliefs, my social beliefs—of course, this is me and my whole life. But another thing would be the technical aspect. A good film is a good film. You have the camera, you have the technique, you have the directing, you have this and this and that. And of course you have the acting. This is something else, also very important. So you have two levels.

BOXOFFICE: Do you find that as an actress you focus more on the acting in a film?

SAGEBRECHT: No. For me, it's always everything together. It's if afterward I'm tired or destroyed, or I'm full of energy and feel happy, if something is touched and something comes together, my heart and my mind.

BOXOFFICE: How do you feel about the whole idea of ranking one movie as better than others?

SAGEBRECHT: I don't like the word "judge," it's terrible. I'd rather say, "I feel this more, I like this more." I don't like to judge so much, because I am not a filmmaker. I can go at it from a totally different level, which is good. I'm like a scout—I was there and I tell what I felt, I tell what I didn't like, what was not right for me.

BOXOFFICE: What are your thoughts on the purpose of a competition in a film festival?

SAGEBRECHT: I always say nobody forces you to take a film to a festival. I know many, many film producers and directors would say, 'No, I don't need this, I just go out and try to touch the audience.' But on the other hand, if you go out and try to touch the audience, you need a distributor and you need a cinema, the place and the chance to show your film. And this [the festival] is a special thing.

So many cinema owners, if they have, for example, eight screens in one big building, they could give one room for young films. But no, they're so focused on making a profit, and this is the worst. I think there's treasure to be found—films from young people [that never found distribution]. I'm sure one day there will be a festival devoted to films that have never been released. Then we will find something, I'm sure. I'm sure.

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NORTHERN EXPOSURE

Canadian News Notes *by Shlomo Schwartzberg*

LEAD STORY: DREAMWORKS SEEKS PERMISSION TO SET UP TORONTO BRANCH

DreamWorks might be coming to Toronto, if the company gets permission from the Canadian government to do so. DreamWorks Distribution LLC would like to distribute its projects from a Toronto-based company, which would be called DreamWorks Distribution Canada. But that would mean getting the go-ahead to distribute directly in Canada, which currently is not allowable for any American companies but Hollywood studios whose operations in Canada pre-date the legislation. A recent attempt by Netherlands-based Polygram Filmed Entertainment to distribute directly in Canada failed to get government approval. But Jim Tharp, head of North American distribution for DreamWorks, told The Toronto Star that he hopes to get consent from Ottawa within the month. That might happen, because DreamWorks, with one of its emphases being animated films, is not threatening any Canadian distributor, and Canada is known for a strong community of artists working in animation, who could only benefit from jobs being offered by the new company. DreamWorks' first feature film, the George Clooney vehicle "Peacemaker," is scheduled for release this fall in Canada as well as the U.S.

MORE CINEPLEX PLEXES

Cineplex Odeon continues its significant expansion with announcements of three new major multiplexes in the Toronto area, representing an investment (in conjunction with the landlords) of C$41 million (US$28.3 million). The twin Varsity cinemas, one of the main venues for The Toronto International Film Festival, will be expanded by 10 screens, six of which will feature all-stadium seating. The 50,000-square-foot multiplex, which is located in downtown Toronto, is expected to be completed by this December. Cineplex will also build a 10-screen, 45,000-square-foot multiplex that will seat more than 2,400 people in Markham, Ontario, and an 11-screen, 2,280-seat multiplex in the city of Scarborough, both also scheduled to open in December of this year. Speaking to BOXOFFICE, Howard Lichtman, Cineplex's executive vice president of marketing and communications, said about the three complexes, "We're building the new theatres in Toronto because it's our home town and we want to make sure that every community within our own home territory that doesn't have a modern state-of-the-art multiplex is properly serviced." Currently, Cineplex has 1,554 screens in 314 locations in North America.

EGOYAN HOPES FOR "SWEET" SUCCESS

At press time, Atom Egoyan's latest film, "The Sweet Hereafter," was said to have been invited to the 1997 Cannes film festival. Egoyan's film, adapted from Russell Bank's book, deals with a horrific bus crash and the effect its aftermath has on a young girl ("Road to Avonlea's" Sarah Polley) who survived. "The Sweet Hereafter" would be Egoyan's second film to be invited to compete in Cannes; two of his other films, "Speaking Parts" and "The Adjuster," have played the Director's Fortnight at the fest.

CANADIAN MOVIEGOERS RENDEZ-VOUS WITH QUEBEC CINEMA

Le Rendez-Vous du Cinema Quebecois has gone on the road, bringing the best of Quebec cinema to other parts of Canada. It's been around for 15 years, showing the full output of the film year in Quebec, and now, for the second year, the top 10 Quebec films (and one short) have traveled outside the province. This year's Rendez-Vous in Toronto did considerably better than in 1996, its first year in the city, says organizer Claude Martel, because of the more central downtown venue where the films showed. Among the movies exhibited were Pierre Gang's "Sous-Sol," the Genie award winner for best original screenplay, which has also been invited to the New Directors/New Films series in New York, and Gilles Carle's "Pudding Chomeur," which had its world premiere in competition at the 1996 Montreal World Film Festival.

BELL CANADA SETS UP H@BITAT FOR FILM STUDENTS

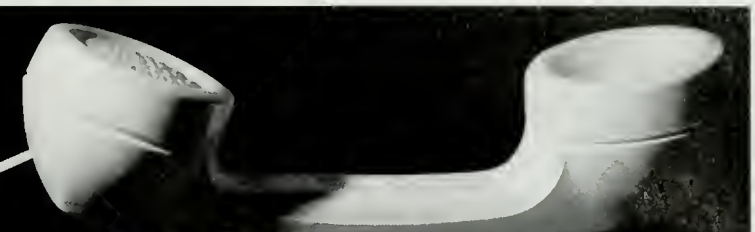
Ana Serrano has been appointed Director of MediaLinx H@bitat, a new media training facility slated to open in June at the Canadian Film Centre, Canada's premier film school. Established with a C$500,000 (US$345,000) donation from Bell Canada, Medialinx H@bitat is a training, resource and development facility committed to "transforming" Canadian film. Workshops and familiarity with the new media should ensure that Centre graduates will be turned "into world class participants in the entertainment industry of the future," says a press release announcing the project. The Centre, which annually unveils short films from its graduates, also produces feature films; Colleen Murphy's romantic comedy "Shoemaker" comes out commercially this month, and previous Centre features include "Rude," "Blood and Donuts" and "House."

OFDC INSTITUTES INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT ONTARIO FILMMAKERS

It might be reeling from funding cuts but the Ontario Film Development Corporation is still determined to support emerging Ontario filmmakers. Its recent initiatives, Market Mentorships and Partnerships in Training, were instituted after extensive research and consultation with industry and clients. "The two new initiatives will create opportunities for the next generation of filmmakers," says Alexandra Raffe, chief executive officer of the organization. "The OFDC is in a position to forge innovative industry partnerships that will provide emerging filmmakers with direct, practical industry contact, mentorship, and professional development opportunities which will give Ontario filmmakers an edge in an increasingly aggressive marketplace." Participants in the programs will be partnered with distributors and producers at workshops held in advance of and on location at domestic and international television and film markets. MIP TV was the site of the official launch of the program and further such pairings between up-and-comers and established talent will take place at Toronto, Berlin, Cannes and the AFM, among other festivals.

DO YOU HAVE AN EXHIBITION-RELATED NEWS ITEM ABOUT THE CANADIAN MARKET? CONTACT SHLOMO SCHWARTZBERG IN CARE OF OUR CANADIAN NEWS BUREAU AT: 416-638-6402

Boxoffice Magazine presents



MovieFone's Moviegoer Activity Report

For the Month of March 1997

MovieFone® (777-FILM®) and its sister service, MovieLink® Online, are now the single largest source of movie showtime information in the country, providing information to over 12 million moviegoers each month. The following information represents the most requested theatres and exhibitors on MovieFone.

Top 10 Exhibitors & Theatres

Most Requested Exhibitors

Rank	Exhibitor	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
1	United Artists	857,388	2
2	Cineplex Odeon	751,614	1
3	Sony	743,298	3
4	AMC	644,822	4
5	General Cinema	408,388	5
6	Century	261,318	6
7	Cinemark	200,557	7
8	National Amusements	174,545	9
9	Mann	158,858	8
10	Regal	156,607	10

Most Requested Theatres

Rank	Market	Theatre	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
1	NY	Sony Lincoln Square	89,295	1
2	BO	Sony Cheri	40,717	2
3	LA	AMC Century 14	38,848	5
4	PH	UA Riverview Plaza	35,717	8
5	NY	CO Chelsea Cinemas	35,305	7
6	BO	Sony Assembly Sq	34,601	4
7	NY	CityCin Village East	33,924	36
8	BO	Sony Copley	32,607	6
9	NY	Sony 19th St. East	32,371	104
10	PH	UA Cheltenham	30,201	30

Most Requested Theatres Per Screen

Total Requests	Rank	Theatre (# screens)	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
New York	1	CO Ziegfeld (1)	24,086	1
1,556,979	2	UA East (1)	15,987	44
	3	Sony Astor (1)	12,161	57
Los Angeles	1	CinAm National (1)	7,072	6
726,793	2	Pacific Cinerama Dome (1)	5,437	27
	3	CinAm Village (1)	5,110	1
Dallas	1	UA United Artists (8)	18,366	9
619,673	2	UA Town East (6)	11,370	15
	3	AMC Forum (6)	11,241	14
San Francisco	1	Century Cinema 21 (1)	9,931	18
375,989	2	UA Coronet (1)	5,399	1
	3	Century Century 21 (1)	3,822	2
Philadelphia	1	AMC Olde City (2)	11,429	7
358,993	2	UA Sameric (4)	19,689	1
	3	UA Cheltenham (8)	30,201	6
Boston	1	Sony Cheri (4)	40,717	1
332,077	2	NA Circle (7)	26,290	3
	3	Sony Janus (1)	3,344	2
Miami	1	Cobb Kendall (9)	15,229	2
306,327	2	Valentino Spr Discount (3)	4,651	20
	3	Cobb Miami Lakes (10)	15,427	1
Chicago	1	CO Biograph (3)	10,174	9
263,763	2	Village North (1)	3,186	4
	3	CO McClurg Court (3)	7,729	1
Phoenix	1	Harkins Cine Capri (1)	2,902	1
216,149	2	Century Glendale D-I (9)	16,847	5
	3	UA Christown Mall (6)	10,258	2
Toronto	1	Famous Centerpoint (3)	7,769	16
215,105	2	Famous Markville (4)	10,197	3
	3	Famous Hollywood (2)	4,526	17
Houston	1	CO River Oaks Plaza (12)	16,481	2
188,180	2	Landmk River Oaks (3)	3,916	3
	3	CO Spectrum (9)	11,212	1
San Diego	1	Landmk Park (10)	14,367	13
137,066	2	CinAm Cinema 21 (1)	1,167	1
	3	CinAm Grove (10)	10,094	9

Total Requests	Rank	Theatre (# screens)	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
Kansas City	1	Dksn Glenwood (4)	4,983	1
103,092	2	AMC Oak Park (6)	6,703	3
	3	Dksn Westglen (12)	12,684	2
Atlanta	1	UA Tara Cinemas (4)	2,254	5
89,233	2	AMC Phipps Plaza (14)	7,379	2
	3	AMC Galleria (8)	3,126	3
Seattle	1	Landmk Egyptian (1)	1,775	18
89,202	2	Landmk Neptune (1)	1,514	2
	3	CO Cinerama (1)	1,466	1
Minneapolis	1	Landmk Uptown (1)	1,084	1
85,640	2	UA St. Anthony Main (5)	3,123	2
	3	GCC Shelard Park (5)	2,924	11
Cleveland	1	Sony Cedar (2)	2,030	3
79,964	2	GCC Ridge Park (8)	7,557	1
	3	General Detroit (2)	1,735	8
Las Vegas	1	UA Green Valley (5)	4,766	7
66,110	2	Century Redrock (11)	9,753	5
	3	Century Rancho (16)	12,140	1
Denver	1	CinAm Cherry Creek (8)	4,900	4
58,117	2	AMC Colorado Plaza (6)	3,502	8
	3	Landmk Mayan (3)	1,411	10
San Antonio	1	Act III Bandera (6)	3,615	5
55,391	2	Act III Galaxy (14)	7,949	2
	3	Act III Crossroads (6)	3,390	3
Sacramento	1	Century Century 21 (2)	1,759	3
49,194	2	Century Sacramento (6)	3,999	2
	3	UA Market Square (6)	3,668	11
Detroit	1	AMC Southland (4)	1,415	1
47,738	2	Star Lincoln Park (8)	2,741	4
	3	Star Taylor (10)	2,897	3
Washington, DC	1	CO Cinema (1)	991	6
31,877	2	CO Uptown (1)	546	1
	3	CO Embassy (1)	490	2
Tampa	1	AMC Varsity (6)	1,682	4
29,978	2	Muvico Palm Harbor (10)	2,701	3
	3	Cobb Northdale (6)	1,576	2

Top 3 Actively* Requested Theatres:

1. CO Worldwide New York, NY
2. Sony Lincoln Sq. New York, NY
3. CO Ziegfeld New York, NY

*Caller specifically requested theatre

Key to Exhibitors

AMC	AMC Theatres, Inc.	CO	Cineplex Odeon Corp	Hollywood	Hollywood Theatres
Act III	Act III Theatres	Cobb	Cobb Theatres	Landmk	Landmark Theatre Corp.
Blm	Blumenfeld Theatres	Dksn	Dickinson Theatres	Laemmle	Laemmle Theatres
Carmike	Carmike Cinemas, Inc.	Famous	Famous Players	Mann MN	Mann Minneapolis
Century	Century Theatres	GCC	General Cinema Theatres	Met	Metropolitan Theatres Corp.
CinAm	CinAmerica Theatres, LP	General	General Theatres	MJR	MJR Theatre Service
CityCin	City Cinemas	Hark	Harkins Theatres	Muvico	Muvico Theatres

777-FILM

NA	National Amusements
Pacific	Pacific Theatres
Regal	Regal Cinemas
Sony	Sony Theatres
Star	Loews-Star Theatres
SupSav	Super Saver Cinemas
UA	United Artists Theatre Circuit

BOXOFFICE

	March	April	May	JUNE (Current)
Buena Vista (818) 567-5000 (212) 593-8900	**Jungle2Jungle**, 3/7, Com, PG, 105 min., Dolby SR, SR-D, SDDS, Flat. Tim Allen, Martin Short, Sam Huntington, Lolita Davidovitch, David Ogden Stiers, JoBeth Williams. Dir: John Pasquin **The Sixth Man**, 3/28, Com, PG13, 108 min, Dolby SR, SR-D, SDDS, Flat. Marlon Wayans, Kadeem Hardison, David Paymer. Dir. Randall Miller.	**Grosse Pointe Blank**, 4/11, Com, R, 107 min, Dolby SR, SR-D, SDDS, Flat. John Cusack, Minnie Driver, Dan Aykroyd, Joan Cusack. Dir: George Armitage. **Romy and Michele's High School Reunion**, 4/25, Com, R, 91 min, Dolby Sr, SR-D, SDDS, Flat. Mira Sorvino, Lisa Kudrow, Janeane Garofalo, Elaine Hendrix. Dir: David Mirkin.	**Gone Fishin'**, 5/30, Com, PG, 94 min, Dolby SR, SR-D, Flat. Joe Pesci, Danny Glover, Lynn Whitfield, Rosanna Arquette. Dir: Christopher Cain.	**ConAir**, 6/6, Act/Adv, R, Anamorphic. Nicc Cage, John Malkovich, John Cusack, Stev Buscemi, Ving Rhames, Colm Meaney. Dir: Simon West. **Hercules**, 6/14 excl. NY, 6/20 Chicago, 6/2 wide, Ani, Flat. Voices: James Woods, Da DeVito, Tate Donovan, Susan Egan, Matt Frewer, Bobcat Goldthwait, Paul Shaffer. Dirs: Ron Clements, John Musker.
Columbia (310) 280-8000 (212) 833-8500	**The Devil's Own**, 3/26, Sus/Thr, R, 107 min, Dolby A & SR, SDDS, Anamorphic. Harrison Ford, Brad Pitt, Margaret Colin, Treat Williams, Ruben Blades. Dir Alan J Pakula.	**Das Boot** (1981 German reissue), 4/4, Dra, R Jurgen Prochnow. Dir: Wolfgang Petersen. **Double Team** (formerly The Colony), 4/4, Act, R, 93 min, Dolby A, SR, SDDS, Jean-Claude VanDamme, Dennis Rodman, Mickey Rourke. Dir. Tsui Hark. **Anaconda**, 4/11, Adv, PG-13, 90 min, Dolby A, SR, SDDS. Jon Voight, Jennifer Lopez, Ice Cube, Eric Stoltz, Kari Wuhrer Dir Luis Llosa.	**The Fifth Element**, 5/9, SF, PG-13, Dobly A, SR, SDDS. Bruce Willis, Gary Oldman, Ian Holm, Milla Jovovich. Dir: Luc Besson.	**Buddy**, 6/6, Com, SDDS. Rene Russo, Ro Coltrane, Paul Reubens, Irma P. Hall. Dir: Caroline Thompson.
MGM/UA (310) 449-3000 (212) 708-0300			**Warriors of Virtue**, 5/2, Act/Adv, PG, 104 min, DTS. Angus MacFadyen, Mario Yedidia, Marley Shelton, Chao-Li Chi. Dir. Ronny Yu.	
Miramax (212) 941-3800 (213) 845-4200	**Rhyme & Reason**, 3/7, Doc, R, 91 min. Features Ice-T, Salt N Peppa, Dr. Dre, The Fugees. Dir: Peter Spirer. **Chasing Amy**, 3/28 NY/ LA, 4/11, 4/18 exp., Rom/Com, R, 105 min Ben Affleck, Joey Lauren Adams, Jason Lee Dir Kevin Smith	**Cosi**, Com, 4/11 NY, LA, 100 min. Toni Collette, Barry Otto, Ben Mendlesohn, Rachel Griffiths, Pamela Rabe. Dir Mark Joffe. **Nightwatch**, 4/25 wide, Dra/Thr. Nick Nolte, Ewan McGregor, Patricia Arquette, Josh Brolin. Dir Ole Bornedal **Temptress Moon**, 4/25, Dra, R, 115 min. Gong Li, Leslie Cheung Dir Chen Kaige.	**Children of the Revolution**, 5/1 NY/LA, Com, R, 102 min. Judy Davis, Geoffrey Rush, Sam Neill. Dir: Peter Duncan. **Shall We Dance** (Japan), 5/16, Com, PG Koji Yasuyo, Tamiyo Kusakari. Dir Masayuki Suo **Brassed Off**, 5/23 NY LA, Dra,R, 107 min, Dolby SR, Flat. Pete Postlethwaite, Tara Fitzgerald, Ewan McGregor. Dir: Mark Herman.	**Mouth to Mouth** (Spain), 6/6, Com, R, Dol SRD, Scope, 110 min. Javier Bardem, Mar Barranco. Dir: Manuel Gomez Pereira **Squeeze**, 6/13, Thr, R. Tyrone Burton, Ed Cutanda. Dir: Robert Patton-Spruill. **Love Serenade** (Australia), 6/20, Com/Dra R, 101 min. Miranda Otto. Dir: Shirley Ba **Talk of Angels**, 6/27, Dra, PG-13, 97 min., D SR. Polly Walker, Vincent Perez. Dir: Nick Har
New Line (310) 854-5811 (212) 649-4900	**Love Jones**, 3/14, Rom/Com, R, 113 min. SR, SR-D, SDDS, Flat. Larenz Tate, Nia Long Dir: Theodore Witcher. **B.A.P.s**, 3/28, Com, PG-13, 90 min. SR, SR-D, SDDS, Flat Halle Berry, Martin Landau, Ian Richardson, Natalie Desselle. Dir: Robert Townsend		**Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery**, 5/2, Com, PG-13, 88 min, Dolby SR, SR-D, SDDS, Anamorphic. Mike Meyers, Elizabeth Hurley, Mimi Rogers, Michael York. Dir: Jay Roach. **Trial and Error**, 5/30, Com, PG-13, Dolby SR, SR-D, SDDS, Anamorphic. Michael Richards, Jeff Daniels, Rip Torn, Charlize Theron. Dir: Jonathan Lynn.	
Paramount (213) 956-5000 (212) 373-7000	**Howard Stern's Private Parts**, 3/7, Com, R, 111 min. Howard Stern, Robin Quivers, Fred Norris, Mary McCormack Dir: Betty Thomas. **The Godfather** (1972 reissue), 3/21 ltd , Dra, R, 175 min. Marlon Brando, James Caan, Al Pacino, Robert DuVall. Dir: Francis Ford Coppola.	**The Saint**, 4/4, Act/Adv, PG-13, 117 min, DTS. Val Kilmer, Elisabeth Shue, Rade Serbedzija. Dir: Phillip Noyce.	**Breakdown**, 5/2, R, 95 min Kurt Russell, Kathleen Quinlin, J.T. Walsh, Jack Noseworthy. Dir: Jonathan Mostow. **Night Falls on Manhattan**, 5/16, Dra, R. Andy Garcia, Richard Dreyfuss, Lena Olin, Ian Holm. Dir Sidney Lumet. **'Til There Was You**, 5/30, Rom/Com, PG-13, 114 min. Jeanne Tripplehorn, Dylan McDermott, Sara Jessica Parker, Jennifer Aniston. Dir. Scott Winant.	**Face/Off**, 6/27, Act. John Travolta, Nicolas Cage, Joan Allen, Gina Gershon. Dir: John Woo.
TriStar (310) 280-8000 (212) 833-8500			**Jungle Book 2**, 5/2 ltd. Bill Campbell, Jamie Williams, Roddy McDowall. Dir: Duncan McLachlan.	**My Best Friend's Wedding**, 6/27, Rom/Com Dolby A, SR, SDDS. Julia Roberts, Dermot Mulroney, Cameron Diaz, Rupert Everett, Philip Bosco. Dir: P.J. Hogan.
20th Century Fox (310) 369-1000 (212) 556-2400	**Return of the Jedi Special Edition** (1983 reissue), 3/14, SF, PG, 135 min, Dobly SR & SRD, SDDS, DTS, Anamorphic. Harrison Ford, Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher, Billy Dee Williams. Dir: Richard Marquand. **Turbo: A Power Rangers Adventure**, 3/26, Adv, PG, 100 min, Dolby SR, Flat. Jason David Frank, Steve Cardenas, Catherine Sutherland. Dir: David Winning.	**Inventing the Abbots**, 4/4, Dra, R, ~120 min. Dolby SR, SDDS, Anamorphic. Liv Tyler, Joaquin Phoenix, Billy Crudup, Jennifer Connelly. Dir. Pat D'Conner. **Volcano**, 4/25, Act/Adv, PG13, Dolby SR, SRD, SDDS, DTS, Anamorphic. Tommy Lee Jones, Anne Heche, Gaby Hoffmann, Don Cheadle, John Corbett, Keith David. Dir: Mick Jackson.		**Speed II: Cruise Control**, 6/13, Act, Dolby SR SDDS, Anamorphic. Sandra Bullock, Jason Patric, Willem Dafoe, Glenn Plummer, Temeur Morrison, Brian McCardie, Royale Watkins. Dir Jan De Bont.
Universal (818) 777-1000 (212) 759-7500	**Liar Liar**, 3/21, Com, PG-13, 89 min, Dolby SR, DTS. Jim Carrey, Maura Tierney, Justin Cooper, Cary Elwes, John Lovitz, Swoosie Kurtz, Jennifer Tilly, Amanda Donohoe. Dir: Tom Shadyac.	**That Did Feeling**, 4/4, Com, PG-13, 103 min, Dolby SR, DTS. Bette Midler, Dennis Farina, Danny Nucci, Paula Marshall, Gail D'Grady Dir: Carl Reiner. **McHale's Navy**, 4/18, Com, PG, ~101 min. Dolby SR, DTS.Tom Arnold, David Alan Grier, Dean Stockwell, Tim Curry. Dir: Bryan Spicer	**The Lost World**, 5/23, Adv, Dolby SR, DTS. Jeff Goldblum, Julianne Moore, Vince Vaughn, Pete Postlthewaite, Arliss Howard, Richard Schiff, Peter Stormare, Vanessa Lee Chester Dir. Steven Spielberg	
Warner Bros. (818) 954-6000 (212) 484-8000	**Selena** 3/21, Dra, PG, 131 min, DTS. Jennifer Lopez, Edward James Olmos, Beckey Lee Meza Dir: Gregory Nava. **Cats Don't Dance**, 3/26, Ani, G, 69 min, DTS. Voices: Scott Bakula, Kathy Najimy, Ashley Peldon, Natalie Cole. Dir: Mark Dindal.	**Leo Tolstoy's Anna Karenina**, 4/4 ltd, Dra, PG13, 105 min, DTS. Sophie Marceau, Sean Bean, Mia Kirschner, Alfred Molina. Dir. Bernard Rose. **Murder at 1600**, 4/18, Thr, R, 106 min, DTS. Wesley Snipes, Diane Lane, Daniel Benzali. Dir: Dwight H. Little.	**Father's Day**, 5/9, Com, Anamorphic. Robin Williams, Billy Crystal, Natassja Kinski, Julia Louis-Dreyfuss. Dir. Ivan Reitman. **Addicted to Love**, 5/23, Rom/Com, R, Dolby SR-D, DTS, Flat. Meg Ryan, Matthew Brodenck. Dir: Griffin Dunne.	**Batman and Robin**, 6/20, Act/Adv, DTS. George Clooney, Chris O'Donnell, Alicia Silverstone, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Uma Thurman. Dir: Joel Schumacher.

FEATURE CHART — JUNE 1997

July	August	Forthcoming	
ing to Lose, 7/16, Com, Rat. Martin rence, Tim Robbins, John C. McGinley, carlo Esposito, Kelly Preston. Steve Oedekerk **rge of the Jungle**, 7/18, Live Act, Flat. ndan Fraser, Leslie Mann, Thomas Hayden rch. Dir: Sam Weisman.	**Air Bud** 8/8, Com. Kevin Zegers, Michael Jeter. Dir: Charles Martin Smith.	**Deep Rising**. Act/Thr. Treat Williams, Famke Janssen. Dir: Stephen Sommers. **Firelight,** Dra. Dir: William Nicholson. **Flubber** (aka The Absentminded Professor), Com. Robin Williams. Dir: Les Mayfield. **G.I. Jane** (formerly In Pursuit of Honor, Navy Cross). Act.: Demi Moore, Viggo Mortensen. Dir: Ridley Scott. **Kundun**, Dra. Tenzin Thutob Tsarong. Dir. Martin Scorsese. **The Little Mermaind** (reissue), Ani. Dirs. John Musker, Ron Clements. **Mr. Magoo**. Com. Leslie Nielsen, Kelly Lynch Dir: Stanley Tong. **Playing God**, Fall, Dra, R, Flat. Timothy Hutton, David Duchovny. Dir: Andy Wilson. **Rocket Man** (formerly Space Cadet), Harland Williams, Beau Bridges. Dir. Stuart Gillard. **A Thousand Acres**, Dra. Jessica Lange, Michelle Pfeiffer, Jennifer Jason Leigh. Dir: Jocelyn Moorhouse. **Washington Square**, Dr. Jennifer Jason Leigh, Albert Finney Dir: Agnieszka Holland	**Buena Vista** (818) 567-5000 (212) 593-8900
in Black, 7/2, SF, Dolby A, SR, SDDS. my Lee Jones, Will Smith, Linda Fiorentino, Tom. Dir: Barry Sonnenfeld. **orce One** (formerly AFO), 7/25, Act, Dolby R, SDDS. Harrison Ford, Gary Oldman, n Close. Dir: Wolfgang Peterson.	**Excess Baggage**, 8/15, Act/Adv, Dolby A, SR, SDDS. Alicia Silverstone, Benicio del Toro, Christopher Walken. Dir: Marco Brambilla.	**Gattaca** (formerly The Eighth Day), Fall, SF. Ethan Hawke, Uma Thurman, Jude Law. Dir: Andrew Niccol. **I Know What You Did Last Summer**, 10/24 Jamie Lee Curtis, Sara Michelle Gellar, Jennifer Love Hewitt, Freddie Prinze, Jr. Dir: Jim Gillespie. **Les Miserables**. Dra, X-mas. Liam Neeson, Uma Thurman. Dir: Billie August **Bad Boys 2**, Act/Com. Will Smith, Martin Lawrence. Dir. Tom Dey **Close Encounters of the Third Kind** (1977 reissue). Richard Dreyfuss, Teri Garr. Dir: Steven Spielberg **The Replacement Killers**, Act Chow Yun-Fat, Mira Sorvino, Michael Rooker, Clifton Gonzales-Gonzales. Dir: Antoine Fugua. **Shut Up and Dance**, '98. Vanessa Williams. Dir. Randa Haines.	**Columbia** (310) 280-8000 (212) 833-8500
	Hoodlum(formerly Hoods), 8/29, Dra, R, DTS. Laurence Fishburne, Tim Roth, Andy Garcia, Vanessa Williams Dir: Bill Duke.	**The End of Violence**, Sept, Dra. Gabriel Byrne, Bill Pullman, Andie MacDowell. Dir: Wim Wenders. **Hurricane** (tentative title), Dra, Fall. Brendan Sexton III Dir: Morgan J. Freeman. **Tomorrow Never Dies** (aka Bond 18), X-mas. Pierce Brosnan, Michelle Yeoh. Dir. Roger Spottiswoode. **Red Corner**, X-mas, Dra. Richard Gere, Bai Ling, Byron Mann. Dir: Jon Avnet. **Breakers** (formerly Sirens), Com. Anjelica Huston, Alicia Silverstone. **Hope Floats**. Sandra Bullock, Gena Rowlands, Harry Connick, Jr. Dir: Forest Whitaker. **The Man In The Iron Mask**, Adv. Leonardo DiCaprio, John Malkovich, Gabriel Byrne, Gerard Depardieu, Jeremy Irons. Dir: Randall Wallace. **Sixteen Pleasures.** Dir: Michael Apted. **Supernova**, SF/Thr. Dir: Joe Nimziki. **The Ump**, '98. Sylvester Stallone. Dir: Frank Oz.	**MGM/UA** (310) 449-3000 (212) 708-0300
gs of the Dove, 7/11, Dra. Helena nam Carter, Linus Roache, Terrance np, Alison Elliott. Dir: Ian Softley **ic**, 7/18 wide, SF, Mira Sorvino, Josh n, Jeremy Northam, Charles Dutton. Guillermo del Toro. **en Notes in Black**, 7/25 NY/LA **Brown**	**Copland**, 8/1, Dra. Sylvester Stallone, Robert DeNiro. Dir: James Mangold **Sonatine**, 8/8, Dra. Dir/Star: Takeshi Kitano. **She's DeLovely**, 8/15, Dra. Sean Penn, Robin Wright. Dir: Nick Cassavetes. **Wide Awake**, 8/22, Dra, PG. Dana Delany, Denis Leary. Dir: M. Night Shyamalan. **Operation Condor** (Hong Kong), 8/29 wide, Act/Adv, PG-13. Dir/Star: Jackie Chan.	**B. Monkey**,9/19, Dra. Asia Argento,Jared Harris, Rupert Everett, Thandie Newton. Dir: Michael Radford. **Little City**, 9/26. **The House of Yes**, 10/10, Dra/Com. Parker Posey. Dir: Mark Waters. **Phantoms**, 10/24 wide, Hor. Peter O'Toole, Joanna Going. **The James Gang**, 11/7 **An American Werewolf in Paris**, Hor/Com. Julie Delpy. Dir: Anthony Waller **Full Tilt Boogie**, Doc. Dir: Sarah Kelly **The Mighty**, Dra. Sharon Stone, Gena Rowlands. Dir. Peter Chelsom. **A Price Below Rubies**, Dra Renee Zellweger. Dir. Boaz Yakin. **The Revenger's Comedies**, Dra. Sam Neill, Helena Bonham Carter. Dir: Malcom Mowbray. **Welcome to Sarajevo** (formerly Sarajevo), Dra. Woody Harrelson. Dir: Michael Winterbottom. **Wishful Thinking**. Fall. Jennifer Beals.	**Miramax** (212) 941-3800 (213) 845-4200
	Mortal Kombat II: Annihilation, 8/1, Act Robin Shou, Talisa Soto. Dir. John R. Leonetti. **Spawn**, 8/22, SF Michael Jai White, John Leguizamo, D.B. Sweeney Dir: Mark Dippe **Boogie Nights**, 8/29 ltd, 9/5 wide, Com/Dra. Mark Wahlberg, Julianne Moore. Dir: Paul Thomas Anderson.	**Dark City**, 9/26, Thr. William Hurt, Rufus Sewell. Dir: Alex Proyas. **Money Talks**, 10/1, Act/Com, R. Charlie Sheen, Chris Tucker, Heather Locklear. Dir: Brett Ratner. **Most Wanted** (formerly America's Most Wanted), 10/17, Act/Com. Keenan Ivory Wayans. Dir: David Hogan. **One Night Stand** (formerly One Night), 11/7, Dra. Wesley Snipes, Nastassja Kinski. Dir: Mike Figgis. **American History X** Edward Norton, Edward Furlong Dir: Tony Kaye **Lost in Space**, '98 William Hurt, Gary Oldman. Dir: Stephen Hopkins. **Pleasantville**, Com. Tobey Maguire, Reese Witherspoon. Dir: Gary Ross. **Wag the Dog**, '98 Dustin Hoffman, Robert DeNiro. Dir. Barry Levinson. **The Wedding Singer**, Com. Adam Sandler, Drew Barrymore. Dir: Frank Coraci. **Woo**, '98, Rom/Com. Jada Pinkett, Tommy Davidson. Dir: Daisy Von Scherler Mayer.	**New Line** (310) 854-5811 (212) 649-4900
hic, Rom/Adv Leonardo DiCaprio, Kate slet, Bill Paxton, Billy Zane, Kathy Bates, a Stuart, Suzy Amis. James Cameron. **d Burger**, 7/25. Kel Mitchell, Kenan mpson. Dir: Bnan Robbins	**Event Horizon**, 8/1. Laurence Fishburne, Sam Neill, Kathleen Quinlin. Dir: Paul Anderson. **The Truman Show**, 8/8, Dra. Jim Carrey, Ed Harris, Laura Linney, Noah Emmerich. Dir: Peter Weir. **A Smile Like Yours**, 8/15, Rom/Com, R. Greg Kinnear, Lauren Holly, Jay Thomas. Dir: Keith Samples. **Dead Man on Campus**, 8/29 Tom Everett Scott, Mark Paul Gosselaar. Dir: Alan Cohn.	**The Magic Hour** (tentative), 9/19. Paul Newman, Susan Sarandon, Gene Hackman. Dir: Robert Benton. **The Flood**, Fall, Act. Christian Slater, Morgan Freeman, Minnie Driver, Randy Quaid. Dir. Mikael Salomon. **Going West in America**, Fall, Thr. Dennis Quaid, Danny Glover, Jared Leto. Dir: Jeb Stuart **In and Out**, Fall, Com. Kevin Kline, Tom Selleck, Joan Cusack, Debbie Reynolds. Dir: Frank Oz. **Kiss the Girls**, Fall, Sus. Morgan Freeman, Ashley Judd, Alex McArthur, Cary Elwes. Dir: Gary Fleder **Deep Impact**, Act/Thr. Tea Leoni, Elijah Wood Dir: Mimi Leder **Fairy Tale: A True Story** (formerly Illumination), Dra. Peter O'Toole. Dir: Charles Sturridge. **Kiss Me Guido**, Com. Nick Scotti. Dir: Tony Vitale.**The Rainmaker**, Dra. Matt Damon, Claire Danes. Dir: Francis Ford Coppola. **The Real Blonde**. Matthew Modine. Dir: Tom DiCillo. **Snake Eyes**, Thr. Nicolas Cage. Dir. Brian DePalma.	**Paramount** (213) 956-5000 (212) 373-7000
	Desperate Measures, 8/8, Act Michael Keaton, Andy Garcia, Brian Cox, Marcia Gay Harden. Dir: Barbet Schroeder. **Stray Dogs**, 8/29. Sean Penn, Billy Bob Thornton, Jennifer Lopez, Nick Nolte, Powers Boothe. Dir: Oliver Stone	**Bloodline** (formerly Kilronen), Thr, Fall. Jessica Lange, Gwyneth Paltrow Dir. Jonathan Darby. **Seven Years in Tibet**, 10/10, Dra. Brad Pitt, David Thewlis, B.D. Wong Dir: Jean-Jacques Annaud **Starship Troopers**, 11/7, SF, SDDS. Neil Patrick Harris, Denise Richards. Dir: Paul Verhoeven. **Apt Pupil**, Dra Ian McKellen, Brad Renfro, Kevin Pollack, Joe Morton. Dir. Bryan Singer. **Forever** (formerly Amy Foster). Vincent Perex, Rachel Weisz. Dir: Beeban Kidron. **Godzilla** Hank Azaria, Matthew Broderick, Jean Reno. Dir. Roland Emmerich. **Old Friends**, Dra. Jack Nicholson, Helen Hunt, Greg Kinnear Dir: James Brooks. **The Mask of Zorro**, Act/Adv. Antonio Banderas, Anthony Hopkins, Catherine Jones. Dir: Martin Campbell. **Stinkers**. Com. B.D. Wong, Bronson Pinchot, Jennifer Coolidge. Dir: Barnet Kellman.	**TriStar** (310) 280-8000 (212) 833-8500
to Sea. 7/2, Com. Dolby SR, SDDS, Rat. er Matthau, Jack Lemmon, Brent Spiner, n Cannon, Elaine Stritch. Martha Coolidge	**Picture Perfect**. 8/8, Rom/Com,PG-13, ~105 min, Dolby SR, SR-D, Rat. Jennifer Aniston, Kevin Bacon, Olympia Dukakis, Jay Mohr, Illeana Douglas. Dir: Glenn Gordon Caron.	**Great Expectations**, Fall, Dra. Robert De Niro, Gwyneth Paltrow. Dir: Alfonso Cuaron. **Anastasia**, 11/21, Ani. Voices. Meg Ryan, Kelsey Grammer. Dirs: Don Bluth, Gary Goldman. **Alien Resurrection**, Nov, SF. Sigourney Weaver, Winona Ryder, Ron Perlman. Dir: Jean-Pierre Jeunet. **Untitled Bulworth**, Nov, Dra Halle Berry, Paul Sorvino. Dir/Star: Warren Beatty. **Home Alone 3**, Dec, Com. Alex D.Linz, Olek Krupa. Dir: Raja Gosnell. **The Wild** (formerly Bookworm), Act./Thr. Anthony Hopkins, Alec Baldwin. Dir: Lee Tamahori **Doctor Dolittle**, Com. Eddie Murphy. Dir: Betty Thomas. **Firestorm**, Act./Adv Howie Long, Suzy Amis, Scott Glenn. Dir.. Dean Semler. **A Life Less Ordinary**, Dra. Cameron Diaz, Holly Hunter. Dir: Danny Boyle. **Soul Food**, Dra. Vanessa Williams, Mehki Phifer. Dir: George Tillman, Jr. **Hope Floats**. Com. Sandra Bullock. Dir: Forrest Whitaker	**20th Century Fox** (310) 369-1000 (212) 556-2400
mple Wish (formerly The Fairy God-her), 7/11 tent., Com. Mara Wilson, Martshort, Kathleen Turner, Robert Pastorelli. Michael Ritchie.	**Leave it to Beaver**, 8/1, Com. Janine Turner, Christopher McDonald, Cameron Finley, Erik Von Detten. Dir. Andy Cadiff. **Kull the Conqueror**, 8/29, Adv. Kevin Sorbo, Tia Carrere, Karina Lombard Dir: John Nicolella.	**Reach the Rock**, Fall, Dra/Com. Alessandro Nivola, William Sadler, Bruce Norris Dir. Bill Ryan. **The Jackal**, Nov, Thr. Bruce Willis, Richard Gere, Sidney Poitier Dir: Michael Canton-Jones **For Richer For Poorer**, Dec, Rom/Com. Tim Allen, Kirstie Alley Dir: Bryan Spicer. **The Boxer**, Dec, Dra. Daniel Day-Lewis Dir: Jim Sheridan. **Virus**. '98, Thr. Jamie Lee Curtis, Donald Sutherland, William Baldwin, Cliff Curtis. Dir. John Bruno. **Primary Colors**. Dra John Travolta, Billy Bob Thorton Dir: Mike Nichols. **Meet Joe Black**, Rom/Dra Brad Pitt, Anthony Hopkins. Dir: Martin Brest. **Simple Simon**, Thr Bruce Willis Dir: Harold Becker.	**Universal** (818) 777-1000 (212) 759-7500
rds and Hurt, 7/2, Com. Chris Farley, Mat-Perry. Dir: Christopher Guest. **Wild America**, dv, PG. Jonathan Taylor Thomas. Dir: Bill **Contact**, 7/11, Thr, DTS. Jodie Foster, ew McConaughey, John Hurt. Dir: Robert ckis. **Conspiracy Theory**, 7/25, Thr, DTS. Gibson, Julia Roberts. Dir: Richard Don-**187**, 7/30, Dra, R. Samuel L. Jackson. Kevin Reynolds.	**Steel**, 8/8, Act/Adv, 105 min. Shaquille O'Neal Dir: Kenneth Johnson. **Free Willy 3**, 8/15, Fam/Adv, DTS. Jason James Richter. Dir: Sam Pillsbury. **L.A. Confidential**, 8/22, Dra, R, 138 min. Kevin Spacey, Kim Basinger. Dir: Curtis Hanson.	**The Devil's Advocate**. Al Pacino, Keanu Reeves. Dir: Taylor Hackford. **Fire Down Below**. Act. Steven Segal. **Home Fries**, Com. Drew Barrymore, Gary Busey. Dir: Dean Parisot **Mad City**. Dra. John Travolta, Dustin Hoffman. Dir: Constantin Costa-Grava. **Incognito**. Thr, Jason Patric. Dir: John Badham **Pre**, Dra. Billy Crudup, Donald Sutherland. Dir: Robert Towne. **Fallen**, Dra. Denzel Washington, John Goodman. **Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil**. Dir: Clint Eastwood. **The Postman**, SF Dir/Star: Kevin Costner. **Venice**, Dra, R, 112 min. Cathenne McCormack. Dir. Marshall Herskovitz. **Watch That Man** Bill Murray. Dir: Jon Amiel. **Eyes Wide Shut** Tom Cruise, Nicole Kidman. Dir: Stanley Kubrick.	**Warner Bros.** (818) 954-6000 (212) 484-8000

BOXOFFICE Independent Feature Chart JUNE 1997

MAY

Arrow
212-258-2200

Ponette *(France)*, Dra, 92 min. Victoire Thivisol. Dir: Jacques Doillon. 5/23

Artistic License
212-265-9119

Color of a Brisk and Leaping Day, Dra, 90 min. Peter Alexander, Jeri Arredondo, Henry Gibson. Dir: Chrisopher Munch. 5/2

CFP
212-995-9662

Hollow Reed, Dra, 106 min. Martin Donovan, Ian Hart. Dir: Angela Pope. 4/18

Cinema Village Features
212-431-5119

Fetishes, Doc, 82 min. Dir: Nick Broomfield. 5/9

Fine Line
212-649-4800

nowhere, Dra, R, 88 min. James Duval, Traci Lords. Dir: Gregg Araki. 5/9 NY/LA
Love! Valour! Compassion! Dra, 120 min. Jason Alexander, John Glover. Dir: Joe Mantello. 5/16

First Look
310-855-1199

The Designated Mourner, Dra, 94 min. Miranda Richardson, Mike Nichols. Dir: David Hare.

First Run
212-243-0600

Brothers in Trouble, Dra, 102 min. Dir: Udayan Prasad. 5/14

Fox Searchlight
310-369-4402

Intimate Relations, Dra, 99 min. Dir: Philip Goodhew. 5/9 ltd, 5/16, 5/23 exp
The Van, Com., R, 99 min. Colm Meaney. Dir: Stephen Frears. 5/23 ltd, 5/30 exp

Goldwyn
310-282-0550

Rough Magic, Rom/Adv, 104 min. Bridget Fonda, Russell Crowe. Dir: Clare Peploe. 5/30

Gramercy
310-777-1960

Commandments, Dra. Courteney Cox, Aidan Quinn, Anthony LaPaglia. Dir: Daniel Taplitz. 5/2
Twin Town, Com/Thr. Rhys Ifans, Llyr Evans. Dir: Kevin Allen. 5/9 NY, 5/16 LA

Legacy
213-467-3700

Underworld, Thr. Denis Leary, Joe Mantegna. Dir: Roger Christian. 5/9

New Yorker Films
212-247-6110

La Promesse, Dra, NR, 93 min. Dirs: Jean-Pierre Dardenne, Luc Dardenne. 5/16 NY

Northern Arts
413-268-9301

Gray's Anatomy. Spalding Gray. Dir: Steven Soderbergh. 5/9 LA

Phaedra
310-319-5344

Lady in White *(1989 reissue)*, Thr. Lukas Haas, Alex Rocco, Katherine Helmond. Dir: Frank LaLoggia. 5/2 LA

Shadow Distribution
207-872-5111

Mondo *(France)*, Dra, 87 min. Philippe Petit. Dir: Tony Gatliff 5/23

Sony Classics
212-833-8851

Broken English, Dra, 91 min. Rade Serbedzija, Sashka Vujcic. Dir: Gregor Nicholas. 5/2

Strand
310-395-5002

Late Bloomers, Rom/Dra, 104 min. Dir: Julia and Gretchen Dyer. 5/2
Timothy Leary's Dead, Doc, 80 min. Dir: Paul Davids.

Trimark
310-314-3040

Ripe. Monica Keena, Daisy Eagan. Dir: Mo Ogrodnik. 5/2 NY, 5/9 LA
Sprung, Com, Tisha Campbell. Dir/Star: Rusty Cundieff. 5/14

Triumph
310-280-8059

Truth or Consequences, N.M., Sus. Vincent Gallo, Kim Dickens. Dir/Star: Kiefer Sutherland. 5/2
Masterminds *(formerly Smart Alec)*, Act/Com. Patrick Stewart. Dir: Roger Christian. 5/30

JUNE

CFP
The Pillow Book, Dra, 126 min. Vivian Wu, Ewan McGregor. Dir: Peter Greenaway. 6/6

Cinema Village Features
Mondo Plympton, Ani. Dir: Bill Plympton.

Fine Line
For Roseanna (formerly Roseanna's Grave), Com, PG-13, 99 min. Jean Reno, Mercedes Ruehl. Dir: Paul Weiland. 6/18

First Look
Different for Girls, Rom/Com, 97 min. Rupert Graves, Steven Mackintosh. Dir: Richard Spence.

Kino Intl.
212-629-6880

M *(1931 German re-issue)*, Dra, 99 min. Dir: Fritz Lang. 6/27

Leisure Time Features
212-267-4501

Twisted, Dra, 100 min. Dir: Seth Michael Donsky.

Live
818-778-3174

The Winner. Rebecca DeMornay, Frank Whaley. Dir: Alex Cox. 6/6 ltd

Manga
415-975-5405

Tetsuo: Body Hammer. Dir: Shinya Tsukamoto.

New Yorker Films
Gabbeh, Dra, 75 min. Abbas Sayahi, Hossein Moharami. Dir: Mohsen Makhmalbas. 6/27

Northern Arts
Midaq Alley *(Mexico)*, Dra, 140 min. Salma Hayek, Ernesto Gomez. Dir: Jorge Fons.

Orion Classics
310-282-0550

Ulee's Gold, Dra, R, 113 min. Peter Fonda, Patricia Richardson. Dir: Victor Nunez.

Orion Pictures
310-282-0550

Fall, Rom/Com. Eric Schaeffer, Amanda de Cadenet. Dir: Eric Schaeffer. 6/20

Roxie Releasing
415-431-3611

The Last Time I Commited Suicide, Dra, 92 min. Thomas Jane, Keanu Reeves. Dir: Stephen Kay

Sony Classics
Dream With the Fishes, Dra, R, 96 min. David Arquette. Dir: Finn Taylor. 6/20
When the Cat's Away *(France)*, Dra/Com, R, 95 min. Garance Clavel. Dir: Cedric Kapisch. 6/20

Strand
The Tit and the Moon *(Spain)*, Com, 92 min. Dir: Bigas Lunas.

JULY

Artistic License
La Renconter *(France)*, Dra, 80 min. Dir: Alain Cavalier.

CFP
Guantanamera, Com, NR, 124 min. Dirs: Thomas Gutierrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabio Rey. 7/2

Fine Line
The Tears of Julian Po. Christian Slater, Robin Tunney. Dir: Alan Wade. 7/18 NY

First Look
Alive and Kicking (aka Indian Summer). Jason Flemyng, Antony Sher, Dorothy Tutin. Dir: Nancy Meckler.

Fox Searchlight
Star Maps, Dra, 90 min, R. Douglas Spain. Dir: Miguel Arteta. 7/11

Strand
Contempt *(1963 reissue)*, Dra/Com, 103 min. Brigitte Bardot. Dir: Jean-Luc Godard.

Theafilm
213-368-1778

Dirty Weekend. Lia Williams, Sylvia Syms. Dir: Michael Winner. 7/11 ltd

Trimark
Box of Moonlight, 107 min. John Turturro, Sam Rockwell, Catherine Keener, Lisa Blount. Dir: Tom DiCillo. 7/25 NY, 8/8 LA

AUGUST

Artificial Eye
212-255-1922

Happiness *(France)*, Com, 102 min. Michel Serrault. Dir: Etienne Chatiliez. Aug NY

CFP
Sunday, Dra. David Suchet, Lisa Harrow, Jared Harris. Dir: Jonathan Nossiter. 8/22

Cinema Parallel
410-442-1752

Talking To Strangers (reissue). 8/2

Fox Searchlight
The Full Monte, Com, 90 min. Robert Carlyle. Dir: Peter Cattaneo. 8/15

Goldwyn
310-282-0550

Napolean, Ani, G, 82 min. Voices: Adam Wylie, Bronson Pinchot. Dir: Mario Andreacchio.
Paperback Romance (formerly Lucky Break), Rom/Com. Anthony LaPaglia. Dir: Ben Lewin.

Gramercy
How To Be a Player, Com. Bill Belamy, Lark Voorhies, Jermaine Big Hugg Hopkins, Pierre, Natalie Desselle. Dir: Lionel Martin. 8/15
Going All the Way, Dra. Jeremy Davies. Dir: Mark Pellington. 8/22

Sony Classics
Fast, Cheap & Out of Control, Doc, 79 min. Dir: Errol Morris. 8/29

Strand
Full Speed, Dra, 85 min. Elodie Bouchez. Dir: Gael Murel.
Nights of Cabiria *(1957 Italian reissue)*, Dra, 110 min. Giulietta Masina. Dir: Federico Fellini.

BOXOFFICE Independent Feature Chart JUNE 1997

Triumph
Warrior of Waverly Street, SF. Joseph Mazzello. Dir: Manny Coto. 8/8

SEPTEMBER

CFP
Bandwagon, Com/Mus, NR, 103 min. Kevin Corrigna, Lee Holmes. Dir: John Schultz.

Dreamworks SKG
818-733-7000
The Peacemaker, Act/Adv. George Clooney, Nicole Kidman. Dir: Mimi Leder.

Fox Searchlight
Cousin Bette, Dra. Jessica Lange. Dir: Des McAnuff.

Gramercy
The Matchmaker, Com. Janeane Garofalo. Dir: Mark Joffe.

Live
818-778-3174
No Way Home, Dra. Tim Roth. Dir: Buddy Gioviazzo.
Wishmaster, Hor. Dir: Robert Kurtzman.

Manga
Gravesend, Dra. Dir: Sal Stabile.

Orion Pictures
Gang Related, Dra, R. Tupac Shakur, Jim Belushi. Dir: Jim Kous. 9/10
The Locusts, Dra. Kate Capshaw, Ashley Judd. Dir: John Patrick Kelley.

Sony Classics
The Myth of Fingerprints, Dra. Noah Wyle, Julianne Moore, Roy Schneider. Dir: B. Freundlich.

FORTHCOMING

Arrow
Breathing Room, Rom/Com, 90 min. Dir: John Sherman. 11/8

Cabin Fever
203-622-3449
The Elevator, Com. Martin Sheen.
The Secret Agent Club, Act.

Cinema Parallel
To Have (Or Not), Dra, NR, 93 min. Sandrine Kibberlane. Dir. Laetitia Masson. Fall

Cinema Village Features
Cartoon Noir, Ani. Fall

Dove
310-786-1600
Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, Com/SF, 92 min. Douglas Adams. Dir: Neil Davies.

Dreamworks SKG
Amistad (formerly Mutiny), Dra. Matthew McConaughey, Anthony Hopkins, Morgan Freeman. Dir: Steven Spielberg.
Ants, Ani. Voice: Woody Allen
Blue Vision. Dir: Neil Jordan.
Deep Impact. Tea Leoni, Elijah Wood. Dir: Mimi Leder.
El Dorado: City of Gold, Ani. Dir: Will Finn.
Mousehunt, Com/Ani. Nathan Lane. Dir: Gore Verbinski
Paulie: A Parrot's Tale. Dir: John Roberts.
The Prince of Egypt, Ani. Dirs: Simon Wells, Steve Hicker and Brenda Chapman. Fall '98
Saving Private Ryan, Dra. Tom Hanks, Ed Burns. Dir: Steven Spielberg.

Filmopolis
310-914-1776
In a Strange City. Winston Chao, Kuei-mai Yang. Dir: Chi Yin.

Fine Line
Didier *(France)*. Alain Chabat. Dir: Alain Chabat.
Girl Talk, Dra/Com. Troy Beyer, Randi Ingerman. Dir: Troy Beyer.
Gummo., Dra. Chloe Sevigny. Dir: Harmony Korine. '97
Head Above Water, Dra/Com, PG-13, 92 min. Harvey Keitel, Cameron Diaz. Dir: Jim Wilson.
Letters of Love *(Japan)* (formerly Love Letters), Dra, 116 min. Dir: Shunji Iwai. '97
Winter Guest, Dra. Emma Thompson, Phylidda Law. Dir: Alan Rickman. Fall

First Look
Slaves to the Underground, Dra, 92 min. Marisa Ryan, Jason Bortz. Dir: Kristine Petersen. Sum
Mrs. Dalloway, Dra. Vanessa Redgrave. Dir: Marleen Gorris.
The Other Side of Sunday *(Norway)*, Dra. Bjorn Sundquist. Dir: Berit Nesheim.

First Run
Forgotten Silver. Mock Doc. Dirs: Peter Jackson, Costa Botes.
Hamsun. Max Von Sydow. Dir: Jan Troell
Project Grizzly. Dir: Peter Lynch.
Six O'Clock News. Dir: Ross McElwee.

Fox Searchlight
Ice Storm, Dra. Kevin Kline, Joan Allen, Sigourney Weaver, Christina Ricci. Dir: Ang Lee. Oct
Oscar & Lucinda. Ralph Fiennes. Dir: Gillian Armstrong. Nov
Hard Men *(UK)*, Dra. Vincent Regan. Dir: J. K. Amalou.
Polish Wedding. Claire Danes, Gabriel Byrne, Lena Olin. Dir: Theresa Connelly.

Goldwyn
The Big Red. Jonathan Schaech, Rod Taylor. Dir: Stephan Elliott. Oct
I Love You... Don't Touch Me, Com, 86 min. Marla Schaffel. Dir: Julie Davis.

Gramercy
Bean, Com. Rowan Atkinson. Oct
The Big Lebowski. Jeff Bridges, John Goodman, Steve Buscemi. Dirs: Joel and Ethan Coen. Nov
Body Count, Act. Ving Rhames, Forest Whitaker, David Caruso. Dir: Robert Patton Spruill. Nov
Land Girls. Gwyneth Paltrow, Catherine McCormack. Dir: David Leland.
Shakespeare's Sister. Kenneth Branagh, Madeleine Stowe.

Gurney Releasing
212-838-2929
Follow the Bitch, Com. Melissa Lechner. Dir: Julian Stone.

Kit Parker
800-538-5838
Coffy *(1973 reissue)*, Dra, R, 91 min. Pam Grier, Booker Bradshaw. Dir: Jack Hill.

Legacy
Leading Man. Jon Bon Jovi.

Live
Critical Care, Dra/Thr. James Spader, Albert Brooks. Dir: Sydney Lumet. Oct
Boys Night Out, Thr. Christopher Walken, Sean Patrick Flanery, Henry Thomas, Johnny Galecki, Jay Mohr. Dir: Peter O'Fallow. Nov

Manga
Tokyo Fist, Act. Dir: Shinya Tsukamoto. Oct

Movieworld Ent.
510-244-5590
The Killing Kind, Dra. Kirk Harris
The Lost Woman. Jennifer Rubin

New Yorker Films
Beaumarchais *(France)*, Com, 100 min. Fabrice Luchini. Dir: Edouardo Molinaro. Fall
Deep Crimson, Dra, NR, 114 min. Daniel Gimenez, Marisa Paredes. Dir: Arturo Ripstein. Oct
Forever Mozart, Dra, NR, 84 min. Madeleine Assas, Frederic Pierrot. Dir: Jean-Luc Godard.

Northern Arts
Hearts and Minds, Thr, R, 105 min. Danny Keogh, Patrick Shai. Dir: Ralph Ziman.

October
212-539-4000
Career Girls, Dra. Katrin Cartlidge, Lynda Steadman. Dir: Mike Leigh.
Kicked in the Head. Linda Fiorentino, Michael Rapaport, Lili Taylor, Kevin Corrigan. Dir: Matthew Harrison.

Orion Classics
Storefront Hitchcock, Concert Doc. Robyn Hitchcock. Dir: Jonathan Demme.
This World, Then the Fireworks, Dra. Billy Zane, Gina Gershon. Dir: Michael Oblowitz. Fall

Orion Pictures
Independence, Dra. Dean Cain, Drew Barrymore, Luke Wilson. Dir: Tamra Davis. Fall
Music From Another Room, Com. Brenda Blethyn, Jennifer Tilly, Martha Plimpton, Jeremy Piven, Jon Tenney, Jude Law, Gretchen Mol. Dir: Charles Peters
Stella Does Tricks. Kelly Macdonald. Dir: Coky Giedroy.

Rhino Films
310-474-4778
Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas, Dra. Johnny Depp.

Seventh Art Releasing
213-845-1455
The Long Way Home, Doc. Dir: Mark Jonathan Harris.
Things I Never Told You, Rom/Com. Lili Taylor, Andrew McCarthy. Dir: Isabel Coixet.

Shadow Distribution
La Petite Apocalypse *(France)*, Com/Dra, 110 min. Pierre Arditi. Dir: Costa-Gavras.

Sony Classics
Call Me Victor *(France)*, Com, PG, 100 min. Jeanne Moreau. Dir: Guy Jacques.

Strand
La Sentinelle *(France)*, Thr, 144 min. Emmanuel Salinger. Dir: Arnaud Desplechin. Sum
Latin Boys Go to Hell.
Self-Made Hero *(France)*, Dra. Matthieu Kassovitz. Dir: Jacques Audiard. Fall

Tara Releasing
415-454-5838
Mushrooms *(Australia)*, Com, 93 min. Julia Blake, Simon Chilvers, Lynette Curran. Dir: Alan Madden.

Theafilm
James Dean: Race With Destiny. Casper Van Dien, Robert Mitchum. Dir: Mardi Rustam. 10/3
Madam, the Grass Is High. Dir: Delbert Mann. Nov ltd

Trimark
Chairman of the Board, Com. Carrot Top. Sept
Eve's Bayou, Dra. Samuel L. Jackson, Lynn Whitfield. Dir: Kasi Lemmons. 10/17
Bombshell, Thr. Henry Thomas, Frank Whaley. Dir: Paul Wynne.
Prairie Fire. Natasha Henstridge.

Zeitgeist
212-274-1989
Fire *(India)*, Dra. Shabani Azmi. Dir: Deepa Mehta. Sum
My Sex Life... or How I Got Into An Argument *(France)*, Com. Dir: Arnaud Desplechin. Sum
Conspirators of Pleasure *(Czech)*, Com. Dir: Jan Svankmajer. Fall
Anthem, Doc. Dir: Shainee Gabel and Kristin Hahn.

THE BOXOFFICE HOME RELEASE CHART

BOXOFFICE

JUNE 1997

HOME VIDEO RELEASE DATE	TITLE	BOXOFFICE GROSS	SCREENS	THEATRICAL RELEASE	THEATRICAL/VIDEO DISTRIBUTOR
May 6	The Evening Star	$12,800,000	1,268	December 25	Paramount
May 6	Get On the Bus	$5,700,000	1,207	October 16	Columbia/Columbia TriStar
May 13	Meet Wally Sparks	$4,000,000	1,552	January 31	Trimark/Vidmark
May 13	Ransom	$136,500,000+	2,768	November 8	Buena Vista/Touchstone
May 13	Zeus and Roxanne	$7,200,000	1,745	January 24	MGM/UA
May 20	Daylight	$32,900,000	2,189	December 6	MCA/Universal
May 20	One Fine Day	$46,100,000	1,975	December 20	Fox
May 20	Star Trek: First Contact	$92,000,000	2,812	November 22	Paramount
May 20	Stephen King's Thinner	$15,300,000	2,009	October 25	Paramount
May 20	Swingers	$4,500,000	164	October 18	Buena Vista/Miramax
May 27	The Mirror Has Two Faces	$41,000,000	2,489	November 15	TriStar/Columbia TriStar
May 29	Jerry Maguire	$147,300,000	2,531	December 13	TriStar/Columbia TriStar
June 3	Breaking the Waves	$3,600,000	77	November 13	October
June 3	The People vs. Larry Flynt	$20,000,000	1,233	December 25	Columbia/Columbia TriStar
June 10	Michael	$93,700,000+	2,141	December 25	New Line
June 17	Mars Attacks!	$37,800,000	1,955	December 13	Warner Bros.

May 29	Jerry Maguire	$147,300,000	2,531	December 13	TriStar/Columbia TriStar
June 3	Breaking the Waves	$3,600,000	77	November 13	October
June 3	The People vs. Larry Flynt	$20,000,000	1,233	December 25	Columbia/Columbia TriStar
June 10	Michael	$93,700,000+	2,141	December 25	New Line
June 17	Mars Attacks!	$37,800,000	1,955	December 13	Warner Bros.
June 17	My Fellow Americans	$22,300,000	1,915	December 20	Warner Bros.
June 24	Gridlock'd	$5,600,000	743	January 29	Gramercy/PolyGram
June 24	In Love and War	$14,500,000	1,612	December 18	New Line
June 24	Ridicule	$1,700,000	74	November 27	Buena Vista/Miramax
June 24	Scream	$88,800,000+	1,994	December 20	Buena Vista/Miramax
June 24	Turbulence	$11,500,000	2,094	January 10	MGM/UA
July 1	Fierce Creatures	$9,100,000	1,620	January 24	MCA/Universal
July 1	Jackie Chan's First Strike	$14,500,000	1,344	January 10	New Line
July 15	Metro	$31,900,000+	2,005	January 17	Buena Vista/Touchstone
July 22	Sling Blade	$19,900,000+	1,020	November 27	Buena Vista/Miramax
July	The Crucible	$7,300,000	344	November 27	Fox
July	The English Patient	$73,100,000+	683	November 15	Buena Vista/Miramax
July	Ghosts of Mississippi	$13,000,000	1,268	December 20	Columbia/Columbia TriStar
July	Hamlet	$4,400,000+	92	December 25	Columbia/Columbia TriStar
July	Jingle All the Way	$60,600,000	2,404	November 22	Fox
July	Mother	$18,800,000	621	December 25	Paramount
July	Shine	$35,100,000+	314	November 22	Fine Line/New Line
July	Vegas Vacation	$35,100,000+	2,054	February 14	Warner Bros.
August 3	Dangerous Ground	$5,100,000	808	February 12	New Line
August	Absolute Power	$48,700,000+	2,568	February 14	Columbia/Columbia TriStar
August	Dante's Peak	$64,100,000+	2,657	February 7	MCA/Universal
August	The Relic	$33,600,000+	2,128	January 10	Paramount

Compiled by BOXOFFICE MAGAZINE. Numbers for ***Boxoffice Gross*** represent total domestic boxoffice grosses to the nearest $100,000; + signs indicate that films remain in theatrical release. Number of ***Screens*** indicates the maximum number of screens in widest, simultaneous release. Entries in the ***Theatrical/Video Distributor*** column list two names when the video releasing company is different from (or releases through a subsidiary different from) the theatrical distributor. Exact day-and-date specific entries for ***Home Video Release*** are confirmed; in all other cases, the month indicated for a release is forecast by the editors of BOXOFFICE. BOXOFFICE is not liable for errors or omissions in the chart.

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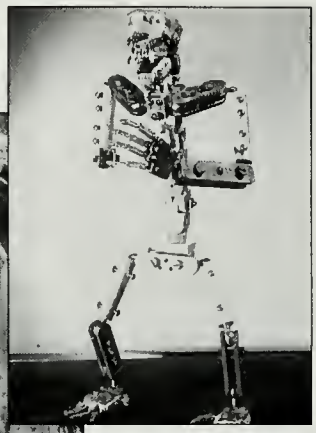
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The Big Picture

The era of realistic model animation for feature films came to an end last year, though few noticed. It happened when Tim Burton was putting together "Mars Attacks!" and was persuaded by test footage from Industrial Light and Magic that his plans could be better (and more cost effectively) fulfilled by the use of computer graphics imaging (CGI). Model animation had already lost dinosaur epics (thanks to "Jurassic Park") and space warfare flicks (in "ID4") to the computer terminal. When former animator Burton sided with the digital effects revolution, it was essentially the model animation equivalent of Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo.

For fans of fantastical cinema, CGI will have to work hard to erase memories of the pulse-pounding model animation tradition of Willis O'Brien and Ray Harryhausen. O'Brien, who began his work in the silent era, was perhaps the single most significant effects pioneer in movies. With 1933's "King Kong," he set standards the industry is still trying to catch up with; working with models sculpted by his lifelong associate Marcel Delgado, O'Brien blended intricate miniature work with live character footage, staged believable battles between enormous primitive beasts, and used mattes and models to create a nightmare vision of both a primeval jungle and an urban one: the overgrown rain forest of Kong's Island, and the depression-era New York City which Kong attacks and is ultimately destroyed by.







ABOVE: *The King of Kongs.* **ABOVE RIGHT:** *Rare view of Kong model's steel skeleton, a Willis O'Brien innovation.* **LEFT:** *A Harryhausen cyclops from "Jason."*

O'Brien's greatest achievement, though, may have come in Kong's close-ups, which, in their range of expression and emotion, made an inarticulate beast's strange love for a flaxen-haired flapper both believable and heart-rending. Kong's "acting" came courtesy of the intricate, frame-by-frame manipulation of an 18-inch puppet, yet it remains one of cinema's great "performances," and the standard by which all other effects-created creatures are still judged.

Interestingly, it was as O'Brien's star pupil that Ray Harryhausen first came to light. As O'Brien's "First Technician" on 1949's Kong-like "Mighty Joe Young," Harryhausen (who had earlier worked on George Pal's "Puppetoons") learned realistic model animation at the hands of its greatest practitioner. Harryhausen's later credits are like a pocket history of '50s and '60s drive-in favorites: "It Came From Beneath the Sea" (1952); "The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms" (1953); "Earth vs. the Flying Saucers" (1956); "Twenty Million Miles to Earth" (1957). Though he did his share of prehistoric creature effects, it was in films based on Greek mythology that Harryhausen found his own unique niche: His complex combination of actors and animation for the duel between live-action warriors and a platoon of sword-wielding skeletons in "Jason and the Argonauts" (1963) remains a masterpiece of animation choreography.

O'Brien passed away in November of 1962 while at work on the miniatures for Stanley Kramer's epic comedy "It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World." But Harryhausen, who is still alive, managed to "team" with O'Brien one last time. In 1969, Harryhausen provided the dinosaurs for "Valley of Gwangi," one of the many unfulfilled "dream" projects O'Brien left behind.

Unfortunately, time is money in movie work, and so the very time-consuming craft of model animation is increasingly a lost art. There is, however, at least one writer and one director who remember their movie history: Michael Crichton and Steven Spielberg, whose latest Jurassic collaboration is called "The Lost World." That title first came to the movies in 1925, when a silent feature based on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's novel of the same name set a brontosaurus loose in Victorian London, to the amazement of audiences. Though not directly related to the Crichton/Spielberg project, the 1925 "Lost World" had certain themes in common: it was not only the first dramatic feature built around model animation but the first film about dinosaurs amok in the modern world.

That first "Lost World" unquestionably launched the genre which "The Lost World: Jurassic Park" will no doubt revivify. It also launched the career of the man who gave the movies its first viable technology for bringing such visions to the screen—a young effects artist, by the name of Willis O'Brien.—***Ray Greene***

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HOLLYWOOD UPDATES

Three lawsuits have been filed against the filmmakers of TriStar's **"Apt Pupil"** for allegedly filming minors as young as 14 in the nude without prior notification or parental consent. **Devin St. Albin, David Stockdale** and **Ben Scott Baker,** three boys who were hired as extras for the film, claim that they were ordered to strip naked for a shower room scene, and were told that they would be fired if they did not comply. Additionally, a photographer is said to have taken indecent photographs of the boys "for no legitimate purpose related to the filming." According to St. Albin's parents, the scene was supposed to be filmed under strict supervision and with no nudity. The suit names **Phoenix Pictures Inc., TriStar Pictures Inc., Sony Pictures Entertainment, Happy Endings Productions, Bad Hat Harry Productions,** director **Bryan Singer,** producers **Kenneth Kokin, Jane Hamsher** and **Don Murphy,** and Hamsher and Murphy's production company, **JD Productions.** A spokesperson for Phoenix Pictures called the accusations "outrageous and completely without merit."

The times they are a-changin'—at least when it comes to that old '80s fixture, the **"Rambo"** franchise. Rights to the once-popular Stallone-performed musclebound Vietnam vet avenger went on the block as part of **Carolco Pictures'** recent bankruptcy hearing. A bidding war was expected between **Miramax's Dimension Films** arm and **Roger Corman's Concorde/New Horizons** but none materialized. The upshot: Miramax got prequel and sequel rights to a character whose adventures have grossed $250 million-plus in the U.S. alone (and at least that internationally) plus countless millions more in ancillaries for a measly $500,000. By comparison, Miramax/Dimension paid $3.15 million for the same rights to Carolco's "Total Recall" thanks to a competitive bidding environment. Other Carolco titles on the block at press time included the "Terminator" franchise and "Universal Soldier." Watch these pages for details on what happens next in the Carolco fire sale.

Anthony Edwards, who stars on the popular TV drama "ER," has entered a first-look deal with **Warner Bros.** to produce TV and film projects through his production company, Aviator. With producing partner Dante Di Loreto, Edwards already has several films in development, including "Us Belongs To You," a romantic comedy in which Edwards will star; "Brother Bertram," based on a comic novel about a monk who visits New York; and "Wrigleyville," a romantic comedy about two fanatic Cub devotees.

Filmmaker **Chris Columbus,** whose successes with **20th Century Fox** include megahits "Home Alone" and "Mrs. Doubtfire," has renewed his deal with the studio for another three years. Under the deal, he will write, produce and direct films through his 1492 Pictures. Under his last pact with Fox, Columbus and his 1492 partners Michael Barnathan and Mark Radcliffe produced "Nine Months" (which Columbus directed) and "Jingle All the Way." Upcoming films under the new agreement include "Shields Green and the Gospel of John Brown," about abolitionist John Brown and his relationship with a freed slave; "The Fantastic Four," based on the comic book series; the comedy-drama "My Ride With Gus"; and the fantasy-comedy "Once More With Feeling." Columbus recently helmed the Susan Sarandon/Julia Roberts starrer "Stepmom" for TriStar.

Miramax Films co-chairmen **Bob and Harvey Weinstein** will be honored with the **Independent Feature Project's Gotham Award for Lifetime Achievement** at a gala to be held Sept. 16 at the Hammerstein Ballroom in New York. The IFP Gotham Awards honor those who demonstrate an outstanding commitment to independent film; past recipients include Al Pacino, Robert Shaye, Arthur Krim, Irwin Young, Martin Scorsese and Sam Cohn. Held on the second night of the Independent Feature Film Market, the ceremony is expected to draw about 900 attendees. The Weinsteins were instrumental in bringing independent fare to the mainstream, most dramatically demonstrated by the critical acclaim and $100+ million domestic gross of 1994's "Pulp Fiction," which, as a "niche" film, in the past would not have received the marketing push or wide distribution crucial to its blockbuster success. Miramax's most recent triumph was its epic romance-drama "The English Patient," which swept the 1996 Oscars and has earned more than $76 million domestically to date.

Actor James Mason's son, **Morgan Mason,** who founded the William Morris Agency's independent films division, has been hired to head up **London Films** and revivify its production arm. London Films was founded by Alexander Korda in the 1930s, and its library includes such titles as "The Scarlet Pimpernel" and "The Ghost Goes West," but the company in recent years has not been involved in filmmaking, focusing instead on sales of its already-existing product. Now, under Mason's leadership, London plans to produce three to five films a year—both original projects and remakes of its own films.

Stephen Herek, who directed "101 Dalmatians" for **Buena Vista** under a three-picture deal, has renewed for another three pictures with the studio. "Dalmatians" (which has grossed more than $136 million domestically to date) was only the first film in the initial deal, so Herek's on board for at least five more movies. The next film he'll helm will be under the Disney/Touchstone division.

The L.A. Superior Court ordered **20th Century Fox** to pay writer-director **Ron Shelton** ("Tin Cup") a sum of $9.8 million for compensation due, but never paid, under his former deal with the studio. Shelton's suit claimed that Fox failed to meet its contractual obligation to pay him half the net profits from "White Men Can't Jump." The studio can appeal the verdict, but would have to post a bond worth 150 percent of the award ($15 million) to start the process.

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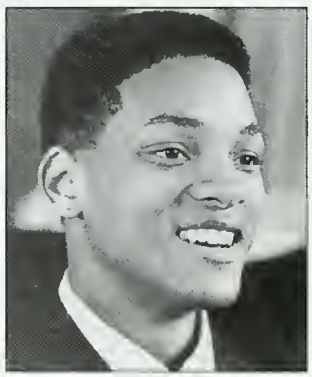
Response No. 35

HOLLYWOOD REPORT



NICOLAS CAGE

"Detective" Find



WILL SMITH

"Wild" Man



LAUREN HOLLY

Something "New"

"WHAT DREAMS MAY COME" Robin Williams will headline this romantic drama about a man who dies but whose spirit remains earthbound, as he can't bear the thought of leaving his wife. His wife is then trapped in Hell, and Williams' character must team with a tracker ("Jerry Maguire's" Cuba Gooding Jr.) to save her. Vincent Ward ("Map of the Human Heart") will helm; Ron Bass ("The Joy Luck Club") scripts. (Distribution to be set)

"IT'S A DOG'S LIFE" Chris Farley ("Beverly Hills Ninja") will star in this fantasy/comedy about household pets magically transformed into human beings. As a pup-turned-person, Farley must win over the lady of the house before she is seduced by a transmogrified pet snake (possibly to be played by Alec Baldwin). (Warner Bros.)

"DEFECTIVE DETECTIVE" Terry Gilliam ("12 Monkeys") will direct Nicolas Cage ("Con Air") in this comedy/drama whose plot is in the vein of Gilliam's 1981 film "Time Bandits." Cage will play a detective who's searching for a lost girl in New York and ends up on a fantastic adventure. Gilliam co-scripts with Richard LaGravenese, his "The Fisher King" collaborator. (Universal)

"BELOVED" TV talk show host Oprah Winfrey ("The Color Purple") returns to the silver screen alongside Thandie Newton ("Gridlock'd") in this period drama about a slave haunted by the ghost of the baby daughter she'd killed years before. Jonathan Demme ("Philadelphia") is in talks to helm. This adaptation of Toni Morrison's novel will be produced through Winfrey's Harpo Prods. (Buena Vista)

"WILD, WILD WEST" This adaptation of the '60s TV series will reteam "Men In Black" star Will Smith and "MIB" director Barry Sonnenfeld. Smith will play James T. West (originally portrayed by Robert Conrad). Johnny Depp and George Clooney are possible contenders for the part of sidekick Artemus Gordon. (Warner Bros.)

"LONG TIME, NOTHING NEW" A small-town woman ("A Smile Like Yours'" Lauren Holly) must find the courage to forget her past and move forward with her life in this drama scripted and directed by Edward Burns ("She's the One"), who also co-stars. (Gramercy)

"SIMPLE SIMON" In this drama helmed by Harold Becker ("City Hall"), Bruce Willis will play an FBI agent on the run from the government. With him is an autistic boy who has inadvertently broken into secret databases. Alec Baldwin ("Ghosts of Mississippi"), who worked with Becker for 1993's "Malice," co-stars as their nemesis. (Universal)

"DOGMA" Kevin Smith ("Chasing Amy") next tells the story of a woman chosen by renegade angels to save humanity. Smith will play a role alongside "Chasing Amy" stars Ben Affleck and Joey Lauren Adams. Jason Scott Lee ("Jungle Book") is in talks to play the angel of death. (Miramax)

"IN TOO DEEP" In this black comedy, a man (not yet cast) learns his best friend ("Inventing the Abbotts'" Joaquin Phoenix) is sleeping with his wife ("An Awfully Big Adventure's" Georgina Cates). He then plots to fake his own death and frame the friend for murder. Vince Vaughn ("Swingers") and Janeane Garofalo ("Romy & Michele's High School Reunion") co-star. David Dobkin will direct. (Gramercy)

"KNOCK OFF" Jean-Claude Van Damme and director Tsui Hark, who joined for "Double Team," reteam in this terrorist actioner scripted by Steven de Souza ("Die Hard"). Lela Rochon ("Waiting to Exhale") will play a CIA operative who helps him in his plan to take down the terrorist conspiracy. (Distribution to be set)

"TARZAN AND JANE" The Edgar Rice Burroughs character leaves civilization to return to Africa to save his homeland. Casper Van Dien ("Starship Troopers") will play the famed jungle man, and Jane March ("Color of Night") will play Jane. (Distribution to be set)

"BODY COUNT" A "Jade" reteaming, Linda Fiorentino and David Caruso will star in this film about an art heist gone wrong. Co-starring are Ving Rhames ("Rosewood"), Forest Whitaker ("Species"), John Leguizamo ("The Pest") and Donnie Wahlberg ("Ransom"). Robert Spruill ("The Squeeze") will helm. (Distribution is to be set)

"BEGIN THE BEGUINE" Elijah Wood ("Flipper") and Anna Paquin ("Fly Away Home") will star in this coming-of-age love story scripted by Raymond De Felitta ("Cafe Society"). (Distribution to be set)

"KISS OR KILL" Down Under helmer Bill Bennett ("Two If By Sea") will direct "Love and Other Catastrophes'" Frances O'Connor and Matt Day in this dramatic thriller about a couple running from police across Australia's Nullarbor desert. When a series of murders occur along their route, each suspects the other. Bennett also scripts and produces. (Distribution to be set)

"THE RISE AND FALL OF LITTLE VOICE" This adaptation of the hit British play will star "Trainspotting's" Ewan McGregor and Jane Horrocks ("Life Is Sweet"). Horrocks also starred in the original play in Lancashire. Sam Mendes directs. (Distribution to be set)

"THE ROAD TO GRACELAND" Jonathon Schaech ("That Thing You Do!") will play a man whose life is shattered when his wife is killed in a car accident, but he's helped through this trying time by a man (Harvey Keitel) who he thinks is Elvis Presley. Bridget Fonda is in talks to play Marilyn Monroe. David Winkler, son of director/producer Irwin Winkler ("The Net"), will direct and script. (Distribution to be set)

"THE FAMILY BLOOM" In this drama, Penelope Ann Miller ("The Shadow") will play a woman who gives up her own life to take care of her widowed brother and his children. But that life to which she's become accustomed falls apart when the brother decides to remarry. Newcomer Craig Saavedra directs; Eric Tuchman ("Anastasia") scripts. (Distribution to be set)

ET CETERA: "Volcano's" Anne Heche has been cast opposite Harrison Ford in Buena Vista's romantic comedy **"6 Days, 7 Nights"**...Harry Connick Jr. will take his first romantic lead in Fox's **"Hope Floats,"** which stars Sandra Bullock and is being helmed by Forest Whitaker ("Waiting to Exhale")...Gena Rowlands, Gillian Anderson and Harry Dean Stanton have joined Sharon Stone in Miramax's **"Freak the Mighty"** ...Chris Columbus ("Nine Months") will direct Julia Roberts and Susan Sarandon in TriStar's **"Stepmom,"** about a dying woman who befriends her husband's new girlfriend... Lending their voices to Fox's Eddie Murphy starrer **"Dr. Dolittle"** are Ving Rhames as a tiger, Chris Rock as a guinea pig, John Leguizamo as a rat and Paul Reubens as a raccoon.

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Response No. 473

BEST BET: THE PATHE TUSCHINSKI THEATER

Going to Cinema Expo '97? Treat Yourself to an Afternoon at Amsterdam's Finest Movie Palace

by Ray Greene



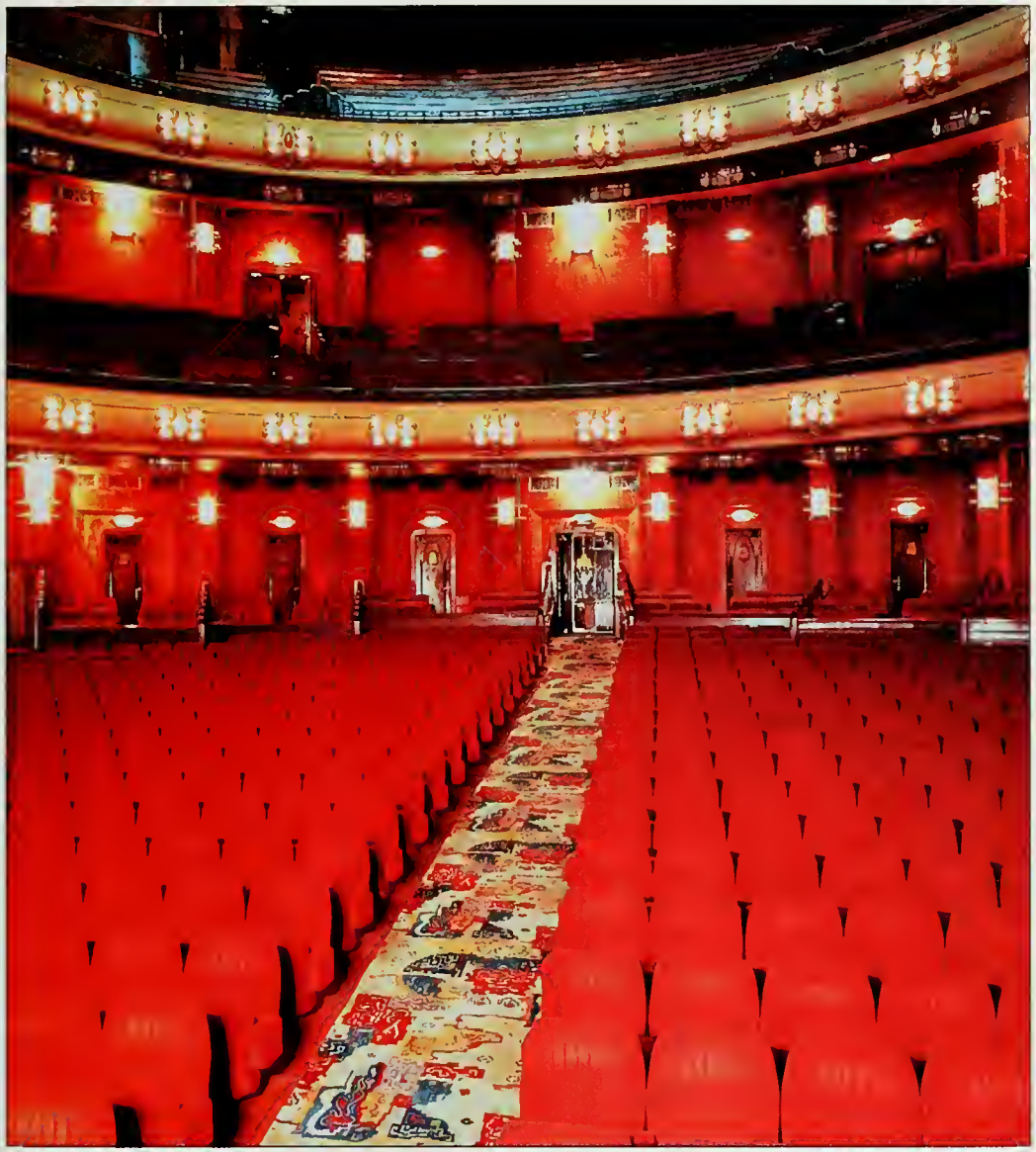
INTERIOR DECO-RATING: *This plush, luxuriant concessions area in Amsterdam's Tuschinski Theater demonstrates the unique design concepts Abram Tuschinski and his designers brought to life.*

Amsterdam is an easy city to fall in love with. Like many modern European cities with a long history extending back to a pre-industrial era, it is comfortably configured for those who like a brisk walk, and that walk is made all the more satisfying by a gorgeous architectural landscape that makes almost every building, from the extraordinarily grand Royal Palace in Dam Square to the random pub or restaurant around any given corner, a feast for the eyes, and just as often a feast for the mind.

The "feast for the eyes" aspect of Amsterdam is easy to discern—every street corner has its own structural offering to make to the attentive visitor, and the famed canals which bind it all together are not only a marvelous way to get a quick, thumbnail tour of the whole local topography, they more than live up to their reputation for tranquil beauty and splendor. Unlike, for example, most American places of interest, Amsterdam has the virtue of being a place where almost nothing has been fabricated for the tourist's benefit. The canals, for all the tour boats plying their waters, are a real and thriving part of the economic and social life of the city. The many museums are a cultural shrine to Amsterdam's (and Europe's) rich artistic tradition—the Dutch are just good enough to share them with you, too. From the notorious "red light" district to the shopping areas to the local bars and restaurants, the "tourist" elements which greet a visitor are not separated from the way the natives lead their lives, and there's an extra thrill in knowing that, with every experience had in Amsterdam, one is shoulder to shoulder with average people, going about the business of their daily lives.

How Amsterdam also manages to be a "feast for the mind" is well demonstrated, especially for the theatre professional, by the splendor of what may be its grandest commercial building: the historic Tuschinski Theater, the Dutch flagship of the Pathe circuit and the largest cinema in all of Amsterdam. Currently celebrating its 76th year of operation, the Tuschinski is a living example of a uniquely European approach to the "movie palace" architecture that flourished in a brassier and more hyperbolic form across the Atlantic in the U.S.A. during the same period as the Tuschinski's construction. Where a definitive American palace of the '20s like Sid Grauman's Hollywood-based Chinese Theatre can be read as a reflection of America's fascination with the grandiose, the Tuschinski offers a more stately vision of luxuriousness.

Lush hardwood surfaces in a variety of woodfaces are perhaps the most defining architectural feature of this wonderful building—one of the few examples of architecture from Amsterdam's immediate post-WWI era to have survived with both exterior and interior intact. Where an exhibitor like Sid Grauman used his theatres to define Hollywood chutzpah and showmanship, it could be argued that Abram Tuschinski, the Polish exhibitor who



LOOK MA—NO HANDS!: *The seemingly support-less twin balconies of the Tuschinski's main auditorium, created to ensure excellent sightlines for all patrons, are an architectural demonstration of Abram Tuschinski's egalitarian outlook.*

built the Dutch theatre that bears his name, was in part a philosophical reflection of the democratization movement that swept through Europe after the downfall of the German Kaiser and Russia's Czar.

Tuschinski's quite noble stated aim in building the Tuschinski was to bring the luxury of the upper classes to within easy reach of the common man, and virtually every design feature of the theatre he left behind triumphantly proclaims the success of his venture. The Art Deco influence of which the wealthier classes were so enamored during the 1920s is prevalent—so much so that the Tuschinski is often cited as a prime example of that architectural school. Deco fans will love the clean, rounded lines of the Tuschinski's hundreds of light fixtures, the sheer marbleized surfaces of its concessions counter spaces and its imposing, slightly rococo stairwells and balustrades.

But though the Deco school is amply and gorgeously represented throughout the Tuschinski's grand design, Tuschinski and his architects took a more playful and eclectic approach to their task in creating the theatre. There is a Mighty Wurlitzer organ dating back to the '20s made and shipped to the house from the Wurlitzer plant in Tonawanda, U.S.A. which is used today mainly for concerts and which is considered such a priceless national treasure that it is actually protected by government statute. There's a touch of Sid Grauman's taste for the exotic in the theatre's many *bas relief* murals and its sculptures, most of which are Far Eastern in influence, some even resembling the work of the pre- and early-Christian Arab icon artists. Uniquely Dutch motifs are also present throughout the theatre, reflecting two discrete architectural movements: the "Jugendstil," which is an ancient building approach, and the more modern Amsterdam school, derived in part from some of the theories on functionalism of the Bauhaus group.

Aside from beautiful pine and mahogany flooring, virtually every covered inch of the Tuschinski is swathed in specially-created hand-woven Persian carpets, created according to a unique design scheme which enhances and unifies the Middle Eastern with the Art Deco components of the theatre's grand style. In many ways it's the floor coverings which serve to bridge the differing visual approaches manifested by the Tuschinski's architecture—the place where divergent influences meet, mingle and give birth to the new.

If there is any one feature of the Tuschinski which perhaps best embodies the democratic spirit of Abram Tuschinski's original ideal, it is the relationship of its two main balconies to the largest of the Tuschinski's six auditoriums. Here, where the attractions which would draw audience's to the house would be displayed, Tuschinski and his builders struggled to ensure that virtually every moviegoer's experience would be identical, and of the highest order.

Sightlines were the principal problem in designing the ultimate viewing place. What Tuschinski and his collaborators came up with was a stunning and unheard of design allowing for two enormous balconies spanning the entire rear section of the main auditorium to hang in the air without the use of even a single column for support. It's a breathtaking sight, and little short of miraculous given the building materials of the day; in their successful quest to ensure that every seat in the Tuschinski had a clear view of the screen, Tuschinski's team created an architectural miracle that seems to defy gravity. While the entire theatre is filled with inspired touches, the main auditorium is, appropriately enough, the culmination.

Amsterdam is a city of wonders, many of which—from the Van Gogh Museum to the Anne Frankhuis to the Rijksmuseum—are justly world-famous. The beauty of its cinematic wonders is by no means limited to the Tuschinski—there are many fine theatres in and about the city proper, a wide range of which are within easy walking distance of Dam Square. But for anyone who loves the architectural possibilities inherent in the moviehouse and who is looking for something special to do while at the Cinema Expo this year, you could do worse than to spend an afternoon at the Tuschinski. And while you're at it, take in a movie. After all, when it's all said and done, that's really what it's all about. ■

75-minute guided tours of the Tuschinski Theater are available during the months of July and August every Sunday and Monday morning at 10:30. Groups are welcome year round, but should apply in writing for a reservation at least one week in advance. For tour info (in Amsterdam): 020-623-1510. Fax: 020-625-3199.

DISNEY ANIMATION Gets Back on Track With "HERCULES," an Animated Epic for the Gods *by Joseph McBride*

While the relatively lukewarm public reception for Disney's last animated feature, "The Hunchback of Notre Dame," perhaps stemmed in part from the liberties it took with its classic Victor Hugo text, Disney is not backpedaling into reverence with its new animated film, "Hercules." The studio's brashly irreverent take on the classical Greek legend is satirical and anachronistic, replete with contemporary gags about pop culture and the commercialization of heroism. That hip comedic approach is the trademark of writer/director/producers John Musker and Ron Clements, whose previous Disney features have included "The Great Mouse Detective," "The Little Mermaid" and "Aladdin."

Following the triumphant release of "Aladdin" in 1992, Disney held brainstorming sessions to help Musker and Clements choose their next project. In recent years, with such animated films as "The Lion King," "Aladdin" and "Pocahontas," the studio has been expanding its cultural horizons beyond its traditional reliance on European fairy tales. Currently in the works are such animated features as "Tarzan"; "Mulan" (formerly "The Legend of Fa Mulan"), set in China; and "Children of the Sun," which takes place in Peru. Greek mythology seemed an exciting stylistic and narrative option for Disney's 35th full-length animated feature. "Aside from the 'Pastoral' sequence in 'Fantasia,' Disney has generally avoided dealing with classical mythology," Clements says. "But for an artist it's fun to do different things. Mythology seems a bigger canvas, dealing with bigger issues.

"We were considering 'The Odyssey.' It scared us a little bit—it seemed too sacred, not something we could have fun with. Hercules was the Capra hero of his time, the common-man hero, a meat-and-potatoes kind of hero."

Sharing a disdain for the starchy movie conventions of sword-and-sandal epics, the directors had no desire to treat Hercules as the stodgy, standard-issue superhero familiar from the 1959 Steve Reeves movie "Hercules" or the current live-action TV series "Hercules: The Legendary Journeys." They decided to "adopt a humorous tone" toward their title character because "anachronistic humor would give more of an entry into the film," Musker explains.

Not only would a more modern approach to Hercules appeal to animation's youthful target audience, but it was also a natural fit for the two filmmakers, whose work always has been replete with jocular references to other movies and pop-cultural artifacts. "We're trying to make movies for ourselves first and foremost," Musker admits. "We're our own audience."

Purists might object to the film's downplaying or jettisoning of some of the elements of classical mythology, including such venerable standbys as the Twelve Labors of Hercules. And, in line with Disney's always-conservative approach to touchy sexual issues, Hercules is no longer the illegitimate son of a god (Zeus) and a human mother (Hera). Hera has been elevated to goddess status in the movie, and Hercules's half-human nature now results from a magical potion imperfectly administered by minions of the villainous Hades, Lord of the Underworld.

But Musker and Clements (along with co-writers Bob Shaw, Don McEnery and Irene Mecchi) have used those narrative metamorphoses as the springboard for much of the film's drama and adventure, with the youthful Hercules growing up conflicted about his identity and determined to prove himself a "true hero" in the eyes of both his fellow Greeks and his Olympian father. Tate Donovan ("Equinox") does the voice of the young-adult Hercules; Joshua Keaton and Roger Bart provide the character's adolescent speaking and singing voices.

> "In becoming sort of the Michael Jordan of his day, Hercules learns there is more to being a hero than being an action hero."
> —*John Musker*

Describing Hercules as "Jimmy Stewart in the body of Arnold Schwarzenegger," Clements says the film has a strong Frank Capra influence throughout, both in plot and characterizations. On a bulletin board in the filmmakers' production office, the storylines of such Capra classics as "Mr. Deeds Goes to Town," "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington" and "Meet John Doe" are prominently displayed on index cards as *aide-mémoire*.

Like the naive young senator so memorably played by Stewart in "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington," Disney's "Hercules" is an idealistic country boy who ventures into the big city (in this case Thebes, aka "The Big Olive") and finds himself surrounded by voracious, worldly-wise cynics. Eventually, as in a Capra movie, idealism narrowly triumphs over the forces of darkness. "All the former cynics," Musker says, "become rallying people" to help Hercules prove his heroism. Among them is the gnomish satyr Philoctetes (voiced by Danny DeVito), an athletic trainer whose personality the directors describe as part William Demarest, part Burgess Meredith via "Rocky."

The film's heroine, Megara, is modeled after the characters played by Jean Arthur and Barbara Stanwyck in the Capra classics. A cynical, fast-talking city dame who's been kicked around, Meg serves as Hades' moll until she rediscovers her romantic idealism under the purifying influence of the good-hearted hero she has set out to exploit and betray. This brassy, experienced heroine breaks the wholesome mold of Disney's animated leading ladies, even though she has the voice of Susan Egan, a Tony nominee on Broadway for playing Belle in the stage version of Disney's "Beauty and the Beast."

THE BOXOFFICE INTERVIEW

STRENGTH


TO STRENGTH

Composer Alan Menken, the eight-time Oscar winner whose Disney credits have included "Beauty and the Beast," "The Hunchback of Notre Dame," "The Little Mermaid" and "Aladdin," says Egan brought a "wonderful wry quality" to the role of Meg. "She's tough and yet vulnerable." Menken's collaborator on "Hercules" was lyricist David Zippel, a Tony winner for "City of Angels" and a newcomer to Disney animation.

Working with Musker and Clements is "a riot," Menken says, "because each song becomes a standout song. You have less of the kinds of songs that are built in and forwarding plot in a complicated way. The songs they like me to write and that make them really fun are production numbers, comedy numbers, and heavily stylized numbers. 'Hercules' is just so funny, so fast-paced, so entertaining."



LABORERS OF "HERCULES": *(left to right) Helmers Ron Clements and John Musker recently signed exclusive pacts with Disney; Tate Donovan takes inspiration from a likeness of the film's hero; and James Woods gets down as the god Hades.*

One of the most daring aspects of "Hercules" is its incorporation of African-American musical idioms to convey hope, idealism and soulfulness, a suggestion by the directors that Menken and Zippel eagerly embraced. The five Muses making up the film's Greek chorus—Calliope, Thalia, Clio, Melpomene and Terpsichore, sung by Lillias White, Vaneese Thomas, Cheryl Freeman, LaChanze and Roz Ryan—vocalize in a style Menken describes as "sort of New Orleans funk," a blend of gospel with rhythm and blues.

That element was added to give the film "a stylistic twist that you wouldn't normally expect," says lyricist Zippel. "Because everything in this show has a twist. Nothing is quite straight on, except for the emotions."

Danny DeVito's big musical number, "One Last Hope," is played as a flamboyant pastiche of vaudeville and Broadway show tunes. Menken urged him to "think Jimmy Durante." But, recalls the composer, DeVito "didn't do Jimmy Durante. It sounded like Danny DeVito singing, and it really worked."

Another example of the film's incessant stream of showbiz in-jokery is James Woods' motor-mouthed portrayal of Hades as what Clements calls "the hippest villain we've ever had, a Hollywood-agent type of personality. When [former agent] Michael Ovitz was here [as president of the Walt Disney Co. until his departure last December], we couldn't say that. Now we can."



"HERC" JERK: *Hades is a blue-haired fast talker with teeth as sharp as a talent agent.*

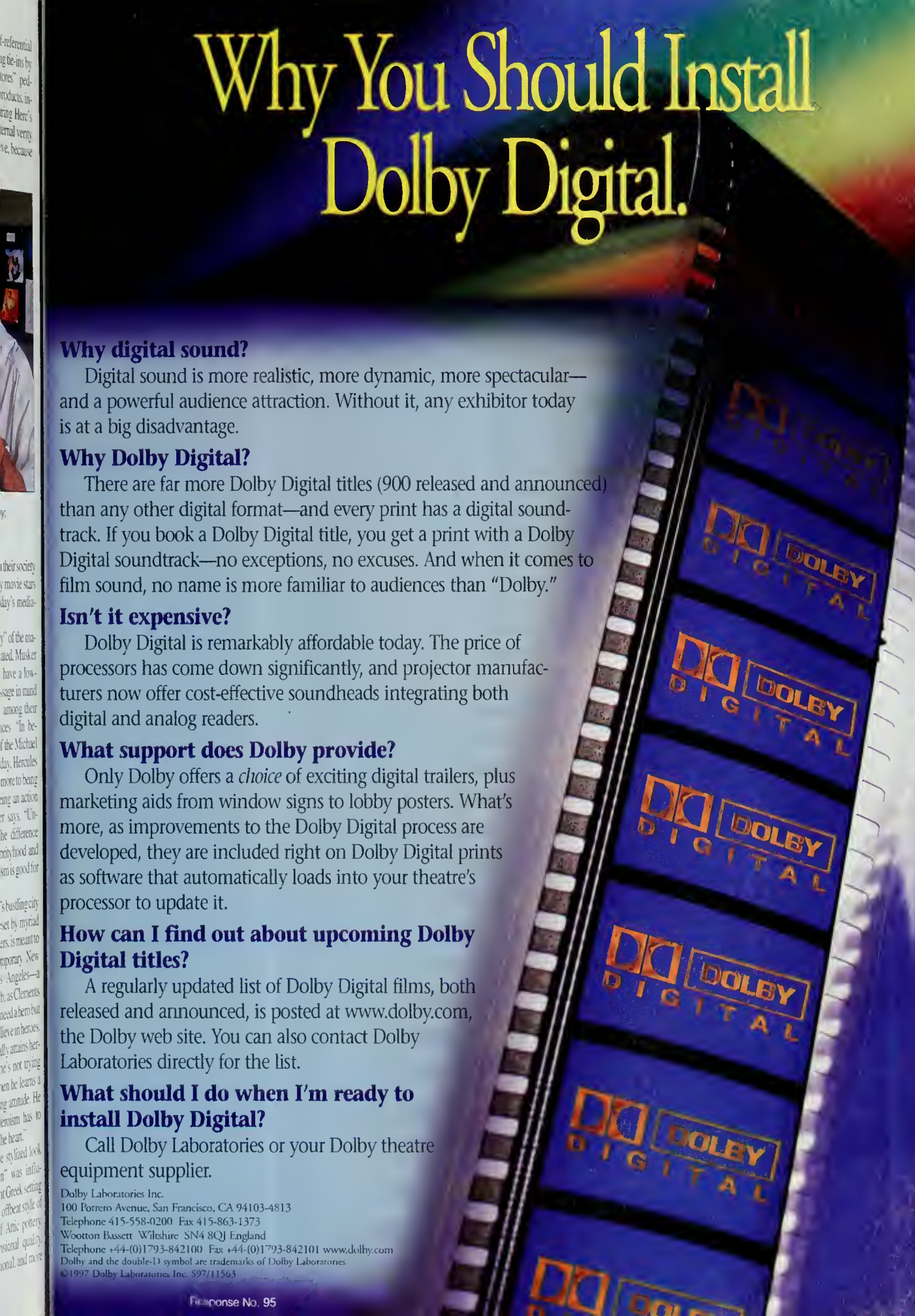
Hercules" also pokes sly, self-referential fun at Disney merchandising tie-ins by showcasing "Hercules Stores" peddling hero-worshipping souvenir products, including such items as vases featuring Herc's valiant visage. There's a certain eternal verity to such gags, the filmmakers believe, because the Greek gods filled a function in their society much like that now performed by movie stars or the British royal family in today's media-saturated culture.

By offering this "gentle parody" of the machinery by which heroes are created, Musker and Clements have a low-key moral message in mind for the young among their family audiences. "In becoming sort of the Michael Jordan of his day, Hercules learns there is more to being a hero than being an action hero," Musker says. "Understanding the difference between celebrityhood and genuine heroism is good for kids today."

The movie's bustling city of Thebes, beset by myriad natural disasters, is meant to evoke contemporary New York or Los Angeles—a place in which, as Clements puts it, "they need a hero but they don't believe in heroes. Hercules finally attains heroism when he's not trying to. That's when he learns a self-sacrificing attitude. He finds that heroism has to come from the heart."

Just as the stylized look of "Aladdin" was influenced by Persian art, the ancient Greek setting of "Hercules" inspired its own offbeat style of animation, evoking the art of Attic pottery. "'Hercules' has a two-dimensional quality, more stylized, less representational, and more

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decorative" than the traditional Disney animated film, Musker notes. "But at the same time we're still trying to work in three dimensions, with the Disney illusion of moving in deep space."

So that the creative team could absorb authentic location atmosphere, Musker and Clements took key department heads on a trip to Greece and Turkey in summer 1994. Shooting video footage and still photographs for reference, they discovered unexpected details they later incorporated into the film's visual texture. "All the sites were overrun with goats," Musker recalls with amusement. "Throughout the film we sprinkled a more liberal dose of goats. That helped give it a life, a certain color."

The noted British artist and political cartoonist Gerald Scarfe, whose distinctive style relies on bold caricature and finely filigreed calligraphy, also came on board the "Hercules" production, aiding with character designs. Scarfe, whose conceptual drawings flowed from England to Burbank for three years, "was basically our graphic designer," Clements says, although Andy Gaskill served as art director.

On "Aladdin," the filmmakers employed artist Al Hirschfeld in a similar capacity to Scarfe's on "Hercules." In both films, animation buffs also can detect the uncredited influence of the boldly stylized UPA cartoons that challenged Disney's hegemony in the 1950s. "Hercules" makes intermittent use of CGI techniques as well, for sequences involving morphing clouds and a thirty-headed monster, the Hydra.

ting-edge animation directors. Not only are they "well-known around Disney for being adventurous when it comes to technology," says their fellow "Hercules" producer Alice Dewey, "they are unique because they are writer/directors, so they have a very careful sense of what their movie is and have thought it through from the genesis.



MOM & POP OUTFIT: *Hera specializes in ambrosia batches, Zeus in lightning bolts.*



EARLY WORK: *Musker and Clements' "The Little Mermaid" swims back into theatres this Thanksgiving.*

The unusual blend of influences on Musker and Clements, and their willingness to experiment with diverse styles of animation, helps account for their status as Disney's most cut-

"Because this is their fourth picture," Dewey continues, "they have a tremendous amount of experience, not only with animation but with each other."

With animation profits soaring over the past few years, the competition among Hollywood studios for animation artists and directors has become increasingly feverish. Keeping Musker and Clements on the lot has been a high priority for Disney. When animation honcho Jeffrey Katzenberg left as chairman of Walt Disney Studios in 1994 and became a partner with Steven Spielberg and David Geffen in DreamWorks SKG, Musker wrote a memo to his Disney colleagues declaring, "Well, guys, I think everybody's salary just went up."

Musker and Clements held talks with DreamWorks and Warner Bros., but last year they decided to sign exclusive new agreements with Disney. "There were long-term projects we wanted to do, and there are good people here," Musker explains. The newly competitive atmosphere is "good for artists, because it's not so monolithic. It helped us when we did 'The Little Mermaid' that Spielberg [and Don Bluth] had done 'An American Tail.' We talked to Jeff and said, 'We've got to do the storm at sea better. We've got to top them.'"

The next project for Musker and Clements is another stylistic challenge, an animated sci-fi feature titled "Treasure Planet." A futuristic version of "Treasure Island," populated with robots and cyborgs, it is being planned for release in either the year 2000 or 2001. "It has to be at least one of those dates," Clements explains, "because those are good graphic numbers."

"Hercules." Voices by Tate Donovan, James Woods, Rip Torn and Danny DeVito. Directed by John Musker and Ron Clements. Written by Ron Clements & John Musker, Bob Shaw & Don McEnery and Irene Mecchi. Produced by Alice Dewey, John Musker and Ron Clements. A Buena Vista release. Animated. Opens wide June 27.

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Response No. 49

UNLIMITED ANIMATION

Remembering the Golden Era of UPA, the Little Animation Studio that Could *by Ray Greene*

A funny thing happened on the way to our nostalgic Big Picture feature this month. As a magazine fortunate enough to call Oscar-winning animator Ernest Pintoff a friend, we came up with an idea we thought might complement our cover story, then told Ernie what we had in mind. Original art seemed not only possible but called for, and Ernie said he thought he had something on hand that might help us out.

What he came up with was something so special we felt a black-and-white page couldn't do it justice. In the meantime, the subject selected for consideration proved vast enough to require more than our usual page space.

The solution was easy: move the Big Picture forward into a full four-color double spread that would meet the visual and narrative possibilities facilitated by the art Ernie managed to supply. Continuity fans will find the Big Picture back where it belongs next month. In the meantime, we hope you'll enjoy this rare format departure for the little summertime gift it is meant to provide.



CAUSE... *Gerald McBoing Boing, titular star of the 1951 UPA short that grabbed an Oscar and marked an early example of the studio's graphic style.*

Caricature has always been a part of the animator's art. From the earliest Mickey Mouse cartoons to Felix the Cat to Betty Boop and Ub Iwerks' Flip the Frog, the pioneers of film animation took a wicked delight in presenting exaggerated and at times grotesque images of the popular figures of their day. But "formal" caricature—the kind reserved for illustrations in the slick magazines of the '40s and '50s, and which survives in part in the recent feature film work of "Aladdin" and "Hercules" co-directors John Musker and Ron Clements—really only found its way into theatrical animation in the early 1950s, thanks to a then-Columbia based animation studio called United Productions of America, aka UPA.

There was a reason why it took so long for what should have seemed a natural marriage to take place: the unprecedented success and influence of the Walt Disney Studios during the '30s and '40s. Though the stories were fanciful, the visual aesthetic behind such signature works as "Snow White," "Pinocchio" and even "Fantasia" was grounded in the concept of ever more convincing dimensionality and realism. Under the guidance of founders Walt and Roy Disney, the Disney Studios became famous for the rigorous discipline they subjected their artists to, which embraced art classes and movement studies with one goal in mind: to replace the amorphous and inconsistent motion which virtually all early cartoons suffered from with something approaching the real thing.

Disney's success at re-inventing the way animation looked is apparent not only in its own work from the period but in that of all its significant competitors of the early sound era. Original Mickey Mouse animator Iwerks foundered when he started his own studio, in large part because of misguided attempts to match the production value of the Disney short subjects division which he himself had helped create. At Paramount, Max and Dave Fleischer, who were arguably Disney's closest and most imaginative rivals throughout the '30s, were forced by the studio into feature animation production in the aftermath of "Snow White's" stunning boxoffice achievement, overextending and eventually bankrupting themselves in the process. At MGM, the Tom and Jerry series put the slapstick energy of "Steamboat Willie" together with a lush pictorial style to create one of animation's longest running success stories, while at Warner Bros., awareness of the Disney house style contributed in the margins to the evolution of an increasingly three-dimensional approach to the medium.

UPA was the one cartoon studio that was founded upon a specific mandate to reject the influential Disney house style in favor of a more eclectic approach, embrac-

ing fine artists as disparate as Lautrec and Daumier as well as contemporary mannerists from Thurber to Hirschfeld. The brainchild of a generation of Disney animators who had been hired out of the art schools as opposed to being brought up within Disney itself, UPA was born out of an eclectic group of artists' desire to expand the graphic boundaries of animation into realms that had been largely off-limits at Disney, but which were the bread and butter of modern art.

A bitter labor strike at Disney in 1941 pitted the younger, more socially-conscious generation against the more established Disney loyalists, and many of the new breed went to work for director Frank Tashlin at the upstart animation studio Screen Gems. From there, members of this breakaway unit formed their own company, run originally by Steve Bosustow, Zack Schwartz and Dave Hilberman, with a stellar animation team including at various times the likes of John Hubley, Bobe Cannon, Bill Hurtz, Bill Melendez and Ernest Pintoff—all legends within the animation field, and each of whom continued to work out ideas first expressed at UPA in subsequent work of groundbreaking achievement.

Though most famous for its enduring "serial" character, Mr. Magoo, UPA's output was as varied as the visual sources it drew upon. "Gerald McBoing Boing" (1951) was only the eleventh UPA cartoon produced and is widely believed to be the first full articulation of the UPA house style. In an irony that probably wasn't lost on Walt Disney, it grabbed the Academy Award for Best Animated Short Subject, which created the unlikely Oscar spectacle of UPA's Bosustow standing shoulder to shoulder with Walt Disney himself, who was accepting an Oscar for "Beaver Valley," 1951's best live action short.

"Madeline," the popular French children's book series, made it to the screen in a Bobe Cannon-directed short from 1952 that flawlessly replicated Ludwig Bemelman's singular graphic style, while Bill Hurtz helped bring the unique vision of New Yorker cartoonist James Thurber to life in his 1953 adaptation of Thurber's "A Unicorn in the Garden." The James Mason-narrated rendering of Poe's "Tell-Tale Heart" (directed by Ted Parmelee in 1953) was a UPA highpoint—an eerie and sumptuous seven-minute nightmare rendered in a surreal, first-person style derived equally from Dali, expressionist theatre and UPA's own evocative house style.

By 1953, the somewhat pejorative term "limited animation" had been applied to the UPA technique (some insiders blame Disney for the term) owing to UPA's interest in stylization. To aficionados, the term is a misnomer; in its audacious and restive desire to re-invent animation with each new cartoon, UPA's output of theatrical cartoons was as boundlessly adventurous—as *un*limited, if you will—as any body of cinematic work ever created.





AND EFFECT: *Oscar-winning animator Ernest Pintoff got his start at UPA. His later, highly personal works reflect the UPA influence.* **ABOVE:** *Study based on Pintoff's "Flebus," made at Terrytoons.* **TOP:** *Study based on Pintoff's self-produced "The Violinist."*

Such a group of free spirits was bound to waft apart over time. There were management difficulties which resulted in Bosustow taking full control of the studio; over the course of the 1950s, key creative talent drifted, often into the then-nascent field of TV work (where UPA itself was a pioneer). The TV medium was uniquely configured to take advantage of UPA's ability to make arresting visual material out of fixed resources; as a result, the UPA approach defined a whole generation of TV's animation style, even when UPA itself wasn't directly involved.

But TV soon ended the era of the theatrical cartoon short, and UPA's two attempts at feature length animation (the Magoo-starring "1001 Arabian Nights" and "Gay Pur-ee," based on a story co-authored by Chuck Jones) were boxoffice flops. Core UPA personnel continued to flourish elsewhere; such veterans as Parmelee and Hurtz helped create Jay Ward's popular "Rocky and Bullwinkle" cartoons, while Bill Melendez went on to become the producer behind such seasonal TV favorites as "A Charlie Brown Christmas" and "It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown"—part of a series of "Peanuts"-derived cartoons which, in their flawless emulation of the Charles Schulz originals, were pure UPA. Ernie Pintoff followed perhaps the most exceptional trajectory of all, going against the pattern for animators in the '50s and '60s by getting his first break as an animator in UPA's TV division and then moving into theatrical cartoons, where his Mel Brooks-narrated "The Critic" eventually won him an Oscar as producer/director of the best animated short of 1963.

Though UPA survives as a company, its days in the artistic vanguard are a distant memory today, and the company's achievement is all but forgotten except among professional animators and animation devotees. UPA's influence, however, is as available as the latest "Ren and Stimpy" or "Dr. Katz" cablecast, and can even be said to be reflected in part in Musker and Clements' recent Disney efforts. It's startling to look back and see just how far one small studio managed to expand the visual possibilities of the American cartoon. In this era, when more and more money is being invested by a variety of studios in animated features designed to look as much as possible as if they were made by Disney in its "golden era" prime, the UPA paradigm may be not just worth celebrating, but worth revisiting, as a model for the unlimited possibilities of color and line.

ON HER "HORIZON"

Kathleen Quinlan heads into action with Paramount's "Event Horizon"

by Bridget Byrne



Kathleen Quinlan (center) with co-stars Jason Isaacs and Joely Richardson in a scene from Paramount's August release, "Event Horizon."

"I took this because there are not many roles where women are really active," says actress Kathleen Quinlan, explaining why she'll be seen charging about in a spacesuit in "Event Horizon," an outer-space adventure that Paramount opens this August.

Recently, Quinlan has been in two films in which the do-or-die stuff was left to a man. Earlier this summer, she was the wife who went missing in "Breakdown," a highway horror movie headlined by Kurt Russell. And she was Oscar nominated as best supporting actress for her turn as Marilyn Lovell, the wife who had to keep her feet on the ground, literally as well as figuratively, when her astronaut husband Jim, played by Tom Hanks, soared off into destiny in the drama "Apollo 13."

Chuckling, Quinlan acknowledges that the choice to portray a medical technician on a space exploration team could well have been a subconscious reaction to her previous groundings. And, furthermore, she never set out in life to be a sit-it-out. Quinlan, now turned 40, excelled at gymnastics and diving as a teen. But in those days, before the influx of endorsement dollars for top athletes, she couldn't "figure out how you made a living doing that."

There was a gym for the actors at the Pinewood Studios in England, where "Event Horizon" was filmed. "We used it not because of wanting to look good, but because of the need to be in good shape to wear the heavy spacesuits. They are spectacular to look at but very hot. Putting one on was like going from chilly London winter weather to the Bahamas in just minutes," Quinlan says.

A search-and-rescue-mission movie, which also stars Laurence Fishburne, Sam Neill and Joely Richardson, "Event Horizon" is set in the confines of a huge and ghostly spacecraft that has mysteriously reappeared after being lost for years. Quinlan plays Peters, a single mother with a child back on earth; she's one of the space team struggling to cope in a ghastly atmosphere haunted by many things, including, says director Paul Anderson ("Mortal Kombat"), "the demons they bring with them."

Quinlan says that Anderson took the time to provide rehearsal interaction and clear storyboarded images of how the finished scenes would look—essential aids for the cast, who often found themselves emoting in a lonely void that would later be linked to special effects or the work of other actors. "A lot of time I was acting to nobody," says Quinlan, who rarely worked on the same days as did Fishburne, even though most of her scenes are actually with him.

Although Quinlan admits to never having had a deep-rooted interest in space, she feels that working on this sci-fi film and the reality-based "Apollo 13" has given her "more of a universal perspective." She says, "It's just too egotistical to think that we are the only lifeform in the universe," though the actress doesn't buy into any of the perceived images of aliens, which she believes are born out of the sort of fear and prejudice usually directed by humans toward anything unknown.



Quinlan, who grew up in Mill Valley, Calif., came to professional acting by chance when she was picked out of a "cattle call" at her high school. Billed as Kathy Quinlan, she was given the role of Peg, who appears at the sockhop in George Lucas' 1973 nostalgia piece, "American Graffiti." In 1977, her performance as a teenager being treated for schizophrenia in "I Never Promised You a Rose Garden" seemed to mark her out for major stardom. But since then Quinlan has favored lower-key films dominated by character work, such as 1983's "Independence Day" and 1988's "Clara's Heart."

> ***"Putting [on the spacesuit] was like going from chilly London winter weather to the Bahamas."***

In conversation, Quinlan comes across as someone who thinks through her answers to questions; she's not glib or polished, just straightforward. On this day, she's back home in Malibu with her actor husband, Bruce Abbott, and their six-year-old son, Tyler, after a New York trip to promote "Breakdown." That film, she says, had even an industry audience "yelling and carrying on, perhaps because it taps into some unconscious fear we can all identify with."

Quinlan says she's happy now with her career, but she admits there were times when she questioned her choice. "When not much is happening and there seems to be nothing you can do to change that, you do wonder. But it just kept coming up that 'I am an actor, like it or not.' I stuck with it and took what was offered." Those offerings have also included "Hanky Panky," "Twilight Zone—The Movie" and "The Doors."

She says she is still a little surprised that she got the role in "Apollo 13," which reminded everyone of her talents. The film's director was, of course, Ron Howard, also an "American Graffiti" alumnus, which undoubtedly helped. But she feels that "some of the newer folks in the industry" too often cast for personality rather than character. "I'm not really sure they are familiar with the term 'acting.' They don't understand what it means to play a character rather than just be a personality," Quinlan muses.

Whatever the future holds, she says, "my dream job has already happened." Earlier this year, she starred in the MGM release "Zeus and Roxanne," a family comedy about a dog and dolphin that would be suitable for her son to see. During filming, she got to swim, and swim, and swim, in the open ocean with the dolphins. It was her idea of bliss because, this one-time diver and gymnast avers, "I am really a sea creature. Just a mammal that lost its fins."

"Event Horizon." Starring Laurence Fishburne, Kathleen Quinlan, Sam Neill and Joely Richardson. Directed by Paul Anderson. Written by Philip Eisner. Produced by Lawrence Gordon, Lloyd Levin and Jeremy Bolt. A Paramount release. Sci-fi. Opens August 1.

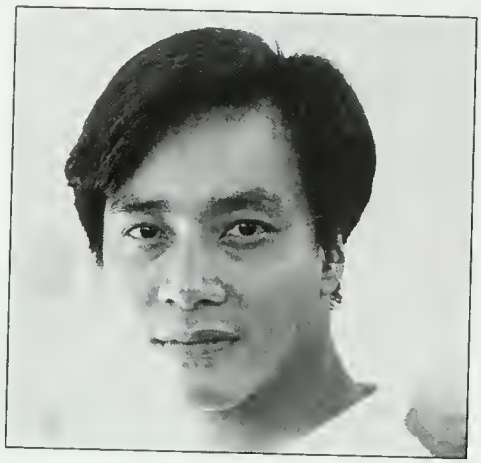
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LENSING "MAGOO"

Hong Kong director Stanley Tong goes Disney with "Mr. Magoo"

by Wade Major



For his Hollywood debut, director Stanley Tong (above) is transforming cartoon character Mr. Magoo (right) to live-action.

Live-action adaptations of famous cartoons are hot. Hong Kong directors are hot. But only in Hollywood would anyone have dared think of pairing the two. Oddly enough, in the case of Disney's "Mr. Magoo," forthcoming this fall, the strange pairing seems inspired.

"They want me to make it more international," says director Stanley Tong, "because the original cartoon is so American. A lot of the verbal jokes don't translate. When you go to Europe and Asia and put on subtitles, you don't get the joke. What Disney liked about my work in 'First Strike' and 'Rumble in the Bronx' was that so much of the humor was visual."

Best known for his three epics with Jackie Chan—"Supercop," "Rumble in the Bronx" and "First Strike"—Tong is the latest Hong Kong action super-director to make the jump to America, right on the heels of John Woo, Ringo Lam and Tsui Hark. Unlike those of his cohorts, however, Tong's Hollywood debut will not feature action star Jean-Claude Van Damme. What's more, it won't even be an action film. It's a family comedy, which suits him fine.

"I don't really like my movies to be violent," he says. "Too much gunplay or too many explosions would kill the female audience, and parents might not want their children to see it. The reason I put so much comedy in my films is because I want to dilute the action element, not make it so much a 'hot' action picture. I'll have 'hot' action in it, but I try to interpret it in a comic way so all audiences will enjoy it and so they won't see it as a straight action picture."

Originally characterized by Jim Backus in a series of theatrical animated shorts beginning in 1949 and again on TV during the 1960s and '70s, the myopic Magoo has a predilection for unwittingly slipping in and out of hair-raising situations—a scenario that would seem tailor-made for Tong's unique blending of comic slapstick and complex action choreography.

That Tong has always handled the bulk of the action directing and stunt coordination himself (most Hong Kong directors hire dedicated action directors to handle complicated sequences) makes his accomplishments that much more impressive. Tong's work on "First Strike," in fact, earned him a 1996 Taiwanese Golden Horse award for best action direction. Tong, though, sees his diverse involvements as simply a logical extension of the work he began while still a stuntman.

"Jackie and I come from similar backgrounds," he says. "I started as a stuntman too, and after three years and hundreds of stunts I had broken my shoulder, my ribs and my knees and even gotten a gunshot wound on my right arm. I felt that, if I went on doing stunts, I'd soon kill myself. So I started working as an assistant director so I could learn more about production and the process of making a movie."



Like Chan, Tong quickly worked his way through the ranks, holding a variety of jobs—camera operator, stunt coordinator, production manager—before segueing into directing with his acclaimed 1989 debut film "Stone Age Warriors."

"When you see my films, I'm more Americanized than other Hong Kong directors," Tong says. "I do storyboards and preproduction very carefully. That system has been here for so many years, there must be a reason.

"In Hong Kong, it's true that I can do whatever I want to do—I can shoot for another day and not have to ask anyone. If I want to change a line in the script, I can do it on-set. In a way, that system is practical, but it also results in directors waiting until the last minute to do things. And that's not a good habit for a director."

> ***"What Disney liked about my work in 'First Strike' and 'Rumble in the Bronx' was that so much of the humor was visual."***

For "Mr. Magoo," Disney has provided Tong with the best of both worlds: Hollywood professionalism and a level of creative freedom that's all but unheard of for a Hong Kong director. "They've even allowed me to bring in my crew," he says, "which is the first time that's happened to a Hong Kong director. Even John Woo can't bring over his assistant director and stunt coordinator. But I'm bringing over my assistant director, my director of photography, my stunt team. It's a package."

The one element missing from Tong's package, ironically, is the one that has proven most crucial to his success: Jackie Chan. But, with Leslie Nielsen starring as the mis-ocular Magoo, and a solid supporting cast that includes Kelly Lynch, Tong appears ready for a substantial Hollywood bow.

"I'm just working on designing the signature action set pieces," Tong says. The story: Evildoers are after an oblivious-as-always Quincy Magoo, a nearsighted millionaire into whose possession a stolen gem has fallen. "The challenge is to put in the signature action sequences while keeping them funny and humorous in a way that's true to the original."

Though he admits to feeling at home in the studio system, Tong stops short of committing himself to Hollywood for the long haul, as he's looking forward to yet another collaboration with Chan, this to be shot in India. "Whether I stay in America or in Hong Kong, I want to make international movies," he says.

"If there is a good story in Hong Kong with a Hong Kong actor, I would love to do it. But I have to take risks. If I don't take risks, then I do only things that I'm comfortable shooting. I believe that in order to have success as a director you have to have the guts to try something new, and you have to have the patience to make it happen."

"Mr. Magoo." Starring Leslie Nielsen, Kelly Lynch, Matt Keeslar, Nick Chinlund, Ernie Hudson and Malcolm McDowell. Directed by Stanley Tong. Written by Pat Proft, Tom Sherohman and Jeff Berry. Produced by Ben Myron. A Buena Vista release. Live-action comedy. Opens this fall.

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AUGUST TRAILERS

Will there be hot August nights at the multiplex turnstiles?

For a month in which exhibitors usually suffer the Awful August Blues trying to sell tickets to the dogs of summer, this year's eighth frame holds augurs of promise. There's no new "Men In Black"-type dreadnought coming a-calling (unless the TBA "Titanic" sets sail), but the month opens more strongly than it did in 1996 and 1995, when exhibitors eagerly dialed up (unfortunately, it proved) "Chain Reaction" and "Virtuosity."

That's partly because August 1997 is front-loaded by distributors trying to eke out as much summer playing time for their titles as they can. Fortunately, although four major films bow 8/1, most lack direct competition. Paramount's "Event Horizon" will play to the male



demo, Universal's "Leave It to Beaver" to families and Fox's "Picture Perfect" to the distaff draw. The real clash, for serious-minded moviegoers, is between Miramax's "CopLand" and Warner's "187." The 8/8 weekend is a bit more dicey, with Warner's "Free Willy 3" going against Disney's "Air Bud," and TriStar's "Desperate Measures" trying to outbreed New Line's "Spawn."

The big mid-month arrivals—Paramount's "A Smile Like Yours," Columbia's Alicia Silverstone-starring "Excess Baggage" (see photo above) and Warner's "Steel"—nicely share the generational pie chart, skewing from mature to young adults to children. The final frames are the more usual August grab bag (a trait the month shares with January), with New Line's "Money Talks" and "Boogie Nights," UA's "Hoodlum," Miramax's "Operation Condor" and Universal's "Kull the Conqueror" intended treats for the action/comedy/urban demos. Still, all in all, it looks to be a month the industry won't get left on hold.

AUGUST 1

Event Horizon

In 2046, a prototype spaceship named the Event Horizon missing for seven years is found by a rescue team traveling the solar system. Led by Laurence Fishburne (also in "Hoodlum"), they discover that terrifying secrets lie within. This sci-fi thriller also stars Sam Neill ("Jurassic Park"), Kathleen Quinlan ("Breakdown") and Joely Richardson ("101 Dalmatians"). Paul Anderson ("Mortal Kombat") directs; Philip Eisner scripts; Lawrence Gordon ("Die Hard"), Lloyd Levin ("The Rocketeer") and Jeremy Bolt produce. *See our Sneak Preview in this issue.* (Paramount, 8/1)

Exploitips: *Unless the likes of "Lost World" and "Men In Black" have sated the teen and twentysomething males, expect a hot August night at this boxoffice. For that demo, which supported Anderson's previous, the "Mortal Kombat" credit will be an attractant, as will the genre.*

Leave It to Beaver

The Cleavers are back and living in the '90s. Based on the classic TV series, this family comedy features the same wholesome characters: wise father Ward ("Happy Gilmore's" Christopher McDonald), wholesome mom June ("Cliffhanger's" Janine Turner), big brother Wally (Erik Von Detten) and, of course, the Beaver (newcomer Cameron Finley). Andy Cadiff (TV's "Home Improvement") directs; Brian Levant ("Jingle All the Way") and Lon Diamond script; Levant produces with Robert Simonds (also "Happy Gilmore"). (Universal, 8/1)

Exploitips: *Universal has had success and failure with TV reprises; think "The Flintstones" and "McHale's Navy." The plus here is that this is its date's only family flick. Play up the nostalgia factor to pull the thirty- and fortysomething parents who would make the moviegoing choice here for their brood.*

Picture Perfect

Jennifer Aniston ("She's the One") stars in this romantic comedy about a woman who uses a random photo to invent a fictional boyfriend to help boost her career. Complications ensue when she actually meets the man in the photo and falls in love. Kevin Bacon, comic Jay Mohr and Illeana Douglas ("Wedding Bell Blues") co-star. Glenn Gordon Caron ("Love Affair") directs, and Caron scripts with Arlene Sorkin, Paul Slansky and Jeffrey Abrams; Erwin Stoff and Molly Madden produce. (Fox, 8/1)

Exploitips: *Audiences will likely hope this is bouncier than Caron's turgid "Love Affair," but "Picture Perfect"—given the presence of Aniston, a TV superstar via "Friends"—will pull much younger. Despite the title-heavy weekend, this is 8/1's big romance, so the distaff and date-night demos are the likely targets.*

187

Director Kevin Reynolds ("Waterworld") goes intimate with this dramatic thriller about a deeply committed high-school teacher ("A Time to Kill's" Samuel L. Jackson) who returns to the classroom a changed man after a long recuperation from a student attack. John Heard ("My Fellow Americans") and Kelly Rowan ("Candyman: Farewell to the Flesh") co-star. Former teacher Scott Yagemann scripts; "Braveheart's" Bruce Davey and Steve McEveety produce for Mel Gibson's Icon. (Warner, 7/30 wide)

Exploitips: *Opening on a Wednesday, "187" has a two-day lead on its weekend's competition—and it might need that edge. The 8/1 slot is filled to overflowing, with key competition being "CopLand," also a drama, and "Event Horizon," which also will pull male. Warner's decision to go wide right away makes it a make-or-break debut.*

Paperback Romance

A shy writer of erotica ("Two If By Sea's" Gia Carides) who's crippled breaks her leg. Provided the perfect "disguise," she goes after her dream man—a handsome but engaged jeweler ("Trees Lounge's" Anthony LaPaglia). Rom/com catastrophe follows. Formerly known as "Lucky Break." Ben Lewin ("The Favor, the Watch and the Very Big Fish") directs and scripts; Bob Weis ("Heartbreakers") produces. (Goldwyn, 8/1 ltd)

Exploitips: *The name change works, as the demo here (women) read paperback romances. Try a catchline like "She wrote tales of love and lust—and then began to live one herself." Our critic (see our May 1997 issue) gave this 2 1/2 stars, calling it a "modestly charismatic" film. Expect the older female demo to opt for this over competitor "Picture Perfect."*

Hamsun

Based on a book by Thorkild Hansen, this Norwegian drama follows the last 17 years of the life of Nobel-winning Norwegian writer Knut Hamsun (Max Von Sydow), whose questionable sup-



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Response No. 29



COPLAND

Sylvester Stallone stars in this drama about a hearing-impaired sheriff who keeps the peace in a small New Jersey burg where many New York police officers live. When a criminal investigation points toward his own town, the sheriff must decide whether to protect the NYPD officers he idolizes or uphold the law. Harvey Keitel, Ray Liotta and Robert De Niro star with Peter Berg ("The Last Seduction"), Janeane Garofalo ("The Truth About Cats and Dogs"), Michael Rapaport ("Metro"), Robert Patrick ("T2") and Annabella Sciorra ("The Funeral"). James Mangold ("Heavy") directs and scripts; Cary Woods ("Citizen Ruth"), Cathy Konrad ("Beautiful Girls") and Ezra Swedlow ("Waiting to Exhale") produces. (Miramax, 8/1)

Exploitips: *A Cannes debut was nixed, because (per Miramax) the film wasn't ready. Some Hollywood scuttlebutt hasn't been all positive, but the heavyweight cast here should make weekend #1 a solid bet. The key competition for the likely male demo is "Event Horizon"; expect this to skew slightly older, with the teens and twenties heading for the sci-fi flick.*

port of the Nazis during WWII made him a controversial figure. The film tracks his turbulent family life and unusual persona. Ghita Norby co-stars; Jan Troell ("The Emigrants") directs; Per Olov Enquist scripts; Erik Crone produces. (First Run, 8/6 NY)

Exploitips: *Our Montreal critic (March 1997 issue) gave this Norwegian- and German-language effort 3 1/2 stars, citing its top performances and atmospheric richness. It's the week's only foreign-language fare.*

AUGUST 8

Desperate Measures

In this suspense thriller, police officer Frank Conner ("Night Falls on Manhattan's" Andy Garcia) must find a bone marrow donor for his dying son. The only match is a vicious murderer ("Multiplicity's" Michael Keaton, in a change-of-pace role) who plans to use the hospital setting to escape. Connor must both protect and contain the killer. Barbet Schroeder ("Single White Female") directs; David Klass, Henry Bean ("Internal Affairs") and Neal Jimenez ("Anaconda") script; Schroeder produces with Susan Hoffman (also "SWF"), Lee Rich and Gary Foster ("Tin Cup"). (TriStar, 8/8)

Exploitips: *Schroeder's recent efforts haven't been blockbusters—a commodity that the talented Garcia still lacks. The family/peril narrative, as variously used in the likes of "Ransom," "Cape Fear" and "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle," can be the genre's strongest, however, and as such those elements in the storyline should be played up here—especially given that the least family-oriented demo, male youths, will likely be out to "Spawn," so this one will trend older.*

Spawn

Six years after his murder, government agent Al Simmons (Michael Jai White) returns to Earth as Spawn, a man with supernatural powers. Though he longs to avenge his own death, Spawn must choose between revenge or saving his loved ones from the menacing Violator ("The Pest's" John Leguizamo). Mark Dippe directs this adaptation of Todd McFarlane's comic book; Clint Goldman and Steve Williams produce. (New Line, 8/8)

Exploitips: *Expect "Mortal Kombat"-like numbers and gender—i.e., youthful males who read comic books and love sci-fi. This is the genre fare at which New Line excels, so expect assured distributor support. Prize drawings for comic books would nab interest.*

Free Willy 3

In this third go about a boy and his whale, Jesse (again Jason James Richter) is a 17-year-old whale tracker. When illegal whaling operations threaten the lives of orca pal Willy and his family, Jesse teams with the 10-year-old son of the illegal whaler to save the day. August Schellenberg and Annie Corley again co-star. Sam Pillsbury ("Starlight Hotel") directs; John Mattson ("Milk Money") scripts; Jennie Lew Tugend again produces. (Warner, 8/8)

Exploitips: *Although not a critical failure, part 2 didn't generate much audience enthusiasm (just $30.1 million), so this has a hill to climb—and "Air Bud" might seem like a fresh alternative to a well-worn tale. Also, as Richter and his original "Free Willy" audience ages, the latter will be less interested in such a homespun narrative, and the single-digit set might see this as a tale for teenagers. But there can be presold strength in such a brand name.*

Air Bud

Twelve-year-old Josh (Kevin Zegers) is the shy, sad new kid in town whose father has recently died. Buddy is the runaway golden retriever with an incredible hook shot. The two meet, become fast friends and join the school basketball team. But Buddy's extraordinary ability causes a media frenzy that leads his nasty former owner, Norm Snively ("The Fisher King's" Michael Jeter), to come looking for him. Wendy Makkena ("Sister Act"), Eric Christmas and Bill Cobbs co-star. Charles Martin Smith directs; Paul Tamasy and Aaron Mendelsohn script; Robert Vince and William Vince produce. (Buena Vista, 8/8)

Exploitips: *The plus here is the Disney imprimatur, the closest thing to a sure thing in kids flickery. But a tale of a basketball-playing dog sounds like Flubber-era Disney live action, hijinkery that'll play these days only to early preteeners. Parents are unlikely to attend, instead opting to take kith and kin to a title more age-malleable. That could be "Free Willy 3" or "Napolean," but the real advantage could go to weekend #2 of "Leave It to Beaver," absent critical skinning.*

Napolean

This live-action film about a golden retriever puppy is set in the Australian wilderness, where the curious Napolean (voiced by "The Doctor's" Adam Wylie) is taken when he slips into a hot-air balloon. There, he befriends a parrot named Birdo ("Courage Under Fire's" Bronson Pinchot), who helps guide him in the right direction. Wendy Makkena (also "Air Bud") voices Napolean's mom; David Ogden Stiers ("The Hunchback of Notre Dame") voices characters called Owl and Koala; and Joan Rivers does Mother Penguin. Mario Andreacchio directs, scripts (with Mark Saltzman and producer Michael Bourchier) and produces. (Goldwyn, 8/8 ltd)

Exploitips: *Any voiceover live-action pet film will have to compete in audience minds with "Babe." This film, two years on the Goldwyn slate, is of the traditional, unlipsynched variety. Still, one can expect that a Goldwyn children's film would be different than a Disney children's film, and if so critical response could aid this release's later expansion. A careful adoption/pet care tie-in with the local SPCA could generate stronger family turnout.*

Career Girls

Oscar-nominated writer/director Mike Leigh ("Secrets & Lies") turns to lighter, comic territory in a film he says is "about love and youth and sex and memories." Set in London over the course of a weekend, the film follows two young career women as they encounter many of their old college friends 15 years after graduation and examine how all their lives have changed. Katrin Cartlidge (the female lead in Leigh's "Naked") and Lynda Steadman

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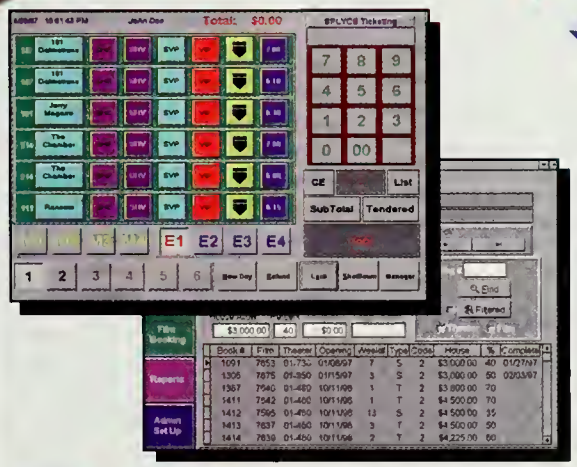
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star. Simon Channing-Williams produces. (October, 8/8 NY/LA, 8/15 exp)

Exploitips: *The Oscar attention given Leigh's most recent credit will give this a leg up in the arthouse marketplace, in which it faces "In the Company of Men," "Soul in the Hole" and the LA expansion of Trimark's "Box of Moonlight" (see our June issue Trailers), and as such the Leigh name is the salemaker.*

In the Company of Men

This black comedy examines the brutalities of '90s corporate culture and love. Chad and Howard are two frustrated white-collar execs who formulate a plan to make themselves feel better: date and dump a young woman who'll never get over it. The frat-style prank soon becomes a serious struggle of hatred, love and manipulation. Aaron Eckhart, Stacy Edwards and Matt Malloy star. Neil LaBute directs and scripts; Mark Archer and Steven Pevner produce. (Sony Classics, 8/8 NY/LA)

Exploitips: *This was named best dramatic feature at Sundance and screened in Un Certain Regard at Cannes, two promotable venues. Our Sundance critic wasn't totally persuaded, however; a 2 1/2-star review (see our April 1997 issue) found fault with the film's morality ("not one ounce of moral restitution can be found in the climax"), inconsistent acting and poor production values. Yet the controversy that erupted at Sundance if replicated on release could make this must-see fare for the arthouse-engaged.*

Soul in the Hole

Set in the subculture of NYC street basketball, "Soul in the Hole" follows one squad, the Bed-Stuy "Dream Team" called Kenny's Kings, as it plays through a lot hot summer on Brooklyn's asphalt playgrounds. Danielle Gardner directs; Lilibet Foster produces. (Northern Arts, 8/8 NY/LA, wider Sept & Oct)

Exploitips: *Loud Records will release the film's soundtrack. More "Hoop Dreams" than "The Mighty Ducks," the film has an emotional focus—the relationship between star point guard Ed "Booger" Smith, thrown out by his mother, and his surrogate father, coach Kenny Jones—that could grab audiences.*

AUGUST 15

Excess Baggage

In this action/adventure, Alicia Silverstone ("Batman & Robin") is a lonely rich girl who plans her own kidnapping. She involves an unwitting car thief ("The Usual Suspects'" Benicio del Toro), but her scheme gets out of control and she finds herself on the run from an ex-CIA assassin (Christopher Walken). Harry Connick Jr. ("Copycat"), Jack Thompson ("The Sum of Us") and Nicholas Turturro ("Mac") co-star. Marco Brambilla ("Demolition Man") directs; Max Adams, Dick Clement ("The Commitments") and Ian LaFrenais script; Silverstone produces with former A&M Films exec Bill Borden and Carolyn Kessler. (Columbia, 8/15)

Exploitips: *Will Silverstone deliver on her multi-pic pact with Sony? Here's the first test, with the actress far from the comic turf of her fame-making "Clueless." Del Toro is a coming name that could further draw the distaff*

LATE MOVIE MOVES...

Shooting Porn

A look at Hollywood's gay porn industry, this Ronnie Larsen documentary is the playwright's first film. It visits two sets, one of director Gino Colbert, the other of Chi Chi LaRue. Porn actors Blue Blake, Bryan Kidd and Adam Rom appear, as do porn reviewers Mickey Skee and David Widmer. Caryn Horwitz and Doug Lindeman produces. (Horwitz, 7/11 NY)

Exploitips: *Although our reviewer gave it only one star (see our May 1997 issue), "Shooting Porn" generated interest at the London Lesbian & Gay Film Fest and at Berlin's European Film Market and has an attention-grabbing salaciousness built into its title. The film will play 6/27 at the San Francisco Lesbian & Gay Film Fest and 7/18 at LA's Outfest '97.*

Mrs. Brown

This romantic drama tells of the unusual relationship between Queen Victoria ("Hamlet's" Judi Dench) and John Brown ("Indecent Proposal's" Billy Connolly), a Highlander summoned from Balmoral to walk the Queen's pony as she rides in the hope that exercise will help Her Highness

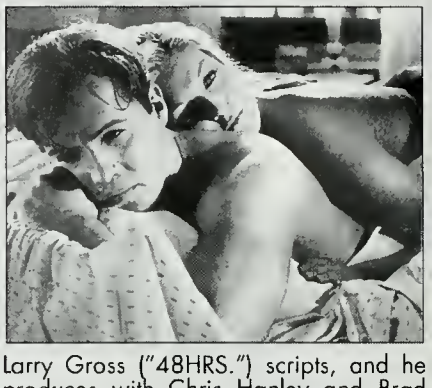


recover from the death of Prince Albert. John Madden ("Ethan Frome") directs; Jeremy Brock scripts; Sarah Curtis ("The Englishman Who Went Up a Hill But Came Down a Mountain") produces for Ecosse Films/BBC Scotland with Masterpiece Theatre and Irish Screen. (Miramax, 7/18)

Exploitips: *Acquired by Miramax before Cannes, this arrives stateside with that fest's famed imprimatur. For arthouse audiences, the "Ethan Frome" and "The Englishman..." credits of the filmmakers will also be a pull, and it being a period piece won't hinder turnout. Calling "Mrs. Brown" "a beautiful film," Miramax co-head Harvey Weinstein bought both North American and most world rights, so expect solid distributor support.*

This World, Then the Fireworks

After as children seeing their father commit a love-triangle killing that left physical and emotional scars on their mother, Marty and Carol Lakewood devotedly protect each other from what Marty calls "a broken world." Grown to adulthood in the late '50s, the two live in a small coastal town, partners in grift and murder, and their mutual devotion has turned erotic. Billy Zane ("The Phantom") and Gina Gershan ("Bound") star with Rue McClanahan, Sheryl Lee ("Bliss") and Seymour Cassel. Michael Oblowitz directs;



Larry Gross ("48HRS.") scripts, and he produces with Chris Hanley and Brad Wyman for Largo. (Orion Classics, 7/18)

Exploitips: *The film adapts a 1955 short story of crime writer Jim Thompson that went unpublished until 1983, and the pulp fictioneer's name is revered by the genre's enthusiasts. The eroticism of the material is likely to draw critical and moviegoer attention, rarely a bad thing (Gershon's "Showgirls" being an exception). The film arrives bearing a Sundance imprimatur.*

Latin Boys Go to Hell

Set in working-class Brooklyn, this gay fest entry tells the story of a shy 20-year-old (Irwin Ossa) and a savvy Latina charmer (John Bryant Davila). Jenifer Lee Simard and Guinevere Turner ("Go Fish") co-star. Ela Troyano directs, and scripts with Andre Salas; Jurgen Bruning ("Hustler White") produces. (Strand, 7/25 NY/LA)

Exploitips: *This will attract a similar demo as "Shooting Porn," and it boasts a similarly salacious title that will attract attention. Positive reviews from the film's fest runs should be pushed.*

Wedding Bell Blues

Three women ("Female Perversions'" Paulina Parizkova, "Grace of My Heart's" Illeana Douglas and "Doc Hollywood's" Julie Warner) are turning 30 unmarried. They decide to head to Las Vegas, find husbands, get maried and get divorced, all in 24 hours—just so they can say they weren't spinsters. Dana Lustig makes her directing debut; Annette Goliti-Gutierrez scripts; Ram Bergman & Dana Lustig and Mike Curb & Carole Curb Nemoy produce the BMG acquisition. (Legacy, 6/13 ltd)

Exploitips: *Our Seattle/Women in Cinema critic gives this three stars, citing a narrative with "an engaging momentum" and a cast that provides "superb performances" in "an above-average romantic comedy laden with well-delivered yuks that also has something smart to say about aging, relationships and the pressure on women to marry young." The obvious demo: twenty- and thirtysomething females, so play up the leads and the storyline.*

demo—and most guys will be happy to watch Silverstone for two hours. Expect this to be the date-night choice for the weekend.

A Smile Like Yours

This romantic comedy stars "Dear God's" Greg Kinnear and "Turbulence's" Lauren Holly as a young married couple struggling to juggle their careers and have a baby. But a beauty (Jill Hennessy) and a tycoon (Christopher McDonald, also in "Leave It to Beaver") bring outside pressures to the duo's happy marriage. Joan Cusack ("Grosse Pointe Blank") and Jay Thomas co-star. Rysher CEO Keith Samples makes his directing debut, and he scripts with Kevin Meyer; David Kirkpatrick ("The Evening Star") and Tony Amatullo produce. (Paramount, 8/15)

Exploitips: *Even if Samples as a director proves to be a good CEO, "A Smile Like Yours" has engaging leads that could provide older couples a weekend alternative to the younger-skewing "Excess Baggage." (It also has a more attractive title.) But August, not April, can be exhibition's cruelest month, and the key is to attract the parent-age demo otherwise busy with family vacations. Try a contest awarding the couple with the best smiles.*

Steel

NBA phenom Shaquille O'Neal ("Kazaam") stars as metals specialist John Henry Irons, who develops a top-secret weapon. But his duplicitous nemesis, Nathaniel Burke ("New Jack City's" Judd Nelson), uses it to arm street thugs, and he plans to sell the weapon to international terrorists. Aided by friends and family, Irons creates an alter-ego superhero: Steel. Annabeth Gish ("The Last Supper"), Richard Roundtree and Irma P. Hall co-star. Kenneth Johnson ("Short Circuit II") directs and scripts; music maven Quincy Jones produces with David Salzman and Joel Simon ("Hard to Kill"). (Warner, 8/15)

Exploitips: *At $18 million in boxoffice, O'Neal's "Kazaam" didn't overfill Disney's coffers, and Warner must hope that "Steel" has more legs than the Lakers did in the playoffs. "Steel" seems aimed a little higher in age bracket, and though little kids idolize Shaq that could lend this project more consideration from moviegoers. Still, the likely attendees will be dad and son—hardcore action fans are unlikely to buy in here—so tout the O'Neal name to draw his NBA watchers.*

She's So Lovely

"Dead Man Walking's" Sean Penn and "Moll Flanders'" Robin Wright co-star as crazy-in-love Eddie and Maureen. When a neighbor attacks Maureen, Eddie's response lands him in jail for 10 years. On his return, he finds Maureen is now remarried to the affectionate Joey (John Travolta), leaving Maureen torn between past and present, passion and love. Gena Rowlands co-stars. Nick Cassavetes ("Unhook the Stars") directs a script written by his father, the legendary John Cassavetes; Rene Cleitman (also "Unhook the Stars") produces. (Miramax, 8/15)

Exploitips: *Aka "She's De Lovely," the film has a publicity-attracting duo in the married Penn and Wright, and the narrative favors them. But the celebrity here is Travolta, returning to the MiramaxLand that relaunched his career with "Pulp Fiction." And, however compassionate his role is, he's the interloper. The casting would be stronger in the Hollywood sense if the boys had switched their parts. But so be it; after all, it's John Cassavetes material. One can expect mano-a-mano sparks from Penn and Travolta in any case.*

How to Be a Player

Philandering ladies man Dray Jackson (Bill Bellamy, best known from the cable show "MTV Jams") has his playboy life disrupted by, of all things, the anthropology project of his sister ("B.A.P.S.'" Natalie Desselle), who sets out to break the predatory habits of the male. Pierre Edwards, Lark Voorhies and Mari Morrow ("Virtuosity") co-star. Lionel C. Martin directs; Mark Brown and Demetria Johnson script; Mark Burg, Todd Baker, Preston Holmes, Stan Lathan and Russell Simmons produce. (Gramercy, 8/15)

Exploitips: *Despite the comeuppance storyline, "How to Be a Player" is likely to draw the urban male demo; if the Showest trailer emphasized any studies, it was only the Book of Love, as written by horny males at that.*

The Full Monty

Strapped for cash, six out-of-work steelworkers form a ragtag band of strippers to make ends meet. Robert Carlyle ("Trainspotting") stars as Gaz, a wild card who persuades best friend Dave and a former foreman to be part of an act that culminates with "the full

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Response No. 114

monty"—baring it all. Mark Addy, William Snape, Steve Huison, Tom Wilkinson, Paul Barber and Hugo Speer co-star. Peter Cattaneo directs; Simon Beaufoy scripts; Uberto Pasolini ("Palookaville") produces. (Fox Searchlight, 8/15 NY/LA, 8/29 exp)

Exploitips: *Our critic accorded this a four-star review (see our April 1997 issue), calling it "a gender-reversed 'Striptease' with the comedy intact" and praising the cast for "performances with admirable charisma and pathos." Although Miramax co-head Harvey Weinstein recently characterized Fox Searchlight as "10 disasters in a row," this—like its Cannes-praised "Ice Storm"—is likely to put the gleam back into Searchlight.*

Different for Girls

In this romantic comedy (held from June), when childhood best friends Paul and Karl meet 20 years later, the heterosexual Paul is sexually attracted to his old pal—because Karl has become Kim. When Paul learns Kim's identity, he decides to wreck Kim's life. Rupert Graves ("Intimate Relations"), Steven Mackintosh ("London Kills Me") and Saskia Reeves ("Butterfly Kiss") star. Richard Spence directs; Tony Marchant scripts; John Chapman produces. (First Look, 8/15 ltd)

Exploitips: *The gender-bender storyline isn't new, but it continues to draw. "Different for Girls" received the Montreal fest's Grand Prix of the Americas award for best film, a citable award for arthouse auds.*

Bandwagon

Four kids form a rock band and hit the road in this slacker rock comedy. Kevin Corrigan ("Walking and Talking"), Steve Parlavecchio, Lee Holmes, Matthew Hennesey and Doug MacMillan star. John Schultz ("The Making of Jurassic Park") directs and scripts, and he produces with Alyson Poole. (CFP, 8/15 ltd)

Exploitips: *Our Ft. Lauderdale critic in a 3 1/2-star review (see our April 1997 issue) citably called this "a fresh, witty road movie."*

AUGUST 22

Money Talks

A small-time con artist ("The Fifth Element's" Chris Tucker) is wrongly blamed for a police killing. Suddenly notorious, he can rely only on the help of an annoying reporter ("Shadow Conspiracy's" Charlie Sheen). Brett Ratner directs; "Toy Story" co-writers Joel Cohen and Alec Sokolow script this action comedy with Vince McKewin; Walter Coblenz ("The Babe") produces. *See our Sneak Preview in the June 1997 issue.* (New Line, 8/22)

Exploitips: *Bouncing around on the NLC slate (first 7/18, then 10/1, now 8/22), "Money Talks" has had its salability hefted a notch by Tucker's attention-grabbing turn in "The Fifth Element." The presence of the "Toy Story" scenarists could portend a decent comedy.*

Sunday

Struggling, middle-aged actress Madeleine mistakes Oliver, a homeless casualty of corporate downsizing, for an acclaimed art-film director. Oliver grabs the opportunity to reinvent himself, even if only for one day. David Suchet ("Executive Decision") and Lisa Harrow ("The Last Days of Chez Nous") star with Jared Harris ("I Shot Andy Warhol") and Larry Pine. Jonathan Nossiter directs, and he scripts with James Lasdun; Nossiter and Aliz Madigan produce. (CFP, 8/22 NY/LA)

Exploitips: *Yet another sign of the ascendance of CFP, "Sunday" won the grand jury prize at Sundance. Our Cannes critic rated it at four stars, saying the two leads give "powerfully honest and risky performances."*

AUGUST 29

Hoodlum

This gritty crime drama stars Laurence Fishburne (also in this month's "Event Horizon") as upstart gangster Bumpy Johnson, who faces off with the famed Dutch Schultz ("Rob Roy's" Tim Roth) for control of Harlem in the '30s. Andy Garcia (also in "Desperate Measures") stars as Lucky Luciano. Vanessa Williams ("Eraser"), Clarence Williams III, William Atherton, Queen Latifah and Cicely Tyson co-star. Bill Duke ("A Rage in Harlem") directs; Chris Brancato scripts; Frank Mancuso, Jr. ("Species") produces. (UA, 8/29)

Exploitips: *Because of New Line's move of "Boogie Nights," "Hoodlum" faces some male-demo and urban-aud competition. This UA project has a higher-profile cast, however, and its wide break means the promotional push will be more intensive this weekend.*

Dead Man On Campus

The second MTV film (the first was "Beavis and Butt-head Do America" finds two freshmen resorting to arcana to win good grades. Tom Everett Scott ("That Thing You Do!") and Mark-Paul Gosselaar star. Alan Cohn directs; Michael Traeger and Michael White script; and Gale Anne Hurd produces for her Pacific Western Prods. (Paramount, 8/29)

Exploitips: *The scenario could seem a salve to Ivy-returning students, and one can expect wall-to-wall promotion on MTV.*

Boogie Nights

This dark comedy follows a group of filmmakers hoping to revamp the XXX industry. Mark Wahlberg, Julianne Moore, Burt Reynolds, Don Cheadle, William H. Macy, Heather Graham and John C. Reilly star. Paul Thomas Anderson ("Hard Eight") directs, scripts and produces. (New Line, 8/29 ltd, 9/5 wide)

Exploitips: *As it did for "The People vs. Larry Flynt" (for good or ill), the XXX setting will draw this extra attention, but the cast talents are also salable. New Line moved this from an early summer bow.*

Operation Condor

In this comic adventure (aka "Armor of God 2"), Hong Kong superstar Jackie Chan races mercenaries across three continents to a trove of gold hidden by the Nazis during WWII. A wind tunnel fight sequence is a comic masterpiece. Carol Cheng, Eva Cobo De Garcia and Ikeda Shoko co-star; Chan and Edward Tang ("Rumble in the Bronx") script; Leonard Ho ("Supercop") produces. (Miramax, 8/29)

Exploitips: *The more recent "First Strike" made $14 million, "Supercop" $15 million; early 1996's "Rumble in the Bronx" did $30 million. To reverse that trend, position this as an exotic "Raiders of the Lost Ark." Emphasize Chan's directing and co-scripting roles to lend this film event status for the already converted. Miramax moved this from May.*

Kull the Conqueror

Based on Robert E. Howard's '30s pulp fiction hero, "Kull the Conqueror" follows the adventures of a slave soldier (Kevin Sorbo of the syndication smash "Hercules: The Legendary Journeys") turned king. Tia Carrere ("High School High"), Thomas Ian Griffith ("Excessive Force"), Karina Lombard ("Legends of the Fall"), Litefoot ("The Indian in the Cupboard") and Harvey Fierstein ("Independence Day") co-star. John Nicollela ("The Fan", 1981) directs; Charles Edward Pogue ("Dragonheart") and Don Mancini (the "Child's Play" series) script; Raffaella De Laurentiis (also "Dragonheart") produces. (Universal, 8/29)

Exploitips: *The similar role for Sorbo means this could pull his TV legions; the Howard name retains a young-male following. The PG-13 rating is demo-friendly.*

AUGUST UNDATED

Masterminds

After being expelled from the Shady Glen School by the principal ("A Time to Kill's" Brenda Fricker), 14-year-old Ozzie ("Alaska's" Vincent Kartheiser) decides to play one more practical joke. But, when he ventures into the school basement to do the deed, he learns the security guard ("Star Trek: First Contact's" Patrick Stewart) has taken all the students hostage. That leaves just Ozzie and his penchant for pranks to lead the kids to triumph. Roger Christian ("The Sender") directs; Floyd Byars ("Mindwalk"), Alex Siskin and Chris Black script; Byars produces with Robert Dudelson. (Triumph, August)

Exploitips: *Held from late May, "Masterminds" now lands just before classes begin again—perhaps not as propitious timing, student psychology wise. New catchline: "Got school? Here's your hero."*

Dirty Dancing

Patrick Swayze stars in this reissue of the 1987 hit as the dance instructor who makes the Catskills summer of a coming-of-age girl (Jennifer Grey) into the time of her life. Jerry Orbach, Cynthia Rhodes and Jack Weston co-star; the late Emile Ardolino directs. (Live, August)

Exploitips: *Aside from "Star Wars," reprises draw only limited attendance. Emphasize the vacation element to interest young females.*

Gravesend

This low-budget drama traces the events in the lives of four teenage friends over the course of one tragic night. Sal Stabile makes his feature directing debut. (Manga, August)

Exploitips: *The odd title and under-20 storyline could capture the interest of out-of-school young males looking for escape from hot August nights.*

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SUMMER '97 PROMO GUIDE

Promotional tie-ins to the biggest summer movies



Herc and Megara from Buena Vista's "Hercules."

BUENA VISTA

Buena Vista has launched another of its famed Mega Mall tours to tout "Hercules," Disney's summer animation event for '97. The five-month, 20-city tour highlights the art of animation through live demonstrations, stage performances and interactive games. There's a live stage show; a miniature carousel themed to Baby Pegasus; a workshop where participants can draw Hercules; and Hercules-themed game booths and prizes. Sponsored by Chevy Venture, the event also includes a Chevy Venture minivan giveaway in each market. Mattel is manufacturing such action figures as Hydra-Slaying Hercules; Head-Butting Phil; Lightning Bolt Zeus; Fireball-Shooting Hades; a Cyclops; and a Hydra that sprouts new heads when you chop one off. "Hercules" will also be promoted from here to Mt. Olympus through a tie-in with McDonald's, with the fast-food chain offering figurines of the heroic demigod, his cohorts and his nemeses.

McDonald's will also promote Buena Vista's "George of the Jungle," a live-action version of Jay Ward's '60s cartoon parody of Tarzan. Customers will be invited to "Swing into McDonald's and Watch Out For That Treeeeat...". The merchandise safari also includes children's apparel from Allison Manufacturing; sportswear from Jerry Leigh; neckwear and boxers from MJC; trading cards from Upper Deck; T-shirts from Stanley De Santis; footwear from Pagoda; and jungle blankets and throws from Beacon Manufacturing.

COLUMBIA

"ID4" star Will Smith will again tussle with aliens this fourth of July weekend, this time in "Men In Black," in which he co-stars as J opposite Tommy Lee Jones, who plays K. They're both MIBs–special agents who monitor extraterrestrial activity and keep it under control–which isn't always easy, judging from some of the toys being offered by Galoob. First there's Alien Ambush J vs. Tree Trunk Alien. "There's a secret alien hidden inside the tree trunk...Pose J to blast 'em out!" Then there's Slime Fighting K vs. Edgar. "K's being slimed by the hidden alien!" And Steel Striker K vs. Manhole Cover Alien–well, that doesn't even require an explanation, does it? Galoob will also release MIB Micro Machine scale miniatures. Over 30 other licensees are on board for this event picture, including Aladdin Industries (lunch boxes); American Needle (baseball caps); Changes Inc. (T-shirts, sweatshirts and tank tops); Disguise Inc. (costumes, masks, make-up and Halloween accessories); Ero Industries Inc. (sleeping bags and play tents); Foot-Tec Industries Inc. (children's footwear); GTE Entertainment (CD-ROM games); Impact (backpacks and wallets); Inkworks (trading cards and stickers); Jay Franco & Sons Inc. (beach towels); Marvel Comics (comic books); Microgames of America (walkie-talkies); OSP Publishing Inc. (posters); Party Professionals (masks); Revell-Monogram (model kits); and Tiger Electronics (LCD hand-held games). For MIB wanna-bes, there will be an "Official Men In Black Agent's Manual" from Newmarket Press.



Slippers featuring characters from Buena Vista's "George of the Jungle."



Slime-Fighting K of Columbia's "Men In Black."

FOX

20th Century Fox will be pulling out all the stops to promote "Anastasia," the first film from the studio's new animation division. Meg Ryan voices the title character in this animated musical about an amnesiac girl who might be the daughter of Russia's last czar. Galoob Toys has designed a fashion doll with a rags-to-riches wardrobe, from a tattered blouse and skirt outfit to a gorgeously ornate ball gown. Burger King will offer premiums based on the film's characters, and Pizza Hut, Nabisco, Kraft Foods, PepsiCo and Coca-Cola will also have tie-ins. Other companies Fox has pacted with for "Anastasia" include Applause (plush dolls); Disguise Inc. (costumes and masks); ERO Industries Inc. (sleeping bags and play tents); Fruit of the Loom (children's underwear); Harper Collins (storybooks); Kid Duds (sleepwear); Tiger Electronics (hand-held games); Tyco/ViewMaster (3-D ViewMaster reel cards); and Warren Industries (board games and jigsaw puzzles). And the music box Anastasia treasures will be recreated in several sizes by SF Music Box, and will play the film's haunting melody "Once Upon a December."

NEW LINE

"Spawn," a sci-fi action film based on the popular Image Comics superhero, will be promoted by a Sony Playstation tie-in and a sweepstakes in Wizard Magazine. Starring Martin Sheen, John Leguizamo and Michael Jai White, "Spawn" is "the story of the ultimate war between good and evil." McFarlane Toys is the toy licensee.



The heroine of Fox's "Anastasia" in her ball gown.

PARAMOUNT

Playmates Toys will manufacture a line of fairy dolls for Paramount's "Fairy Tale...A True Story." Rubie's Costume Company will create Halloween costumes, make-up, masks, boxed costume sets, jewelry, wings and accessories. Raweliffe Corp. will produce resin and pewter figurines. Gilbertie's Natural Fragrances will offer aromatherapy and beauty care products, and the Signature Group will provide women's embroidered denim shirts, T-shirts, baseball caps, nightshirts and mugs.

TRISTAR

An intergalactic battle with alien insects–it has all the elements for a winning promotional smorgasbord. Galoob Toys will manufacture action figures of "Starship Troopers'" heroes and villains, and their futuristic weapons and combat vehicles. GB Posters & Publications will offer posters of the film, and Spectrum Holobyte will develop interactive CD-ROM entertainment software that will mirror the atmosphere and action of the movie.

UNIVERSAL

Judging from "Jurassic Park's" boxoffice receipts, its sequel, "The Lost World," should be the "monster" hit of the summer. And more than two dozen toy licensees will contribute to the film's Dino-Might performance. Promotional partners include Kenner (action figures), Parker Bros. (board games), Laramie (Super Soaker guns), Tyco (radio controlled cars), DreamWorks Interactive (CD-ROMs), Sega of America (electronic games), Fruit of the Loom (children's underwear) and MCI (prepaid phone cards). Burger King will be the



exclusive restaurant promotional tie-in partner, offering merchandise based on the dinosaurs and their human adversaries. Mercedes-Benz is also on board, promoting their new M-Class All-Activity vehicle, which is featured in the film. And General Mills cereals such as Trix, Cocoa Puffs, Golden Grahams and Cinnamon Toast Crunch make this offer: "If you hear this box ROAR, you could win a Lost World Adventure!" A mechanical device that makes a roaring sound, activated when a winning box is opened, indicates that the boxholder is the recipient of the grand prize–a trip to New Zealand and Australia for eight people and up to $24,000 in cash–or one of 10,000 first prizes, including Lost World backpacks, walkie-talkies and binoculars. General Mills has also introduced a "Collector's Edition" cereal called Jurassic Park Crunch, complete with mini-marshmallows shaped like Raptors and hatching eggs.

WARNER BROS.

With a cast of megastars including George Clooney, Chris O'Donnell, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Uma Thurman and Alicia Silverstone, "Batman and Robin" hardly needs promoting. But that won't stop Warner Bros., which has teamed with numerous companies to drive consumers batty. More than 100 million boxes of Kellogg's cereal will feature commemorative boxes and giveaways. Taco Bell will offer premiums; Frito-Lay will have "Bat"-themed bags and a sweepstakes game; Kraft will ice the popsicle competition with Mr. Freeze juice bars; and Brach will sell candy in the shape of the movie's characters. Kenner is the master toy licensee.



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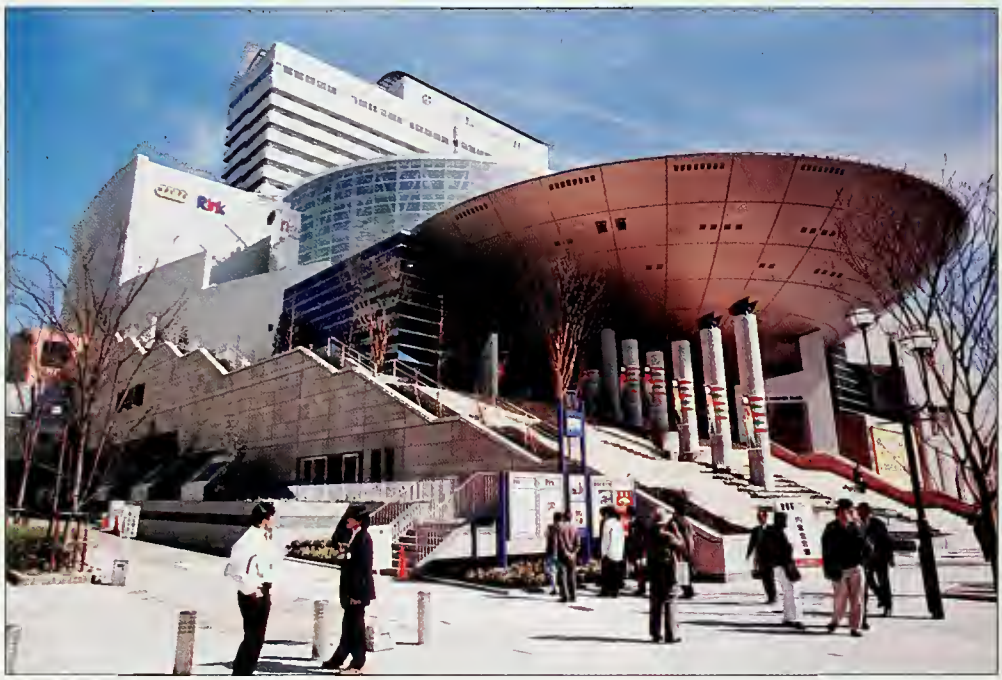
BIG IN JAPAN

The Opening of Kobe's MOVIX Rokko Kicks Off Cinemark's Pact With Shochiku *by Christine James*

As American exhibitors expand their companies further and further across the globe, they're finding there's one thing all their stateside success and experience can't assuage: culture shock. There will always remain unknown elements in any foreign marketplace a given company ventures into. And those variables could decide the success or failure of an enterprise.

Take real estate. Where are the best locations? Where do the local people congregate? What's a fair price to pay? And business. Which companies are reputable? Who produces the best-quality products? And aesthetics. What architecture, environments, styles and colors appeal to this population? Even food. Will salted popcorn go over here, or is pickled squid the cinematic delicacy of this particular region?

The answer, most circuits have found, is to team up with a strategic partner that has the contacts and knows the ins and outs. That's what Cinemark International, Cinemark's transcontinentally-focused subsidiary, decided to do when the company set its sights on Japan. Cinemark International's president, Tim Warner, ultimately chose Shochiku, a 103-year-old entertainment company that's the largest in Japan. And one of its holdings is Shochiku Multiplex Theatres, the second largest exhibition company in Japan. Under the pact, Shochiku Cinemark Theatres (SCT) plans to build 100 screens in Japan by the year 2000.



I LIKE TO MOVIX: *The exterior of the complex in which Shochiku Cinemark Theatres' MOVIX Rokko is housed.*

"I knew [Shochiku president and CEO] Toru Okuyama for a number of years through my involvement with NATO/ShoWest, and was aware of both the quality and status of his company in Japan," says Warner, who resigned from his position as general chairman of NATO/ShoWest last year to join Cinemark. "And I suggested to him when I took my current position as the president of Cinemark International that he might want to consider doing a joint venture."

Warner points out that while their competitors in Japan—AMC, UCI (a partnership between Paramount and Universal), and Time Warner-owned Warner International—have local joint venture partners, they're not with companies in the entertainment or exhibition business. "I think the advantage for us is having a joint venture partner that is in day-to-day exhibition," he notes. "They have excellent knowledge and relationships in the marketplace, and I think it will enable us to build our circuit much faster than the other competing circuits."

"There's nothing like having someone that knows the market well, and they do," says Cinemark's director of corporate development Randy Hester. "It's a unique market, it's a huge market. And it's always advantageous to have someone that knows it."

Of course, Cinemark brings something to the table too. "We bring our knowledge of both the domestic and international marketplace, technology, and expertise," says Warner, who adds that SCT management will be trained in Dallas, where Cinemark is based.

"We've got some experience that they don't have," comments Hester. "We've grown our company from a pretty small regional operation to a nationwide and international company. And we've got some unique ideas about theatre design and about operations and customer service that they saw and they liked."

Shochiku and Cinemark together have 53 percent interest in SCT (meaning each has 26.5 percent). The remaining 47 percent is held by "large, prominent Japanese corporations, which will also assist to move the development forward," according to Warner.

Rather than use the cumbersome company name of Shochiku Cinemark Theatres, the theatres themselves will be called MOVIX. "Shochiku has had that name for their drive-in theatres, so the name has been in Japan, linked with the exhibition business, for a number of years," says Warner.

MOVIX intends to provide Japan's theatregoers with the state-of-the-art multiplexes that are so prevalent in America. The first theatre under Cinemark and Shochiku's partnership was the seven-plex MOVIX Rokko in Kobe, which opened its doors March 20. "It's been doing very well, and it was extremely well-received by the community. Business has been very, very good," says Warner.

"The theatre is built in a spectacular new mall development on Rokko Fashion Island,"

he continues. "The shopping center itself is really futuristic-looking. And the theatre has 1,550 seats with THX auditoriums and a very state-of-the-art modern design."

The opening was celebrated with three days of activities, including a VIP opening attended by about 600 guests, as well a special event for local residents and the media, followed by a grand opening for the general public. "As people walked through the theatres, they were very impressed," says Warner. "They were especially impressed by the size of the concession stand versus those in traditional Japanese theatres, and that the theatre also contains a cafe where people can have coffee and drinks and sandwiches and pastry items. And for Japan, where space is at a premium, the lobby and the auditoriums are very, very spacious. This theatre was built to a world standard, where it's a great theatre in any country of the world."



MOVIX Rokko's concession stand.

The differences between a Cinemark theatre in Japan and one in the States are minimal. "As we continue to develop the projects, there will be fewer differences," says Warner. "But of course there will be allowances for local cultural preferences in [such aspects as] colors and design. But the type of operation and the general layout of the theatres will be very similar to the quality that we're building here in the U.S."

"We'll blend the Shochiku and the Cinemark way of doing things and create a chain of theatres that will be unique and will satisfy what [Japanese patrons are] looking for," says Hester. "We're talking bigger, we're talking the kind of amenities that people have come to expect here in the United States."

When investigating a new market, one might not consider that, for example, certain colors are preferred by certain cultures. There are other differences, too. "The concession operations—although the designs are the same, the actual products that would be sold in the stand might be completely different," Warner remarks. "And so there's a big adjustment to local taste in both the design and stocking the products. For Japan, one of their snacks is a candied squid. That's something I hadn't seen in the U.S.!"

Warner acknowledges that doing business in Japan is "a tremendous cultural challenge for an American company, and the merging of the two cultures, both the Japanese culture and the U.S. culture, is a major challenge." But all the pertinent statistics reveal that the Japanese market is well worth it. "Right now, [Japan has about] one screen for every hundred and some thousand people [in contrast to America's one for every 10,000], and yet it's still one of the primary markets outside of the U.S. for U.S. [film product.]"

"Culturally, their love of entertainment is very similar to ours," Hester agrees. "They love entertainment that comes from Hollywood. What we're trying to do is provide them opportunities to enjoy it. It's that simple."

Shochiku Cinemark Theatres, or MOVIX, will average between 10 and 16 screens, which is huge by Japan's standards. Their next theatre will be a 12-plex in Kyoto.

Real estate in Japan is notoriously expensive and scarce. With AMC, Warner and UCI building, securing well-positioned sites will require a solid strategy. "Having our joint venture is going to be an advantage, because we are dealing with a company that has literally done business in Japan for over 103 years," notes Warner. "We're counting on the fact that they do know the local market and the local developers. And I think that they will bring with them access to the marketplace.

"The average ticket price in Japan is much, much higher than in the U.S., almost two or three times as high," adds Warner. "It's a very upscale market when you look at the ticket price. And they enjoy movies very much, and also enjoy American culture. I think as the market develops, the potential of the marketplace is probably one of the best in the entire world."

But that's not to say Cinemark is slowing down its expansion into other world markets—quite the opposite. At the end of this year, 20 to 25 percent of Cinemark's screens will be international, according to Warner, and future building will be about 50/50 domestic and international. "We're still building very aggressively in the U.S. [In 1998], we'll open over 200 screens in countries outside the U.S., and in the U.S. we will [also] open over 200 screens."

The global marketplace is full of opportunities, says Hester. "International markets aren't as mature as the United States, which does create opportunity," he explains. "It also creates some risk. It is not simple. It takes a lot of effort, and it takes a considerable amount of time and energy. The rewards are the same as they are here. We have a huge population around the world that in many cases is not served adequately through theatres. And we're going to do our best to try to remedy that."

Shochiku Cinemark Theatres, Ltd.

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PLEX-MEX

From 0 to 100 Screens in Less Than Two Years, Cinemex Heats Up the Mexican Market

by Jose Martinez



POLISHED PRESENTATION: *The entrance to Cinemex's Santa Fe 14-plex.*

Stadium-style theatre seats, digital sound, fully-automated telephone ticketing and information services, and world class acoustical standards are taken for granted in the United States. But these innovations have been taking Mexico City by storm—ever since Cinemex opened the doors of its first theatre in August 1995.

Founded in January 1994, Cinemex is a first-run multiplex theatrical exhibitor focusing on the movie marketplace in Mexico's capital city. Cinemex originated as a business project for three Harvard students whose formula went on to win Harvard Business School's two business plan awards in 1993. The company, which employs a staff of 45 at its head office and 485 at its cinemas, was formed by managing partners Miguel Angel Davila (age 31), director of operations and finance; Adolfo Fastlicht (30), director of real estate development and new projects; and Matthew Heyman (35), director of programming and strategic planning. (Of the three young entrepreneurs, Heyman is the only one with prior experience in the exhibition industry, having formerly served as vice president of business affairs at Toronto-based Cineplex Odeon).

Already Mexico's second-largest cinema operator in terms of boxoffice, Cinemex represents 22 percent and 30 percent of the region's attendance and boxoffice, respectively. Ramirez is currently the largest chain in Mexico, and Cinemark is the second largest by screen count. UA has also recently entered the newly-hot market, and others are circling. But Heyman's not worried. "People used to say to Ramirez, 'Who do you think is your competitor?' And I think he used to say Cinemark. I think that everybody now looks more to us."

By the year 2000, Cinemex plans to have from 350 to 380 screens throughout Mexico

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THE ART OF THE DEAL: *Cinemex has risen in the ranks of exhibition by bringing state-of-the-art technology and design to Mexico City, as exemplified by the spacious lobby of the Cinemex Loreto, which features neon-framed poster cases and a ceiling-mounted multi-screen video wall.*

City. "The plan is to build as many screens as we can in Mexico City. Focus, focus, focus," says Heyman. "Keep our eye on the ball, understanding that half the economy takes place in Mexico City. One-quarter of the population lives in Mexico City and the cosmopolitan area."

The company's plan is not to have the finest theatres in Mexico, but the finest anywhere. "Every theatre we're building now is 100 percent digital. We're going back and retrofitting a lot of theatres to make them digital. We have only one goal—to be the best in the world. We're not here to be the best in Mexico. We're here to set the standard for everything."

The company has achieved the industry's highest average ticket price by developing state-of-the-art multiplexes and exceeding customers' theatregoing expectations. "The quality of theatres was so poor [before Cinemex entered the market] that it was easy to raise the bar," Heyman explains. "The relative comparison was really fast. [People] came in and said, 'We've never seen anything like this except in the U.S.'"

And the public is willing to pay for quality. Regarding customers' reaction to Cinemex's higher ticket prices, Heyman says, "We have really incredible, committed, and loyal customers. They never complained once."

Heyman knows the ingredients that go into a successful theatre. "I look for good sight lines, clean service. The big thing for me is the quality of the presentation, the sound, and the cleanliness of the building. Those are the things you notice first. The decor package and the way the theatre looks are fundamental to the whole thing."

The company's multiplex philosophy incorporates the industry's highest technological standards and first-class service to create Mexico's premier moviegoing experience—a concept Cinemex calls La Magia del Cine (The Magic of Cinema). They also have developed their own acoustical standard, Sonido Cinemex, in an effort to further differentiate its cinemas from new and existing competitors. "Sonido Cinemex is our own acoustical standard," says Heyman. "We match THX standard in every single theatre." Cinemex also utilizes a phone service, Linea Cinemex, through which customers can reserve their tickets in advance. Some sites offer patrons a liquor bar with draft beer and a coffee bar, as well as the standard assortment of movie food, and a special pick-'n'-mix bulk candy setup called La Locura—which means "The Craziness." In keeping with the philosophy that the partners have created a brand name, all Cinemex innovations are trademarked.

The company was formed at a time when people predicted Mexico was on the verge of becoming a first-world country. Instead, what occurred was a meltdown of the Mexican economy. "We opened all our buildings during the worst time. The devaluation hit and saved our ass," Heyman recounts. "We couldn't compete because we had no buildings. We opened seven buildings in 14

months because everyone else was scared. We opened some great theatres."

At present, Cinemex has 10 multiplexes with 101 screens. Currently open are the Alavista 6; the Santa Fe 14; the Manacar 9; the Los Reyes 10; the Loreto 10; the Perinorte 12; and the Masaryk 4. (The last is also known as the Casa de Arte, and is one of Mexico's few art-houses.) Coming up are the Cinemex Galerias 14; the Toluca 14; the San Mateo 12; the Villa Coapa 11 and the Universidad 14. Heyman and his partners are already working on expanding Cinemex's scope. "I think the second phase of Cinemex will be an acquisition phase that will not necessarily occur in Mexico City. It could occur in Latin America. The goal is to create an incredible market share in Mexico City and then leverage that market share elsewhere."

One aspect Cinemex prides itself on is the fact that it is a Mexican company. All three partners reside in Mexico City, where the company is headquartered. Heyman is the lone American employee. (The company's investors are 50 percent American, 35 percent Australian and 15 percent Mexican. Australia's Hoyts Corp. invested US$22 million in November 1996, and J.P. Morgan Capital was one of the first investors to come on board, putting several million dollars into the company back in October 1993.) According to Heyman, "We're a Mexican company with an American flair—and I'm the flair."

Heyman is quick to mention the importance of his two partners. "My two Mexican partners are an incredible advantage in this market. They know how to operate in the culture, because they're from the culture. They can operate with the government, with the real estate community, and with any area that is indigenous to Mexico.

"Cinemex's huge competitive advantage in Mexico is that we are extremely Mexican, but we have the benefit of the U.S. experience."

"We're not here to be the best in Mexico. We're here to set the standard for everything."

Ultimately, the secret of success is creating audience demand, and Cinemex knows how to keep the momentum going. "We'd rather have fewer prints and move them around to all our buildings. The history has always been releasing 60 prints on one picture and then it's dead in one week." Cinemex theatres play approximately 94 percent American films, although "the rest is not Mexican; [the remaining percentage] includes French, Italian and Spanish [films]."

Predicting what will be a hit is an art form unto itself. Converse to American performance, "Dante's Peak" was a huge hit in Mexico City, while "Star Wars" proved to be a disappointment, according to Heyman,. But Heyman says that Mexico City does not generally receive science-fiction well—demonstrating the importance of knowing your market.

Even Heyman, a juggernaut of excitement and business savvy, has been surprised by Cinemex's growth and success in such a short period of time. "I'm quite surprised at our success—that we've achieved so much market share so fast, that we've beat so many other exhibitors to locations. The amount of respect we've achieved from the exhibition community has been really nice."

Although Cinemex is relatively new to the market, Heyman and his partners know that this is not the time to look back and admire their accomplishments. Instead, this is the time to act on their strategies. "The company has a long way to go. We're going to do a lot of great things. We're the second largest chain in the country, in terms of boxoffice, but we have a long way to go. We're far from Mission Accomplished. This is a very aggressive strategy that requires a lot of capital and a lot of work.

"For us, the biggest challenge we have is to maintain ourselves as the best. The next challenge is to continue to get locations, making sure they are supreme locations, and keeping the money flowing. The trick is to minimize what's not going to work and maximize what's going to work."

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THE ITALIAN CONNECTION

Cecchi Gori Finds Success On U.S. Soil With Beverly Hills' Fine Arts Theatre *by Pat Kramer*

Even as European exhibitors continue to joint-venture or compete with American circuits looking to expand overseas, one Continental company is contentedly selling movie tickets in Beverly Hills, Calif. Six years ago, Italy's Cecchi Gori Group bought and completely renovated the Fine Arts Theatre, a historic single-screen moviehouse built in 1936.

Since the 1991 purchase (originally via PentAmerica, the now dissolved American venture between the Cecchi Gori Group and Berlusconi Communications), programming plans have been modified; the intent had been to provide a showcase for European films—especially, if not exclusively, Italian-language fare—for American audiences. "Because [company owner Vittorio] Cecchi Gori owns the largest theatre circuit in Italy, he wanted to have a presence in [U.S.] exhibition, and the hope was to primarily show European films," says Cecchi Gori vice president of production Anna Gross, who is based in West Los Angeles. "Unfortunately, especially being a supplier of European films, we know that market seems to be shrinking. We make less than 30 movies a year in Italy."

The Fine Arts does provide extended runs for Cecchi Gori productions; for example, the company's Academy Award-nominated "Il Postino," distributed by Miramax, ran for 17 weeks there. But, as under previous operator Laemmle Theatres, programming covers the entire art-house genre, both foreign and domestic. That's not surprising, given that Miramax provides a substantial amount of the theatre's bookings.

The first-run theatre is one of only two moviehouses remaining in Beverly Hills. (The other, Laemmle's nearby Music Hall, was recently converted into a triplex and also programs specialized fare.) The Fine Arts additionally serves as a screening facility for the entertainment industry thanks to its state-of-the-art projection and sound equipment, all of which was installed during an eight-month renovation project in 1993 that restored the site to its art-deco glory.



THE ITALIANS ARE COMING: *A refurbished Fine Arts opened in December 1993 with "Shadowlands."*

For the Italian media magnate, owning a historic theatre—one of the Hollywood community's last single screens—is just another feather in his cap. Although the son of legendary Italian producer Mario Cecchi Gori doesn't plan further stateside expansion, Vittorio is one of Italy's most prominent businessmen. The Senator of Florence and owner of the Fiorentina soccer team, he also runs the continuously expanding Cecchi Gori exhibition circuit, two TV networks, a record label, a host of communications-related industries, and the largest production/distribution company in his homeland. In addition to "Il Postino," his production credits in the 1990s include such notable titles as Gabriele Salvatore's Oscar-winning "Mediterraneo," Gianni Amelio's "Lamerica," Lina Wertmuller's "Ciao Professore!," Guiseppe Tornatore's "The Star Maker" and Roberto Benigni's "Johnny Stecchino."

Over the theatre's lifetime (its doors first opened in 1937), it has passed from Fox Theatres to Mann Theatres to Laemmle, with each organization adding its own touch to the site's look. Designed by renowned theatre architect B. Marcus Pritica (who also designed Hollywood's Pantages Theatre), the moviehouse—then called the Regina—was initially a Fox property. During the 1940s, Fox gave it its first and most pronounced facelift, overseen by designer Charles P. Skouras; it was he who

provided the theatre with an art deco flair by installing hammered-metal wall sconces, three ornamental chandeliers, quilted walls with brass buttons, etched metal doors, and a polished-metal concessions stand.

With Skouras' work completed, Fox renamed the theatre the Fine Arts and ran it until 1973, when Mann moved in. In the early '80s, Laemmle took over the theatre, programming specialized films. When Cecchi Gori came on the scene, the theatre was closed for its most recent renovation, which was completed in time for a December 29, 1993 opening with Savoy's "Shadowlands." Gross, who directed the renovation process, used the theatre's glory days as her polestar.

To aid her quest, she hired designer Joe Musil, whose refurbishment efforts for Pacific Theatres at the circuit's El Capitan Theatre in Hollywood and its Crest Theatre in Westwood Village—both of them single-screen halls—had gained well-deserved acclaim. Musil was able to salvage many of the Fine Arts' most intriguing features: He recast the hammered-metal wall sconces and restored the quilted wall coverings and the proscenium, which now displays Skouras' signature 1940s look with swags and tassels.

The brass buttons were removed and made gleaming again; new carpeting was installed; and walls were painted to depict the post-World War II period. The restrooms and the concessions stand were modernized with an art deco motif, the original vintage seats were restored (the theatre now has several fewer rows, allowing for greater legroom throughout the auditorium), armrest cupholders were installed and the marquee was relit to beckon in passersby, letting them know that the "grand old lady" had returned.

As at Musil's redone El Capitan and Crest, a glorious new feature of the vintage look is the Fine Arts' glittering velvet curtain, which greets audiences in a dramatic way. Says Gross, "When people round that bend, they gasp because you don't see theatres like that anymore." All told, the renovations ran into the "high six figures," Gross says.

Along with upgrading its look, Cecchi Gori wanted his theatre to provide outstanding capabilities in sight and sound. "As a production executive, I know how hard you work on a film. I know what you go through—and then it goes into a theatre and you don't even recognize your own film," says Gross, who made sure that the vision here was attained. To revitalize the technical systems at the Fine Arts, Gross hired Tony Francis of Los Angeles-based Theatre Products International. Francis designed a version of the THX sound system, building a wall directly behind the screen and installing loudspeakers in it, and he created a bi-amplified sound system with JBL speakers. The end result is a sound system that is almost identical to what some consider Hollywood's premier screening room, the Samuel Goldwyn Theatre at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Says Francis, "It's a terrific sounding theatre. When Turner Entertainment came out with its restored 'Dr. Zhivago,' it screened at the Fine Arts." Although the original sound installed was analog, the system has since been upgraded with SDDS digital sound.

The projection system is designed to accommodate both commercial films and screenings of dailies for the studios. To allow for flexibility, Francis installed two projectors—one for 70mm films, the other for 35mm—plus a platter system. "The platter works both ways," Francis says, "so that they can use either projector and the platter, or they can do a changeover where they could use both projectors as 35mm." To accommodate the showing of dailies, for which the soundtrack isn't always on the film, a dual dubber (a magnetic sound reproducer) was installed to handle separate picture and track. Both projectors can be interlocked to the dubber to maximize the sound.

With the renovation well underway, Gross began looking for a company to manage the Fine Arts. As part of her deliberations, she traveled to a number of L.A.-area theatres to inspect them for cleanliness as well as to judge the staff's courtesy and knowledgeability. Based on a belief that its management philosophy was similar to hers, Gross chose AMC, which has found great success with its nearby Century City AMC 14 and its seven-screener in Santa Monica.

She had evidence her belief was correct barely a month after the theatre's reopening—specifically, on the morning of January 17, 1994—when a phone call arrived from the Fine Arts manager 40 minutes after the predawn Northridge earthquake. "She had come in the dark during the aftershocks to make sure the theatre was okay," Gross recalls. "That's when I knew we had great management." Although the temblor did inflict a certain amount of damage—some cracking along the roofline and some broken mirrors inside—the theatre was able to re-reopen three weeks later.

Nora Dashwood, AMC's vice president of operations of the West Division, says the Fine Arts has given AMC the opportunity to display its abilities in a new area. The Fine Arts is one of two single-screeners (the other is in San Jose) that AMC manages, an interesting sideline for the company commonly credited with giving birth to the con-





NOW AND THEN: *The Fine Arts concessions stand now carries items favored by American art-house audiences.*

temporary multiplex. "What attracted AMC to the job," Dashwood says, "was the phenomenal job [Cecchi Gori] did with the theatre. It's an absolute jewel, and customers are very pleased to have seen it renovated back to—even better than—its former glory. Being in Beverly Hills, where the film community is, the producers and stars, we felt it would give AMC a chance to showcase our operational expertise, as well as to be able to run a beautiful theatre."

Now in its fourth year run under the Cecchi Gori flag, the Fine Arts provides a quality of viewing a cut above some local theatres—and certainly several cuts above many theatres that make their living on foreign films. As Gross puts it, "It's a place for those who want to enjoy foreign films in a theatre that doesn't have sticky floors." Indeed, keeping the theatre clean is one of the priorities at the Fine Arts; another is serving high-quality beverages and food. At the concessions counter, patrons can choose from the likes of cappuccino, espresso, fresh-baked pretzels, Snapple drinks, and dried fruits, in addition to the customary popcorn and soft drinks. As with all the features at the Fine Arts, everything is artfully displayed on polished counters. And, with a theatre capacity that tops out at 500, the lines are never very long.

With its subtitled films, which show more frequently at the Fine Arts than in mainstream houses, the theatre sees a higher percentage of deaf viewers. To expand the viewing opportunities for that audience segment, the Fine Arts made an agreement with the Tripod School for the Deaf and the Deaf Entertainment Foundation (DEF) and is showing English-language films for the hearing impaired. The program launched in summer 1995 with a special screening of Warner Bros.' "The Bridges of Madison County," complete with open-captioned subtitles and special captioning indicating musical song lyrics and sound effects. Holding more of such screenings for the deaf, Gross says, remains a key goal.



Then called the Regina, the theatre drew a crowd with a Lugosi/Karloff scarefest in 1942.

Whether it's providing a more comfortable sanctuary for art-house lovers and its many celebrity patrons, or whether it's serving as one of the most "authentic" old theatres now operating with modern sight and sound quality, the Fine Arts provides new-Hollywood fare in an early-Hollywood setting. It also represents a coming-together of two cultures, with Italian owner Cecchi Gori providing the expertise in foreign films, and AMC, one of America's top circuits, providing the management. Say AMC's Dashwood, "It's a bit of a throwback to the past, restoring some of Hollywood's glory. There are not a lot of theatres in L.A., where Hollywood started. Most of the old beautiful single screens have gone by the wayside. I think the theatre is appreciated for that."



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Response No. 267

KNOCKIN' ON THE BOXOFFICE DOOR

A German-made blockbuster may serve as a blueprint for the European production and exhibition

by PKay Krieg

"You've never seen the ocean? Don't you know what happens when you get to heaven? In heaven, all they talk about is the ocean. How gorgeously beautiful it is. And all the sunsets that they saw. How you could feel the sun lose its strength. And how the cool water splashed forward and the only fire left was the fire in their souls. And you? You can't say a thing, because you've never been there. Up there, you'll be nothing but a f----d up outsider."
—from "Knockin' on Heaven's Door"

The German film industry is celebrating its strongest period since the 1950s, when domestically-made German product dominated theatre screens. In first-quarter 1997, German features accounted for 37 percent of the national boxoffice. More than 11.6 million filmgoers viewed German features at moviehouses. In comparison, American films counted 19.3 million admissions in the same period. This is astounding, considering the very large amount of American film being shown on German screens. During 1997's first three months, 3,091 prints of locally-made films were delivered to German theatres—a third more than during an entire year just half a decade ago.

"We want to concentrate on producing German films in Germany for the German public." That was how Wolfgang Braun, vice president of Buena Vista International Germany, summed up his company's domestic business strategy two years ago at the Buena Vista International trade fair. And he wasted no time in putting this credo into action. Buena Vista Germany's first German production, "Knockin' on Heaven's Door," a dramedy in road-movie style, is already setting industry standards on how German product will be viewed internationally and how it will be produced in the years to come. Among other things, the Buena Vista production shows how capital from a U.S.-based company can be used to reinvigorate a European market, as opposed to siphoning local resources, which divisions of Hollywood studios are occasionally accused of doing.



DOORWAY: *The story of two men who want to reach the sea, "Knockin' on Heaven's Door" has opened new vistas for German film.*

Buena Vista Germany risked plunging into new territory by working with a dynamic young German production company called Mr. Brown Entertainment. The result of this cooperative effort is a road movie about two terminally ill men, Martin and Rudi, who meet in the hospital. After realizing that one of them has never seen the ocean, they steal a car, planning on driving north to the sea before one of them dies. It turns out that the car belongs to Frankie Boy, whose hitmen, Henk and Abdul, were supposed to transport it (and the million German marks in the trunk) to Frankie's boss, Curtiz. Now millionaires, Rudi and Martin go on shopping sprees, order room service in the best hotels, and set about making their foremost wishes come true, determined to get to the ocean before fate overtakes them.

"Knockin' on Heaven's Door" was an instant commercial smash for Buena Vista. Within just eight weeks it garnered the coveted Golden Screen Award (Goldene Leinwand) for more than three million admissions sold (a feat that typically takes up to 18 months in release). The film could be seen in almost every theatre complex in Germany during February and March 1997, and it received two prestigious German Film Award nominations: for Best Film and Best Supporting Actor. Buena Vista Germany and Mr. Brown Entertainment touched the pulse of the nation with their first try, which makes the details of this intriguing partnership worth noting as a possible production model for the shape of German things to come.

It all began rather harmlessly two years ago in a bookstore in Cologne. There, Thomas Jahn bumped into Til Schweiger. Schweiger at that time was regarded as a major up-and-coming star in Germany. (He's since gained that reputation stateside, having become hot in Hollywood.) He was basking in the success of "Der Bewegte Mann" ("Maybe, Maybe Not"), another huge domestic hit, which was released on October 13, 1994. Produced by Bernd Eichinger (head of Constantin Film), "Maybe,



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Maybe Not" is currently the second most popular German film of the past 16 years, having earned the Golden Screen with Star award (a distinction rarely achieved) for amassing more than six million domestic admissions (to be exact, "Maybe, Maybe Not" pulled in 6,510,213 moviegoers during its first run).

That hit catapulted Schweiger into the highest echelons of the country's talent. For Thomas Jahn, meeting Schweiger was therefore a moment of destiny. Jahn is a self-described movie freak: "When I was 12 or so, all I did was go to the movies," he says, "or watch them on TV. I ingested everything I could get my hands on—classics from Howard Hawks or John Ford, American cult movies like 'Midnight Run,' action flicks, just about everything."



A CO-VENTURE ADVENTURE: *Wolfgang Braun of BVI Germany (l.) says the Disney subsidiary took a chance on first-time director Thomas Jahn (r.) because the studio wanted "to offer the German audience a new domestic type of film."*

The reference to "Midnight Run"—another odd-couple road movie—is no coincidence. In Jahn's film, "Knockin' on Heaven's Door," Schweiger's character is named Martin Brest, after "Midnight Run's" U.S. director. His partner's character is named after Rudolph Wurlitzer, the screenwriter for Sam Peckinpah's cult western "Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid." And it's the Bob Dylan tune used as the musical motif in "Pat Garrett" that eventually gave Jahn's breakthrough feature its title: "Knockin' on Heaven's Door."

So when Jahn, who was moonlighting at that time as a taxi driver, saw Schweiger leafing through film books, he had to go up and talk with him. They discussed "Der bewegte Mann," Schweiger's growing interest in creating and producing his own films, and Jahn's stash of unrealized screenplays sitting in his closet. One thing led to another, and within a week of this initial meeting Schweiger's mailbox was busting at the seams: Jahn had sent him a potpourri of possible film ideas. In that stack of scripts was a first draft of "Knockin' on Heaven's Door."

"What bothers me is that death is such an uncomfortable way to live."
—from "Knockin' on Heaven's Door"

Schweiger was automatically drawn to the story and knew he wanted to film it. He and Jahn worked on the script for about

GERMAN PRODUCTION'S SECOND COMING

If current trends continue, 1997 should be a big year for German-produced cinema at the German boxoffice. In addition to the numerous smaller domestic films which will be in play, here are a few of the higher-profile features that are either currently in the editing room or else in production for prospective release this year (all release dates are tentative):

● ***Buena Vista International Germany*** *is the number one major involved in domestic production, with a handful of German co-productions, including:*
"Bandits" is a musical comedy about an all-girl prison band from Katja von Garnier starring Katja Riemann, Nicolette Krebitz, Jasmin Tabatabai and Hannes Jaen-nicke. *(German release date: July 3);*
"Hunger: To Yearn for Love," a dramatic love story about the effects that bulimia can have on one's life, is Dana Vavrova's directorial debut and stars Catherine Flemming, Kai Wiesinger and Christiane Horbiger. The film is produced together with Perathon Film, the production company of German filmmaker Joseph Vilsmaier (Vavrova's husband). *(Sept. 4);*
"2 Frauen, 2 Manner" ("Two Women, Two Men"), a comedy about infidelity by Vivian Naefe from Olga Film, stars Heino Firch, Aglaia Szyszkowitz and Gedeon Burkhard. *(Oct. 16);*
"Widows" stars Uwe Ochsenknecht, Heino Firch, Huub Stapel, Thomas Heinze and Eva Mattes. Sherry Hormann is at the helm. *(Early 1998).*

● *Bernd Eichinger's* ***Constantin Film*** *is another company hard at work on delivering high-quality German product. Its slate includes:*
"Die 3 Madels von der Tankstelle" ("Three Girls at the Gas Station") is a comedy starring Wigald Boning, Axel Milberg and Franka Potente from Peter Brinkmann. Boning is the star of Germany's answer to "Saturday Night Live"; this film marks his feature debut. *(June 12).*
"Prince Valiant," a fantasy-adventure film based on the comic series, marks another international production for Constantin (following "Smilla's Sense of Snow"). Anthony Hickox directs an international cast including Stephen Moyer, Katherine Heigl, Edward Fox, Ron Perlman, Udo Kier and Thomas Kretschmann. The film will be shot in English. *(July 3).*

● ***Concorde-Castle Rock/Turner*** *is also entering the ring and will be promoting Paul Harather's newest release, a holiday comedy entitled* **"Weihnachtsfieber"** ("Christmas Fever"). *(Nov. 13).*

● ***Warner Bros. Germany*** *has quite a few projects in the development and discussion stage. Two that will definitely be released this year are:*
"Die Furchtlosen Vier" ("The Fearless Four") is an animation comedy based on the classic fairy tale about the Bremer Town Musicians. Currently, it is set to open just before the fall school vacations on Oct. 2.
"Das Trio" ("The Three") is a crime drama starring Christian Redl and Felix Eisner from Hermine Hundgeburth. This debut film from Next Film in Hamburg boasts a five million mark budget and is slated for release on Dec. 4.—***PKay Krieg***



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a year until they had the story honed. After investing so much in their endeavor, Schweiger was afraid of losing creative control over the project. Thus, in the spring of 1996, he formed Mr. Brown Entertainment (a name taken from Quentin Tarantino's "Reservoir Dogs") together with Thomas Zickler, an independent short film and commercial producer, and with Andre Hennicke, a screenwriter and actor.



ON THE ROAD: *Jan Josef Liefers and Til Schweiger are the terminally ill adventurers in "Knockin' on Heaven's Door."*

Mr. Brown immediately began developing its first feature, and a positive buzz echoed through the German industry. The fact that Germany's answer to Brad Pitt was personally involved in the creative and financial process sparked interest at the offices of domestic distribution. Buena Vista Germany was one of the first local distributors to make inquiries. Schweiger didn't trust the postal service to make the sale. "I just didn't want to send them a script," he explains. "I wanted the chance to personally introduce the film and all the ideas behind it."

A mutual friend introduced Schweiger to Christoph Ott, executive director of distribution at Buena Vista Germany. "We didn't realize that this meeting would prove to be so important," Schweiger reflects. "After this initial meeting, we met for another two or three hours. I read him through the entire film and even played out some of the scenes."

Schweiger's performance must have been very convincing. Buena Vista Germany not only became co-producer of "Knockin' on Heaven's Door," it also distributed the film in German-speaking territories (Germany, Austria and Switzerland). By teaming with Buena Vista International, "Knockin' on Heaven's Door" profited from high-quality PR attuned to the likes and dislikes of the German public. The entire BVI marketing department knew exactly how to position the film with audiences and exhibitors alike.

"A crucial factor in our decision to become involved in the project was Til Schweiger's enthusiastic dedication to it," says BVI's Braun. "After studying the material, we knew it would make a first-class film. But we decided to go about the production our way. Of course, we could have hired a well-known TV director to take the helm. But then the film would have had that certain old-fashioned look. We wanted to offer the German audience a new domestic type of film, and Schweiger's enthusiasm and professional way of doing business made that decision even easier."

"When I found out that the film was really greenlighted, I was ecstatic," Jahn recalls. "But when Til kept talking and told me that I was going to direct it, well, that was too much." Jahn could hardly believe that a major studio would trust a no-name with such a project. "Up till then I had made only a few Super-8 and video films. I never dreamed anyone would give someone like myself the reins of a million mark film project." This faith in his capabilities proved to be that extra incentive Jahn needed. "Til and all the others had so much trust in me. I didn't want to let them down and did all I could to make [the film] a success."

Once the crew was set, it was time to focus on the talent in front of the camera. Not only the main characters but the cameo appearances read like a who's who of young German and European cinema. Jan Josef Liefers took the second main role of the melancholic Rudi Wurlitzer against Schweiger's more dynamic and extroverted main character. The film received a touch of Hollywood by enlisting Rutger Hauer to play the role of Curtiz, the mini Mafia boss in charge of the whole operation. And Holland's best known export, Huub Stapel, took the role of Frankie Boy.

The secret stars of the film, though, are Henk and Abdul—two hitmen with very limited intelligence. Moritz Bleibtreu received a German Film Award nomination for his portrayal of Abdul, and the best-known star in Luxembourg, Thierry van Werveke, took the role of Henk. The scenes with those two characters were so popular that project talks are currently underway to develop a spin-off sequel: "Henk & Abdul: The Boys are Back in Town."

Schweiger was even able to convince his mentor Bernd Eichinger, the innovator of modern German film production, to take a small cameo role—no easy task. Eichinger judges himself a miserable actor, and considers his forte to be behind-the-scenes work. "I didn't let loose until he said yes," Schweiger says. The cameo appearance—shot with another German household name, Hannes Jaennicke—comes right before the end credits and was an immediate hit with the audience.

"Knockin' on Heaven's Door" opened in Germany on February 20 of this year and promptly became the number one movie in the nation, a status it maintained the following weekend. It went on to become the second most popular German film of the first quarter of 1997. The arrival of "Das kleine Arschloch" ("The Little Bastard"), a domestic adult animation comedy, pushed "Knockin'" to number two on its third weekend.

On the live-action side, however, not even Buena Vista's own high-powered U.S.-produced competition could hurt Jahn's debut film. "101 Dalmatians" opened against "Das kleine Arschloch" and landed at number three on its first weekend, behind those two German productions.

"Good work, Keller. Thinking always helps!"

—from "Knockin' on Heaven's Door"

Both "Knockin'" and the social satire "Rossini" (another Eichinger production, which has also received the Golden Screen Award and is the top-grossing domestic release of this year) prove that the German and European publics are ready to embrace well-made domestic fare. And there is no shortage of creative talent ready to follow in Schweiger's footsteps, either in front of the camera or behind the scenes [*see sidebar, p.46*]. Not only Buena Vista but also other majors and domestic distributors are eager to help finance and distribute German film.

The success of this latest slew of German product has proven to even the toughest naysayers that there is indeed a financial future for domestic product. "Knockin' on Heaven's Door" offers vindication for the commercial style of moviemaking as it applies in Germany, inasmuch as it is a departure from the artistic and cultural German films of the 1960s and '70s, which focused on high-brow, sometimes grim subjects appealing primarily to specialized audiences. Where those esoteric efforts always seemed to project a "message," "Knockin' on Heaven's Door" succeeds first and foremost as entertainment.

Undeniably, serious and "art" films are still important and will continue to fill a global niche. But from a purely pragmatic standpoint they have limited commercial appeal. And what's wrong with just wanting to be entertained? Apparently nothing, as "Knockin' on Heaven's Door" demonstrates. It is proving to the German film industry that domestically created "entertainment" can indeed be popular and acceptable—not to mention profitable.

"Our film is one giant pioneering effort and we are proud of it," sums up producer/actor/screenwriter and risk taker Schweiger. "It was done in true team spirit." A team that was courageous and daring enough to go where not many German films have gone before—and, quite possibly, to take the rest of the German film industry along with it: straight into boxoffice heaven.



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OVERVIEW: EUROPE AT A GLANCE

A country-by-country examination of European Exhibition *by Melissa Morrison*

The European Continent is currently in the midst of sweeping changes where exhibition is concerned. It's a big and rapidly changing picture, one which can be difficult to get a handle on. But fear not: **BOXOFFICE** *European correspondent Melissa Morrison knows the terrain and was willing to do the necessary legwork to get the pertinent info in each market.*

We can think of no better starting point for an exhibition professional trying to get a feel for Europe than the data which has been arranged here in tabular form for your easy reference. A companion table, listing full corporate rosters for 20 of the biggest players on the European exhibition scene, begins on page 52. All screen counts are as of 1996, except where noted; an asterisk () indicates 1995 figures.*



TOTAL NUMBER OF EUROPEAN SCREENS: 25,636

UNITED KINGDOM/IRELAND

MAJOR EXHIBITORS: Rank-Odeon; UCI; Virgin; ABC; Cine-UK; National Amusements' Showcase; Warner Bros. International Theatres/Village Roadshow; Ward-Anderson; Apollo Cinemas

MAJOR DISTRIBUTORS: UIP; Buena Vista International; 20th Century Fox; Rank; Warner Bros.; Columbia TriStar Films; Entertainment Film Distributors; Guild Pathe; Artificial Eye; PolyGram; First Independent

SCREENS: U.K.: 2,222; Ireland: 197*

PERCENT OF EUROPEAN MARKET: U.K.: 8.7; Ireland: 1

PLANNED BUILDS: Major exhibitors have plans to build a total 400-plus new screens in 1997 and 1998; Australia's Village Roadshow joins the act in partnership with Warner Bros.

INDUSTRY EVENTS: BAFTA Awards (April); Edinburgh International Film Festival (August); Pre-MIFED Screenings (October); London International Film Festival & Market (October); London Film Festival (November)

GERMANY/AUSTRIA

MAJOR EXHIBITORS: UFA Theatre; Flebbe; Kieft und Kielt; Omniplex Group; Rolf Theile; Georg Reiss; Bofi-Gruppe; UCI; Warner Bros. International Theatres/Village Roadshow; Constantin Film

MAJOR DISTRIBUTORS: UIP; Buena Vista; 20th Century Fox; Constantin; Warner Bros.; Columbia TriStar; Concorde-Castle Rock; Delphi; Pandora; FPV Filmwelt-Prokino; Kinowelt; Jugendfilm

SCREENS: Germany: 4,000; Austria: 382*

PERCENT OF MARKET: Germany: 15.7; Austria: 1.5

BUILDS: Germany anticipates about 1,000 new screens by the end of the century; UCI beginning aggressive building campaigns; Warner Bros. and Village Roadshow to build multiplexes in Germany; Omniplex Group plans to build six multiplexes through '97; Bernd Eichinger's Constantin Group planning $209 million cinema complex in Munich; U.S.'s UCI and Germany's UFA plan separate projects in the eastern German city of Gera

INDUSTRY EVENTS: Berlin Film Festival (February); Filmfest Munchen (June); Filmfest Hamburg (September)

FRANCE/SWITZERLAND

MAJOR EXHIBITORS: Gaumont, UGC, Showcase; Pathe

MAJOR DISTRIBUTORS: Gaumont; Buena Vista International; AMLF; UIP; U.S. studio offshoots

SCREENS: France: 4,365*; Switzerland: 488*

PERCENT OF MARKET: France: 17.2; Switzerland: 1.9

PLANNED BUILDS: Heron International (UK) is planning five new complexes in France and Spain at a total cost of $223 million

NDUSTRY EVENTS: Cannes International ilm Festival and Market (May); Deauville estival of American Films (September); Fesval of European Cinema (November)

ITALY

MAJOR EXHIBITORS: Cecchi Gori Group; Cinema 5; Village Roadshow

MAJOR DISTRIBUTORS: Medusa; Buena Vista; Warner Bros.; Cecchi Gori; UIP; FilmAuro; Columbia TriStar; IIF; Artisti Associati; Lucky Red

SCREENS: 4,000

PERCENT OF MARKET: 15.7

PLANNED BUILDS: Warner Bros and Village Roadshow have formed a joint venture to build 20 multiplexes throughout Italy; UCI is planning 15 multiplexes

INDUSTRY EVENTS: MIFED (October); Venice Film Festival (August/September)

SPAIN/PORTUGAL

MAJOR EXHIBITORS: Lauren Films; Alta Films; Warner-Lusomundo; Yelmo Films; UGC (France); Cinesa; UCI

MAJOR DISTRIBUTORS: Lauren Films; Sogepaq Distribucion

SCREENS: Spain: 2,090*; Portugal: 282*

PERCENT OF MARKET: Spain: 8.2; Portugal: 1.1

PLANNED BUILDS: Lauren to build 72 screens by end of '97; Warner Bros., Spanish multimedia giant PRISA and Portuguese major Lusomundo to develop 20 multiplexes in Spain; Heron International (UK) planning five cinemas in France and Spain at a total cost of $223 million; AMC targeting the Iberian Peninsula for development, scheduling a multiplex to open in Barcelona this fall, with a second under construction, as well as a 20-screen multiplex in Porto, Portugal

INDUSTRY EVENTS: San Sebastian International Film Festival (September)

BENELUX (BELGIUM, NETHERLANDS, LUXEMBOURG)

MAJOR EXHIBITORS: Pathe; Decatron/Kinepolis Group; Gaumont; UGC Belgique; Decatron; Jogchem's Theatres; Minerva; Cine Utopia

MAJOR DISTRIBUTORS: Concorde Film; PolyGram; RCV

SCREENS: Belgium: 447*; Netherlands: 446; Luxembourg: 17*

PERCENT OF MARKET: Belgium: 1.8; Netherlands: 1.8; Luxembourg: < 1

PLANNED BUILDS: Belgium's Decatron and Holland's Cinema Groep plan to build 10 cinemas and will begin with an eight-screen theatre in the Dutch city of Flushing; Pathe will build 27 screens in Amsterdam in 1998

INDUSTRY EVENTS: Brussels International Film Festival (January); Film Festival Rotterdam/CineMart (January/February); Brussels Cartoon & Animated Film Festival (February); European Children's Film Festival Antwerp (March/April); Holland Animation Film Festival (spring); Holland Film Meeting (September/October); Flanders International Film Festival (October); International Documentary Film Festival & Market (November/December)

SCANDINAVIA

MAJOR EXHIBITORS: Finnkino (Finland); Camera Film, Nordisk, Metronome (Denmark); Svensk and Sandrew Film (Sweden); Skifan, Samfilm (Iceland)

MAJOR DISTRIBUTORS: Finnkino; Scanbox; Svensk Filmindustri; Nordisk Film; Metronome; Buena Vista International; UIP; Camera Film; All Right Film

SCREENS: Denmark: 313*; Norway: 250; Finland: 330*; Sweden: 1,168*; Iceland: 23*

PERCENT OF MARKET: Denmark: 1.2; Norway: 1; Finland: 1.3; Sweden: 4.6

PLANNED BUILDS: Metronome with Warner to build multiplex in Denmark; Finland to get three Helsinki multiplexes constructed by Kino-Palatsi-Sandrews-Metronome, a collaboration among a Swedish-Danish exhibition partnership and a pair of Finnish producers; Finnkino to build the world's first 40-plex in Helsinki, scheduled to open in October 1998; Oslo's first private cinema, with six screens, scheduled for completion by year's end; 14 more private cinemas planned for the Oslo area in Norway; AMC plans a 5,000-seat multiplex in a Stockholm suburb; Skifan planning a multiplex in Iceland in 1997

INDUSTRY EVENTS: Gothenburg Film Festival (January/February); Norwegian International Film Festival (August); Umea Film Festival (September); Uppsala Film Festival (October); Stockholm International Film Festival (November)

RUSSIA

MAJOR EXHIBITORS: Golden Ring; Eastman Kodak

MAJOR DISTRIBUTORS: East West Creative Association; Kino Video Service

SCREENS: 1,468*

PERCENT OF MARKET: 5.8

PLANNED BUILDS: Golden Ring plans to build chain of multiplexes across the country

INDUSTRY EVENTS: Open Russian and International Film Festival (May/June); St. Petersburg Film Festival (June); Moscow International Film Festival (July); Open Festival of CIS and Baltic States (September)

HUNGARY

MAJOR EXHIBITORS: Budapest Film; Village Roadshow International; InterCom

MAJOR DISTRIBUTORS: InterCom

SCREENS: 470

PERCENT OF MARKET: 1.8

PLANNED BUILDS: Village Roadshow International has three multiplexes planned for Hungary in the next two years

CZECH REPUBLIC AND SLOVAKIA

MAJOR EXHIBITOR: Multikino

MAJOR DISTRIBUTORS: Bonton Alpha and Beta; Space Films; Barradov Biografia

SCREEN COUNTS/MARKET SHARES:

UNITED KINGDOM:	**2,222/8.7**
IRELAND:	**197/1**
GERMANY:	**4,000/15.7**
AUSTRIA:	**382/1.5**
FRANCE:	**4,365/17.2**
SWITZERLAND:	**488/1.9**
ITALY:	**4,000/15.7**
SPAIN:	**2,090/8.2**
PORTUGAL:	**282/1.1**
BELGIUM:	**447/1.8**
NETHERLANDS:	**446/1.8**
LUXEMBOURG:	**17/ < 1**
SWEDEN:	**1,168/4.6**
FINLAND:	**330/1.3**
DENMARK:	**313/1.2**
NORWAY:	**250/1**
RUSSIA:	**1,468/5.8**
HUNGARY:	**470/1.8**
CZECH REPUBLIC:	**1,091/4.3**
SLOVAKIA:	**265/1**
POLAND:	**622/2.4**

SCREENS: Czech Republic: 1,091; Slovakia: 265

PERCENT OF MARKET: Czech Republic: 4.3; Slovakia: 1

PLANNED BUILDS: Australia's Village Roadshow has earmarked the Czech Republic for its expansion into Europe over the next three years; Prague-based distributor Space Film will begin construction of the 10-screen, 3,800-seat Kinocentrum theatre in Prague to be opened in 1997

INDUSTRY EVENTS: Karlovy Vary International Film Festival (July)

POLAND

MAJOR EXHIBITOR: Multikino

MAJOR DISTRIBUTORS: ITI; Syrena; IMP; Vision; Soloplan; MTL Maxfilm/3;4; Aefit; Planfilm; Space Films

SCREENS: 622

PERCENT OF MARKET: 2.4

PLANNED BUILDS: Multikino to build 10 multiplexes at $70 million total; UCI, with Poland's ITI, planning 10 multiplexes, the first scheduled to open in 1997; Polish distributor Syrena and Portico, a developer based in Warsaw, each also preparing similar ventures

GREECE/TURKEY

MAJOR EXHIBITORS: Village Roadshow (in a joint venture with Greek Vardinoyannis oil conglomerate)

MAJOR DISTRIBUTORS: Village Roadshow; Spentzos

SCREENS: Greece: 350*; Turkey: 350*

PERCENT OF MARKET: Greece: 1.4; Turkey: 1.4

PLANNED BUILDS: Australia's Village Roadshow plans to build two new cinemas in Athens, plus four in other cities throughout the territory.

INDUSTRY EVENTS: International Thessaloniki Film Festival (November); Istanbul Int. Film Festival (March/April)

GIANTS OF EUROPEAN EXHIBITION

A Directory of 20 Top European Circuits

Here it is—a compilation of 20 of Europe's top exhibition circuits and supporting trade organizations. Although some companies didn't respond to multiple faxes and phone calls (you know who you are), we believe this to be the most useful directory of its type. Enjoy! And for those European circuits that didn't make the list—there's always next year. Call, fax or e-mail us with your comments or corrections.

1. UFA Theater AG

Grof-Adlolf-Str. 96
40210 Dusseldorf Germany
PHONE: (49-211) 169-0650
FAX: (49-211) 169-0633
EXECUTIVE ROSTER:
Volker Riech, board chairman
YEAR FOUNDED: 1917
TOTAL SITES (6/31/97): 150
TOTAL SCREENS (6/31/97): 470
AVE. SCREENS PER SITE: 3
PROJECTED SITES, 12/97: 150
PROJECTED SCREENS, 12/97: 470
THEATRE EMPLOYEES: 3,000
CORPORATE EMPLOYEES: 200
THEATRE LOCATIONS: Germany

2. United Cinemas International

Lee House
Great Bridgewater St.
Manchester M1 5JW England
PHONE: (44) 161-455-4000
FAX: (44) 161-455-4076
EXECUTIVE ROSTER:
(currently vacant), CEO
Alan McNair, CFO
YEAR FOUNDED: 1988
TOTAL SITES (6/31/97): 61
TOTAL SCREENS (6/31/97): 438
EUROPEAN SITES: 60
EUROPEAN SCREENS: 431
AVE. EUROPEAN SCREENS/SITE: 7
PROJECTED SITES, 12/97: 80
PROJECTED SCREENS, 12/97: 593
PROJECTED EUROPEAN SITES, 12/97: 73
PROJECTED EUROPEAN SCREENS, 12/97: 522
THEATRE LOCATIONS: United Kingdom, Germany, Ireland, Spain, Austria, Japan, Brazil (12/97)

UCI Germany (Multiplex GMBH)

Oskar-Hoffmann-str. 156
44789 Bochum Germany
PHONE: (49) 234-937-190
CONTACT: Ray Smith, vice president

UCI Spain (Cinesa)

Floridablanca 135
08011 Barcelona Spain
PHONE: (343) 228-9600
CONTACT: Jose Batlle, vice president

UCI UK Ltd.

Lee House
Great Bridgewater St.
Manchester M1 5JW England
PHONE: (44) 161-455-4000
FAX: (44) 161-455-4076
CONTACT: Steve Knibbs, vice president

3. Gaumont Cinemas

30 Av. Charles de Gaulle
Neuilly, Seine 92220, France
PHONE: (33) 1-46-43-2400
FAX: (33) 1-46-43-2428
EXECUTIVE ROSTER:
Jean Louis Renoux, director
Stephane Parthenay, programming director
YEAR FOUNDED: 1895
TOTAL SITES (6/31/97): 41
TOTAL SCREENS (6/31/97): 372
AVE. EUROPEAN SCREENS/SITE: 9
THEATRE LOCATIONS: France

4. Odeon Cinemas

54 Whitcomb Street
London, U.K. WC2H 7DN
PHONE: (71) 18-39-6373
FAX: (71) 13-21-0357
EXECUTIVE ROSTER:
Richard Segal, managing director
B.J. Keward, operations director
M.G. Walker, finance director
YEAR FOUNDED: 1930
TOTAL SITES (6/31/97): 75
TOTAL SCREENS (6/31/97): 340
AVE. SCREENS/SITE: 4.5
THEATRE EMPLOYEES: 2,500
CORPORATE EMPLOYEES: 200
THEATRE LOCATIONS: United Kingdom

5. Pathé Cinemas

5 Boulevard Malsherbes
75008 Paris France
PHONE: (33-1) 49-24-4086
FAX: (33-1) 49-24-4089
EXECUTIVE ROSTER:
Mr. L. Nielsen, Managing Director
Mr. J. Seydoux, Chairman/CEO
YEAR FOUNDED: 1987
TOTAL SITES (6/31/97): 76
TOTAL SCREENS (6/31/97): 267
AVE. SCREENS/SITE: 3.5
THEATRE LOCATIONS: the Netherlands, France

Pathé Cinemas Netherlands

P.O. Box 75948
1070 AX Amsterdam
The Netherlands
PHONE: (31-20) 575 1751
FAX: (31-20) 662 2085

6. Warner Bros. International Theatres

4000 Warner Blvd.
Bridge Bldg. South, 5th fl.
Burbank, Calif. 91522
PHONE: (818) 954-6278
FAX: (818) 954-6047
EXECUTIVE ROSTER:
Millard L. Ochs, President
C. Christopher Adelmann, Sr. VP
David Bent, VP Theatrical Exhibition
Glenn Finch, VP Finance & Strategic Planning
Chris Sanders, Director, Worldwide Concessions
Peter Dobson, Director, Worldwide Film-buying
YEAR FOUNDED: 1987
TOTAL SITES (6/31/97): 59
TOTAL SCREENS (6/31/97): 485
EUROPEAN SITES: 36
EUROPEAN SCREENS: 222
AVE. SCREENS/SITE: 6.2
PROJECTED SCREENS, 12/97: 550
PROJECTED SITES, 12/97: 65
THEATRE LOCATIONS: Australia, United Kingdom, Denmark, Germany, Portugal, Spain, Japan (Italy and Taiwan by 12/97)

Warner Village Cinemas

Wells Point, 3rd fl.
79 Wells St.
London W1P, England
PHONE: (44) 171 465-4090
FAX: (44) 171 465-4998
CONTACT: Rafael Badillo, Managing Director

Warner Lusomundo Cines de Espana S.A.

Minipark 1 - Edificio B-1 Planta
c/Azalea N 1
Urbanizacion el Soto de la Moraleja
28109 Madrid, Spain
PHONE: (34-1) 658-5358
FAX: (34-1) 658-5356
CONTACT: Tomas Naranjo, Managing Director

Warner Lusomundo Sociedade Iberica de Cinemas, LDA

Rua Luciano Cordeiro, 113, 1
1150 Lisboa, Portugal
PHONE: (351-1) 315-0806
FAX: (351-1) 355-7784
CONTACT: Miguel Teceidero, Managing Director

Warner Village Italia

Piazza Augusto Imperatore, 3
Scala C/2nd Piano
00186 Rome, Italy
PHONE: (39-6) 68-8111
FAX: (39-6) 68-80-8578
CONTACT: Antonio Maldonado, Managing Director

7. Village Roadshow Ltd.

206 Bourke St.
Melbourne VIC 3000
Australia
PHONE: (61-3) 96-67-6666
FAX: (61-3) 96-63-1972
EXECUTIVE ROSTER:
Graham Burke, Managing Director
Robert Kirby, Chairman
John Kirby, Deputy Chairman
Peter Foo, Group General Manager
YEAR FOUNDED: 1954
TOTAL SITES (6/31/97): 122
TOTAL SCREENS (6/31/97): 781
EUROPEAN SITES: 23
EUROPEAN SCREENS: 207
AVERAGE SCREENS/SITE: 6.4
PROJECTED SCREENS, 12/97: 1,082
PROJECTED SITES, 12/97: 154
THEATRE EMPLOYEES: 1,090
CORPORATE EMPLOYEES: 335
THEATRE LOCATIONS: Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Argentina, Hungary, United Kingdom, Germany, India, Greece

Village Roadshow International (Europe)

Wells Point
79 Wells St.
London W1P 3RD, United Kingdom
PHONE: (44) 171- 465-4090
FAX: (44) 171-465-4998
CONTACT: John Crawford

8. AB Svensk Filmindustri

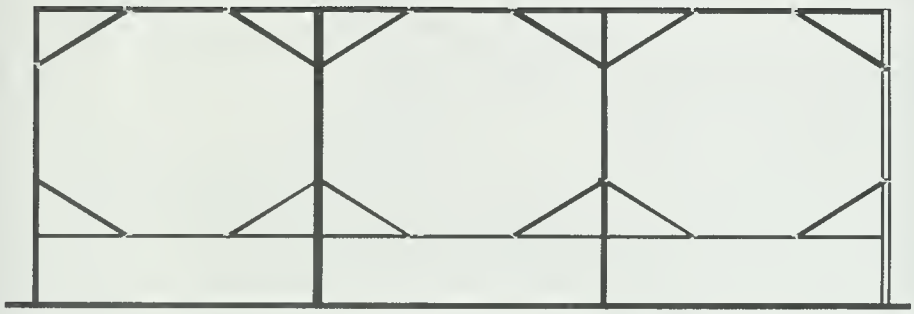
127 83 Stockholm, Sweden
PHONE: (46-8) 680-3500
FAX: (46-8) 710-4460
E-MAIL: stefan.klockby@sf.se
URL: http:www.sf.se
EXECUTIVE ROSTER:
Mr. Torsten Larsson, President/CEO
Mr. Raoul Lindqvist, VP and COO
Mr. Jan Bernhardsson, CFO
Mr. Stefan Klockby, Corporate info
YEAR FOUNDED: 1919
TOTAL SITES (6/31/97): 37
TOTAL SCREENS (6/31/97): 180
AVE. SITES/SCREEN: 4.9
PROJECTED SITES, 12/97: 37
PROJECTED SCREENS, 12/97: 182
THEATRE EMPLOYEES: 1,050
CORPORATE EMPLOYEES: 20
THEATRE LOCATIONS: Sweden

9. National Amusements (UK) Ltd.

200 Elm St.
Dedham, Mass. 02026
PHONE: (617) 461-1600 x300
EXECUTIVE ROSTER:
Sumner Redstone, Chairman & President
Shari E. Redstone, Exec. VP
Jerome Magner, Sr. VP, Finance & Treasurer
William J. Towey, Sr. VP, Operations
Edgar A. Knudson, Sr. VP, Adv. & Pub
George Levitt, Sr. VP, Film Booking
YEAR FOUNDED: 1936
TOTAL SITES (6/31/97): 116

WESTAR SCREEN FRAMES

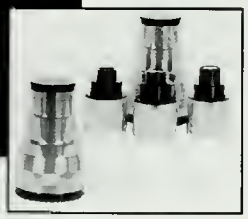
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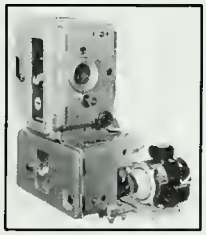
Westar ATAP/k 14 Automatic Projectors



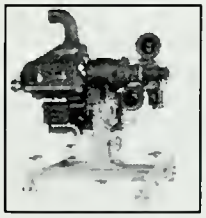
Lens, Screen, Lamp and Aspect Ratio Calculators



Westar HDMC Projection Lenses

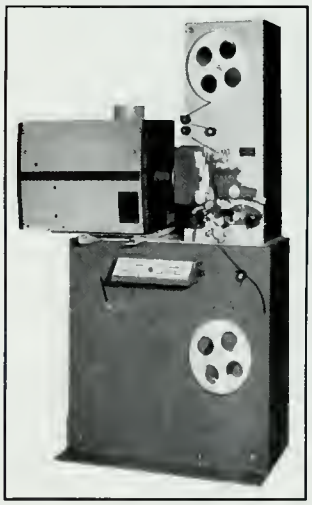


Westar 35 & 35/70 mm Projectors



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International Cinema Equipment Company Inc.

100 N.E. 39th Street □ Miami, Florida 33137 U.S.A. □ Phone 305 573-7339
Fax 305 573-8101 □ E-mail ICECO@aol.com □ Web Site http://www.iceco.com

TOTAL SCREENS (6/31/97): 1,072
EUROPEAN SITES: 13
EUROPEAN SCREENS: 169
AVE. EUROPEAN SCREENS/SITE: 13
PROJECTED EUROPEAN SITES, 12/97: 15
PROJECTED EUROPEAN SCREENS, 12/97: 197
THEATRE EMPLOYEES: 4,500
CORPORATE EMPLOYEES: 195
THEATRE LOCATIONS: United Kingdom, United States, Chile, Argentina (planned

10. Kieft und Kieft Filmtheater GMBH

Muehlenbruecke 11
D-23552 Luebeck, Germany
PHONE: (49-451) 703-0200
FAX: (49-451) 703-0222
EXECUTIVE ROSTER:
Marlis Kieft and Heiner Kieft, Presidents
YEAR FOUNDED: 1948
TOTAL SITES (6/31/97): 36
TOTAL SCREENS (6/31/97): 137
AVE. SCREENS/SITE: 3.8
PROJECTED SITES, 12/97: 42
PROJECTED SCREENS, 12/97: 190
THEATRE LOCATIONS: Germany

11. Kinepolis Group

Eeuwfeest Laan 1
1020 Brussels, Belgium
PHONE: (32-2) 474-2600
FAX: (32-2) 474-2606
EXECUTIVE ROSTER:
Albert Bert, Rose Claeys, Presidents
Joost Bert, CEO
Jan Staelens, Financial Manager
Boudewyn Muts and Florent Geybels, VP, Theatre Operations
Koen Bert, Booking
YEAR FOUNDED: 1988
TOTAL SITES (6/31/97): 9
TOTAL SCREENS (6/31/97): 133
AVE. SCREENS/SITE: 14
PROJECTED SITES, 12/97: 11
PROJECTED SCREENS, 12/97: 159
THEATRE LOCATIONS: Belgium, France

12. Flebbe Filmtheaterbetriesse GMBH & Co. KG (Cinemaxx)

Mittelweg 176
20148 Hamburg Germany
PHONE: (49-40) 45-06-80
FAX: (49-40) 45-06-8204
EXECUTIVE ROSTER:
Hans-Joachim Flebbe, Michal Pawlowski, Presidents
Ernst-Guenther Surkus, CFO/Treasurer
Wolt-Dieter Hahne, VP Personnel
Chris Koppelmeier, Meinolf Thies, VPs, Theatre Operations
YEAR FOUNDED: 1977
TOTAL SITES (6/31/97): 32
TOTAL SCREENS (6/31/97): 132
AVE. SCREENS/SITE: 4
PROJECTED SITES, 12/97: 37
PROJECTED SCREENS, 12/97: 178
THEATRE EMPLOYEES: 1,400
CORPORATE EMPLOYEES. 65
THEATRE LOCATIONS. Germany

13. Sandrew Film AB

Box 5612 Floragatan 4
114 32 Stockholm Sweden
PHONE: (46-8) 762-1700
FAX: (46-8) 10-38-50
EXECUTIVE ROSTER:
Klas Olofsson, President/CEO
Bertil Sandgren, COO
Ulf Djure, CFO/Treasureer
Bo Nilsson, Theatre Operations
YEAR FOUNDED: 1926
TOTAL SITES (6/31/97): 31
TOTAL SCREENS (6/31/97): 116
PROJECTED SITES, 12/97: 33
PROJECTED SCREENS, 12/97: 128
THEATRE EMPLOYEES: 300
CORPORATE EMPLOYEES: 50
THEATRE LOCATIONS: Sweden, Denmark, Finland (planned)

14. Yelmo Films SA

Jacometrezo 4, Floor 7
Madrid 28013 Spain
PHONE: (34-1) 523-1560
FAX: (34-1) 523-1658
E-MAIL: yelmo@info4.com
EXECUTIVE ROSTER:
Ricardo Evole Martil, President/CEO
Angel Poveda Gallego, CFO/Treasurer
Enrique Vinas, VP, Booking and Equipment
YEAR FOUNDED: 1982
TOTAL SITES (6/31/97): 12
TOTAL SCREENS (6/31/97): 99
AVE. SCREENS/SITE: 8.25
PROJECTED SITES, 12/97: 13
PROJECTED SCREENS, 12/97: 108
THEATRE EMPLOYEES: 133
CORPORATE EMPLOYEES: 19
THEATRE LOCATIONS: Spain

15. Jogchem's Theaters B.V.

Veenestraat 31
3751 GE Bunschoten,
The Netherlands
PHONE: (31-33) 298-4884
FAX: (31-33) 298-4908
EXECUTIVE ROSTER:
J. van Dommelen and W. van Dommelen, Presidents
YEAR FOUNDED: 1932
TOTAL SITES (6/31/97): 27
TOTAL SCREENS (6/31/97): 93
AVE. SCREENS/SITE: 3.4
PROJECTED SITES, 12/97: 29
PROJECTED SCREENS, 12/97: to be determined
THEATRE EMPLOYEES: 300
CORPORATE EMPLOYEES: 15
THEATRE LOCATIONS: The Netherlands

16. Finnkino OY

Koivuvaarankuja 2
01640 Vantaa Finland
PHONE: (358-9) 13-11-91
FAX: (358-9) 13-11-9300
EXECUTIVE ROSTER:
Timo Manty, President
YEAR FOUNDED: 1986
TOTAL SITES (6/31/97): 30
TOTAL SCREENS (6/31/97): 81
SCREENS PER SITE: 3.9
PROJECTED SITES, 12/31: 30
PROJECTED SCREENS, 12/31: 81
THEATRE EMPLOYEES: 400
CORPORATE EMPLOYEES: 80
THEATRE LOCATIONS: Finland

17. Alta Films

Martin de los Heros 12
28008 Madrid, Spain
PHONE: (34-1) 542-2702
FAX: (34-1) 542-8777
EXECUTIVE ROSTER:
Enrique Gonzales, President
TOTAL SITES (6/31/97): 11
TOTAL SCREENS (6/31/97): 54
AVE. SCREENS/SITE: 4.9
PROJECTED SITES, 12/97: 11
PROJECTED SCREENS 12/97: 54
THEATRE LOCATIONS: Spain

18. Grupo Lauren Exhibicion

Balmes 87
08008 Barcelona Spain
PHONE: (34-3) 451-6679
FAX: (34-3) 323-6155
EXECUTIVE ROSTER:
Antonio Llorens Olive, CEO
Joan Herbera, Theatre Operations
Xavier Villarroya, Equipment Buyer
Irene Rabar, Advertising
TOTAL SITES (6/31/97): 6
TOTAL SCREENS (6/31/97): 40
AVE. SCREENS/SITE: 6.7
THEATRE EMPLOYEES: 131
CORPORATE EMPLOYEES: 9
THEATRE LOCATIONS: Spain

Emp. Central de Espectiaculos

Teturon, 29
28013 Madrid Spain
PHONE: (34-1) 521-5694
FAX: (34-1) 521-3743
CONTACT: Jose Arias

Grupo Immobiliario Mar

Balmes 98
08008 Barcelona Spain
PHONE: (34-3) 451-6679
FAX: (34-3) 451-6980
CONTACT: Joan Herbera

Los Cines de Zaragoza, S.A.

Francisco Vitoria, 30
50003 Zaragoza Spain
PHONE: (34-76) 23-20-18
FAX: (34-76) 32-82-94
CONTACT: Juana Mendizabal

Emp. Control Y Sam. Catalonia

Rietla, 5
07003 Palma de Mallorca, Spain
PHONE: (34-71) 72-60-74
FAX: (34-71) 71-86-50
CONTACT: Antonio Roca

19. Cinema 5

via Aurelia Antica 422
Rome Italy
PHONE: (39-6) 66-39-01
FAX: (39-6) 66-39-0440
EXECUTIVE ROSTER:
Gian-Luigi Della Casa, President
YEAR FOUNDED: 1988
TOTAL SITES (6/31/97): 12
TOTAL SCREENS (6/31/97): 29
AVE. SCREENS/SITE: 2.4
PROJECTED SITES, 12/97: 13
PROJECTED SCREENS, 12/97: 32
THEATRE EMPLOYEES: 100
CORPORATE EMPLOYEES: 13
THEATRE LOCATIONS: Italy

20. Cine-UK Ltd.

Sutherland House
5/6 Argyll St.
London W1V 1AD
PHONE: (44) 171-494-1394
FAX: (44) 171-734-1443
EXECUTIVE ROSTER:
Stephen M. Wiener, CEO
Ian Johnston, COO
Paul Stefka, VP, Design and Construction
Al Alvarez, VP, Operations
Richard Jones, VP, Finance
Sabine Khan, Marketing & P.R.
YEAR FOUNDED: 1995
TOTAL SITES (6/31/97): 2
TOTAL SCREENS (6/31/97): 24
AVE. SCREENS/SITE: 12
PROJECTED SITES, 12/97: 3
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Pas de DEUX

French film luminaries on the uneasy truce between France and the U.S. *by Karen Achenbach*

More than 102 years ago, the United States and France began separate but equal paths in the creation of motion pictures. Today they remain cinema equals, though in very different ways. The U.S. increasingly dominates the global market (most commonly with technically brilliant, language-recessive action spectacles) to such an extent that film production in many countries is disappearing. But France's use of legislation to keep its film culture healthy makes the French film industry a unique example of the pros and cons of a protectionist approach to the film marketplace.

As far back in cinema history as the late 1950s, Andre Malraux, the first French minister of culture, established the now famous advance on receipts ("Avance sur recettes"), a tax on movie tickets to help finance independent films, administered by the Centre National de la Cinematographie (CNC). The bigger the boxoffice, the more funds there are to distribute back to the filmmakers. Considering that, in France, boxoffice is measured by admissions (by the number of people who come, rather than the dollars they hold), this assigns a deep and (typically French) nationalistic significance to overall attendance. And attendance has been rising. According to Laurent Danielou, of the French Consulate in Los Angeles, in 1996 moviegoing was up from each of the past three years: 140 million admissions in 1996, 125 million admissions in 1993.

"Protectionism" and "subsidy" are somewhat dirty words to U.S. producers, but it's hard to deny the impact of these French measures. As a result of all these steps, France is holding its own in the face of a global system that threatens to over-simplify the market, and France remains the European market where North American cinema gathers the smallest market share. It was also the French who spearheaded an action to exclude cinema (culture) from the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) treaty, fearing in part that, under the general agreement, France's elaborate system of subsidies would be dismantled.



GOING WITH THE FLOW: *Alice Houri as Nenette in Claire Denis' "Nenette and Boni."*

Stateside, there are problems for French product. Of the 500 or so movies released in North America last year, only 20 were French. Motivated by the decreasing U.S. market for French films, a Franco-American cultural fund was created from blank videocassette tax monies to support the promotion of French films in the United States. To this end, a stellar panel of representatives from the French industry recently came to America to plead the French case. The seriousness with which the French view the situation is apparent in that the delegation included two of the most internationally successful French directors, both of whom brought prints of their latest films: Claude Lelouch ("A Man and A Woman," "Bolero," "Les Miserables"), whose most recent effort is entitled "Men, Women: User's Manual," and Bertrand Tavernier ("Round Midnight," " A Sunday in the Country"), whose "Captain Conan" offered a portrait of a sub-group of warriors within an army.

Both of these veteran filmmakers agree the state of the French film industry is healthy, yet challenged. "For a hundred years French cinema has been in crisis," says Lelouch. "But it is easier nonetheless to make a film in France than in most other countries. The authorities like cinema. There are internal rules which allow us to use money that is earned by the cinema. All the successes of films play a part in the production of film. So I think the French cinema is very resilient—in a permanent state of crisis, but it can defend itself."

For Tavernier, alive means aware. "Today, the French cinema is very much alive, with a lot of ideas. One proof of this life is that 66 French directors decided to fight a shameful French law against immigration. More than 100,000 people were in the street [to protest the law]. And it was the young [generation] of film directors who started this."

One of the more successful young producers, Georges Benayoun ("Wild Reeds, "Mina Tannenbaum" and the current U.S. release "Irma Vep," out via Zeitgeist), believes things are looking better and better, particularly on France's domestic side. "Today, the French cinema is very alive. Six years ago we got 29 percent of the share of the market, and now it's around 38 percent. You have to understand that

France is the only country [in Europe] with a national market like that. Even in the United Kingdom, British films have only seven percent or eight percent of the market."

Producer Benayoun has several recent titles that he is currently shopping in the international market: "The Apartment," a slick exercise in architecture and cinematography by first-timer Gilles Mimouni; and "Nenette and Boni", a stunningly intimate film by Claire Denis ("Chocolat," "I Can't Sleep").



NEW DIRECTIONS: *"Captain Conan" director Bertrand Tavernier feels French films might be too complex for U.S. audiences.*

Recent events in Benayoun's career prove that Hollywood and French talent are not mutually exclusive concepts. Earlier this year, "The Apartment" screened at Park City's Sundance Film Festival. Soon after, Benayoun and Mimouni were both signed by CAA; U.S. distribution for "The Apartment" and a possible remake are in the works. Meanwhile, "Nenette and Boni" has been picked up by San Francisco-based Strand Releasing for a 1997 release in the States.

Benayoun asserts that the French are now competing for market shares and producing many different types of films, even science fiction (like "The Fifth Element," an $80+ million, French-financed extravaganza from the "Gallic Spielberg," Luc Besson). Among young filmmakers, it appears that ultra-realism is popular, as in debut filmmaker Sandrine Veysset's "Will It Snow for Christmas." As for trends, Benayoun believes the major trend in French cinema is toward more audience-friendly, less specialized fare. "The only trend I see is [that] the writer and the director are more willing to have success. They want the audiences now, and they are talking about how to attract the audience and yet not lose their authenticity."

And attract an audience they must, not only abroad but at home. Despite pro-French cinema initiatives, Hollywood has an overwhelming presence on French screens. "You have to understand that 10 years ago we received about 80 or 90 American films," explains Benayoun. "This year, for instance, there are 160. There are more American films, they stay less time on the screen, and it's always new films."

The French wariness of an unbridled free-market approach to cinema is also affecting French exhibition. Multiplexes, new to France, are encountering legislation to limit their growth, in order to protect the art-house cinemas of the cities and to defend against the practice of using many screens for few movies. Despite the success his own films have had in the U.S., Tavernier articulates the fear many French film professionals feel about changing France's exhibition infrastructure. "In Germany," he claims, "where the number of screens devoted to the American cinema is much larger than in France, they release less [domestic product]." *[For a counter opinion, see our article on the German market, p. 44.]*

"Nenette and Boni" director Denis agrees. "American cinema is dear to every single French director. But we don't like the American emphasis on economics, and we don't like the way that emphasis is taking hold in world cinema. We consider cinema not only merchandise but also art."

As to breaking into the U.S. market, "maybe we have to make better movies," asserts Mimouni. But Mimouni also turns the "protectionist" argument on its head, saying, "In America, your cinema is incredibly protected. It's quite impossible for a foreign movie to be released, and if it is released it's a very small release."

Demonstrably, the U.S. market for foreign product is still shrinking. In 1970 there were 52 French movies distributed stateside, while in 1990 there were only 25. Denis, who had stateside success with her 1988 film "Chocolat," describes the difference in her past and current experiences. "My experience here with 'Chocolat' was great because I had a great distributor—Orion before it became Sony Classics—and the film really met the audience. [Getting] 'Nenette and Boni' a U.S. release was much more difficult, but now I have a good distributor [Strand Releasing] though the deal is modest."

Lelouch has had American distribution for only 10 of his 35 films in the 40 years of his career. At press time, his latest, "Men, Women: User's Manual" was being considered for release by the specialty arm of a major studio. "The companies that could distribute our films, that is to say the majors, are not interested in our films," says Lelouch. "So we have to absolutely encourage the small distributors. The only thing that really can make a success of a French film here now is word of mouth."

Word of mouth takes time, and there is so much product out there that the market has become very swift and often very deadly. Paradoxically, the rise of American independent film, as assisted by the rise of Disney-owned Miramax, has hurt foreign product by claiming for American-made titles a greater portion of the boxoffice shared by independent and foreign titles. Miramax also dominates many of the art-houses, leaving smaller distributors without screens.

According to Jon Gerrins, co-president of Strand Releasing, Strand recoups its investment on English-language titles with video and cable sales, "and that's where our foreign-language films are having a problem. HBO won't buy foreign-language films [unless they are Academy Award winners], and I can't get the same amount of dollars for these pictures as I can get for an average English-language picture that can play on a Saturday night."

Subtitles are accused of ruining the market for foreign-language product. Americans seem unwilling to read language onscreen, whereas in Europe people not only read but speak several languages, and subtitling is the norm. But "the problem is more than just the subtitles," says Tavernier. "The problem for French films in the U.S. is that they do not bring easy answers. There is not an easy way out. In a country where there is a lot of unemployment, where there are political problems, and where the people feel insecure, where there is a lot of fear, films that are easy to watch are popular. They bring easy answers. You have a problem with the Middle East, you send Schwarzenegger. No more problems. The kids go and see those films. French films are not built that way."

The French will continue trying to find an audience in the U.S. "America is the mecca of film, so you always feel very good when you have your film seen here," Benayoun confirms. The hope for the future "depends on the American audience," asserts Lelouch. "I am optimistic because it is my nature. If I wasn't optimistic I wouldn't try to make my 36th film. And therefore if my films are not distributed immediately they will be distributed another day. They are immortal. And they'll wait for their audience to be ready for them."

BOXOFFICE *would like to thank Florence Dauman of the Directors Guild of America for her heroic assistance in the assembling of this article.*

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SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

SATURDAY, JUNE 28

9.00-17.00*	Trade Show Registration	Holland Hall #11**

SUNDAY, JUNE 29

8.00-18.00	Trade Show Registration	Holland Hall #11
8.00-20.00	Convention Registration	Onyx Lounge
10.30-12.00	Seminar. Sponsor: Media Salles	Auditorium
12.00-13.30	Buffet Lunch. Sponsor: Media Salles	Auditorium Lounge
13.30-15.30	Screening: Media Salles	Auditorium
15.30-17.00	Technical Seminar	Auditorium
17.00-19.00	Screening: Buena Vista International's "Face/Off"	Auditorium
19.00-20.00	EDI Awards	Auditorium
20.00-21.30	Opening Night Dinner. Sponsor: Polygram Film International	West Hall #3
21.30-23.30	Product Reel and Screening: Polygram Intl.'s "Bean"	Auditorium

MONDAY, JUNE 30

8.00-18.00 8.00-18.00	Convention Registration Trade Show Registration	Onyx Lounge Holland Hall #11
8.15-8.45	Continental Breakfast	Auditorium Lounge
8.45-10.15	Concessions Seminar	Auditorium
10.30-12.30	Product Reel and Screening: UIP's "The Lost World"	Auditorium
12.45-14.30	Opening Day Luncheon. Sponsor: UIP	West Hall #3
14.30-18.00	**Trade Show** and Cocktail Party. Sponsor: Dolby Laboratories	Holland Hall #11
18.00-20.00	Screening: 20th Century Fox International's "Volcano"	Auditorium
20.00-21.30	Dinner Gala. Sponsor: Fox Intl.	West Hall #3
21.45-24.00	Screening: Fox Intl.'s "Speed 2"	Auditorium

TUESDAY, JULY 1

8.00-18.00	Convention/Trade Show Registration	Onyx Lounge
8.30-9.15	Continental Breakfast	Auditorium Lounge
9.15-12.00	Product Reel and Screening: Warner Bros. International's "Batman & Robin"	Auditorium
12.00-15.30	**Trade Show** and Luncheon. Sponsor: Warner Bros. Intl.	Holland Hall #11
15.30-17.45	Screening: Buena Vista International's "Hercules"	Auditorium
17.45-18.00	Refreshment Break	Auditorium Lounge
18.00-20.00	Product Reel and Screening: BVI	Auditorium
21.00-23.15	Dinner Gala. Sponsor: BVI	To Be Announced

WEDNESDAY, JULY 2

8.00-18.00	Convention/Trade Show Registration	Onyx Lounge
8.15-8.45	Continental Breakfast	Auditorium Lounge
8.45-10.15	Seminar: "Creating the Product." Moderator: Peter Cowie, Variety	Auditorium
10.00-12.30	**Trade Show**	Holland Hall #11
12.30-14.15	Luncheon. Sponsor: Columbia TriStar Film Distributors International	West Hall #3
14.30-17.00	Product Reel and Screening: Columbia TriStar Intl.'s "Men In Black"	Auditorium
19.30-20.30	Champagne Reception. Sponsor: Eastman Kodak	Auditorium Lounge and Terrace
20.30-close	Final Night Banquet & Awards Ceremony. Sponsor: Coca-Cola International	West Hall #3
Close	Post Dinner Reception. Skylight Show by Xanto Searchlights	Main Entrance Drive

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**** All locations are at the RAI complex unless specified.**

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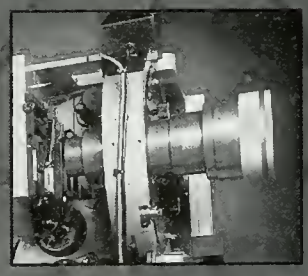
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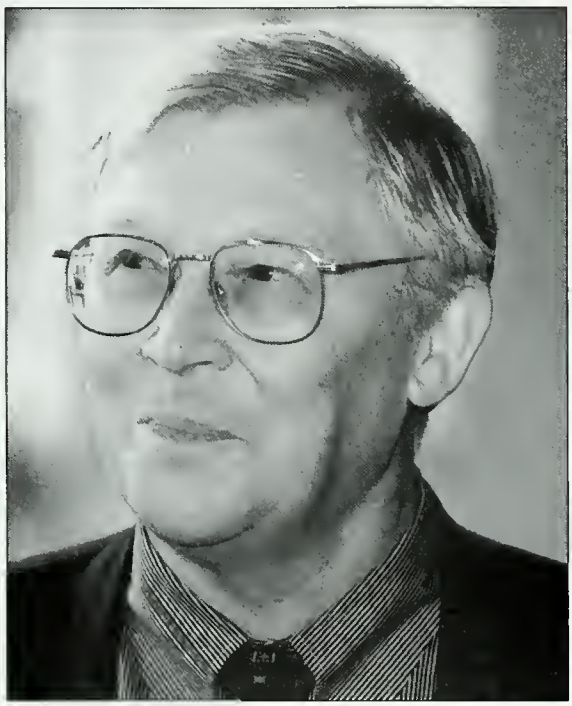
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Response No. 23

MULTIPLEX MAVEN

Founder of Decatron and Kinepolis and father of the European multiplex, Albert Bert is Cinema Expo's Exhibitor of the Year

by Pat Kramer



Albert Bert, founder of the Belgium-based Decatron N.V. and co-founder of its sister company, the Kinepolis Group, is Cinema Expo's Exhibitor of the Year. Bert's exhibition circuit is Belgium's largest, and it's making inroads into the Dutch and French markets due to the company's unique qualifications in building multiplexes.

Widely regarded as the man who launched Europe's multiplex boom in the 1980s, Bert's companies now operate 11 multiplexes (including two in France) with 100 screens. Born into a family whose heritage was exhibition, Bert followed the example of his grandfather, Charles Bert, a forerunner in early exhibition. The elder Bert established Harelbeke's first cinema in 1927, running silents at the Hotel de Flandres, while Albert's father, Alfred, debuted Harelbeke's Theatre Majestic in 1941.

Starting out as a ticket seller, Albert later became involved in the single-screen theatre's renovation into a twin-screen cinema, providing Belgium with its first multiplex. Joining forces with his sister-in-law, Rose Claeys, Bert built a three-screen theatre called Trioscoop in 1972 as a sort of test case to see if attendance would increase when a greater choice of films was provided. Located in Hasselt, a small provincial town with only two screens at the time, Trioscoop was a perfect place to begin proving this theory. The success of Trioscoop quickly demonstrated that multi-screen cinemas were the way to go in Belgium. Bert later added four more screens to the theatre.

However, as Bert recalls, other exhibitors were not quite ready to accept the concept back then. "When my family first started multiplexing in Belgium, 25 to 30 years ago, attendance was down very low. Most of my colleagues thought, 'Yes, he's lucky. Each time it's a bulls-eye, but it will not continue.'"

Pentascoop, a five-screen cinema, followed in 1975 in Kortrijk. In 1981, the 12-screen Decascoop was built in Ghent. Setting a new standard for the whole of Europe, Decascoop's dozen halls and stadium seating for 3,500 made it one of the first modern multiplexes. "That was the first very big multiplex," Bert recollects. "It had 12 screens, but only one projection booth!"

Having established expertise in multiplexes, Bert in 1987 founded Decatron, owned by the Bert family. The Kinepolis Group, a partnership between Bert and Claeys, was inaugurated the following year with the opening in Brussels in 1988 of Kinepolis, then the world's largest multiplex. With Kinepolis, featuring 24 screens plus an IMAX theatre, Bert continued to set the trend for European exhibition.

Since that time, the Kinepolis Group has added three additional multiplexes. The 24-screen, 8,500-seat Metropolis is in Antwerp, and there are two multiplexes in France: Kinepolis's 14-screen complex at St. Julien-les-Metz and the 23-screen Le Chateau du Cinema at Lomme (Lille). This September, another multiplex will open in Belgium, a 10-screen complex in Kortrijk.

With the Belgian exhibition market now reaching its saturation point, Bert says plans are to expand into new markets. One such venture includes the freshly inked partnership between Decatron managing director Joost Bert (Bert's eldest son) and A.J. Weststrate of Holland's Cinema Groep for an eight-screen multiplex in Vlissingen (see our report in the May 1997 issue). This partnership is expected to yield at least 10 exhibition outlets in the Netherlands over the next few years.

Given such burgeoning growth, Bert relies on sons Joost, Koen, Geert and Peter to help with management and planning. (There are also 13 grandchildren to carry on the family tradition.) Although he acknowledges his role in bringing about European multiplexing, he says there are always new challenges in exhibition. "I am always busy. I just received a call from my son, Joost, who has been [in France] in Nancy to talk with city authorities. Yesterday, he was in Reims, about 200 kilometers from here. In every city in which we go, we have competition. We're in competition with French companies that started five or six years ago in multiplexing. They don't have the same experience as us, but I still have to plead for my project."

Commenting on his Exhibitor of the Year award, Bert comments wryly, "It's better than the Lifetime Achievement Award. I am only 69 years old—I'm not done yet!" Saying he's inspired by his father and grandfather in heaven, Bert continues to greet the new challenges with the same perseverance and vision that has won him acclaim for nearly three decades in exhibition.

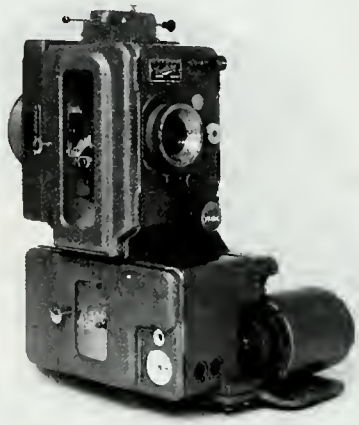
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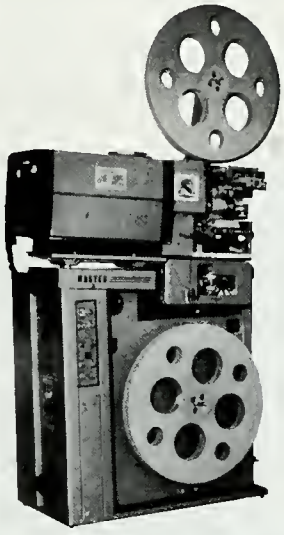
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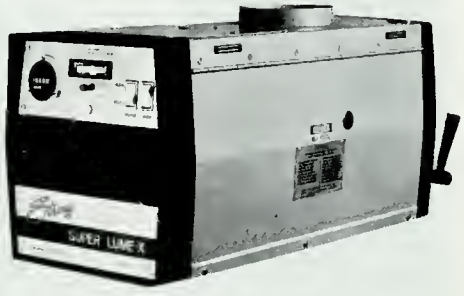
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MULTI-MEDIA MAN

Fox International president Jim Gianopulos, a seasoned entertainment veteran, is Cinema Expo's Distributor of the Year

by Pat Kramer



Since becoming president of Twentieth Century Fox International, Jim Gianopulos has seen his company's boxoffice tallies double each year. Having foreign rights to the likes of the Oscar-winning "Braveheart" (earning more than $140 million overseas), "Independence Day" (more than $500 million) and the redone "Star Wars" trilogy (expected to generate $250 million) didn't hurt, but he credits his staff—"a tightly knit team, dedicated to making the most of all our films in the international marketplace while working closely with our exhibition partners to do so"—for much of the success.

A 15-year veteran of international distribution, Gianopulos has a strong background in emerging entertainment technologies (video, pay TV and satellite)—experience that has helped him better understand the exhibition marketplace, he says. As senior vice president of business affairs/international for RCA/Columbia Pictures International Video from 1982 to 1986, Gianopulos worked to establish the company's worldwide video operations. He moved to a similar slot at Paramount Pictures in 1986, building the studio's overseas video and pay TV businesses. "Those were great times and times of rapid growth and excitement," he recalls. "Being a part of it was very gratifying and rewarding." During a nine-month stint as executive vice president, international at Carolco Pictures, Gianopulos boosted revenues handling films like "Terminator 2," "Cliffhanger" and "Basic Instinct."

He joined Fox in 1992 as president of international and pay TV and took his current post in 1994. Gianopulos has spearheaded the development of the studio's regional offices in Europe, Latin America and Asia. He's also responsible for overseeing foreign marketing and distribution for all of Fox's theatrical releases and overseas acquisitions.

"It's interesting to find myself in the theatrical side of the business," he says, "because I spent so much of my career in video, pay TV and satellite distribution. But what I learned in this process is that, ultimately, the beginning of the lifepsan of any film—and the most innovative point in its existence—is at its initiation, its first release in theatres."

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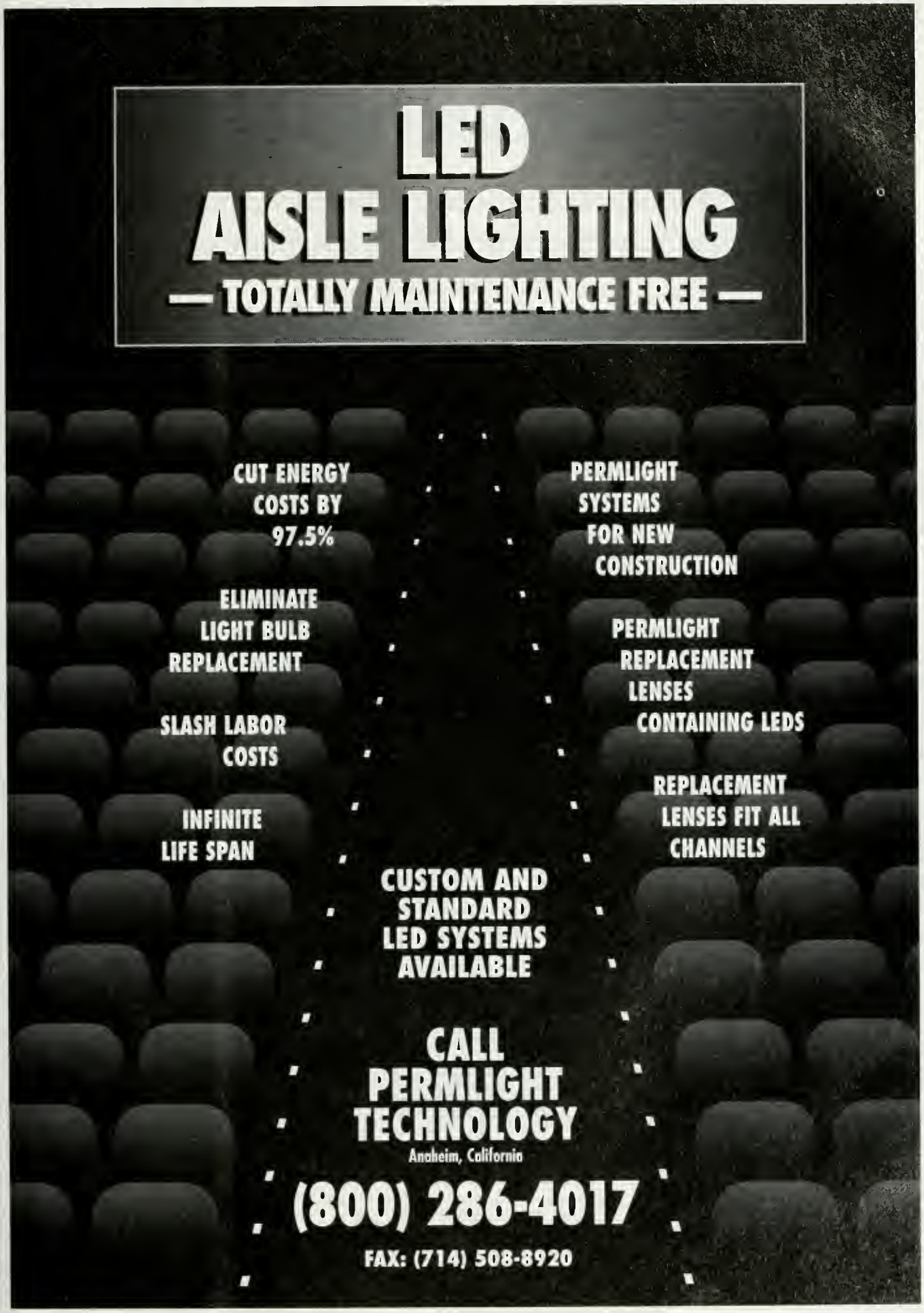
Rather than thinking of alternatives like pay TV and video as threats, Gianopulos believes each medium has its place. "It's not about trying to diminish those businesses," he says, "It's quite the opposite. Ultimately, a studio succeeds because it lives in harmony with the various media and distribution windows. It's not about trying to pretend TV or video will go away. It's about heightening the experience and the value perceived and the importance of the media we're in."

Comparing the 1980s trend toward home video to that of consumer response to color TV and even radio at their inceptions, Gianopulos says, "What we learn from all these cycles of new media is that, ultimately, people's desire to see film increases overall. And they realize that the most exciting and newest place to see films is at a theatre on a big screen."

Gianopulos has a bullish outlook for foreign returns. "If you look at East Germany, there's been a very severe economic recession—and yet attendance is up almost 20 percent, largely due to the improvements of the cinema infrastructure." Similar scenarios are occurring in Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic, where revenues are hitting records as screens are improved, and in Spain and Germany, where rapid screen growth has led to admissions gains despite recessionary conditions. "With Greece, Italy and Portugal's cinema expansion," he says, "the potential in Europe and the international marketplace is tremendous."

Another plus is the longer playing season. "Typically, summer has not been the most active cinemagoing season. But then you look at a place like Germany, where admissions last year were up 60 percent, in part due to the generic campaign we did. In Italy, the expansion of the season into May and an earlier opening in August and September are leading to increased revenues. I think people are finding that the better the theatres, the better the experience, the more likely they are to go—and go more often during the entire year, as opposed to just at Christmas in years past."

Acknowledging his Cinema Expo Distributor of the Year award, Gianopulos says, "It's an honor to win the award, but it's really an award that reflects the enormous success that Fox International has had, particularly in the past year, and in rebuilding an organization over the past couple of years. And, while I get to make the speeches, that success belongs to a team of almost 500 people spread across the world. And I shared with them their hard work and dedication that made it possible."



Response No. 194

CELSMANSHIP

Disney Animation president Peter Schneider is honored with Cinema Expo's International Creative Achievement Award

by Pat Kramer

Since Peter Schneider joined Disney 12 years ago, the company has achieved phenomenal commercial and artistic success with such animated fare as "The Lion King," "Toy Story," "Beauty and the Beast," "Aladdin" and "The Little Mermaid." Under the generalship of Schneider and Disney Co. vice chairman Roy Disney, the studio has continued its long distinction of being the world's animation leader. It's deserved, then, that Schneider—president of Walt Disney Feature Animation and Walt Disney Theatrical Productions—is this year's recipient of Cinema Expo's International Creative Achievement Award.



Schneider insists that the glory is not all his. "This award is not for me, per se," he says, "but is symbolic of [the work] that both Roy Disney and I have overseen." Schneider says he's less excited about his name being on the award than by the fact that animation is finally being honored globally. "I'm thrilled for the artists being recognized by the international community. I feel animation is a very collective art form in many, many ways. These artists are truly spectacular in what they've done. I'm proud of all of them."

Under Schneider's leadership, the animation division has grown tenfold in size, produced 12 features and received 10 Academy Awards. Commercially, those animated films have generated more than $2.5 billion in boxoffice. Disney's first animated feature under Schneider, 1986's "The Great Mouse Detective," earned $25 million; 1988's "Oliver & Company" did $53 million. Through "The Lion King," each successive film beat the past record: 1989's "The Little Mermaid" did $84 million, 1991's "Beauty and the Beast" $146 million, 1992's "Aladdin" $217 million and 1994's "The Lion King" $313 million.

Those results, Schneider says, comes from a collaboration among the wizards of illustration, writing, technology and song. "Animation is a visual medium first—it's the written word and the visual word, in a sort of marriage," Schneider says. "But it's the animation artist, the animator, who knows how to make things move and give the perception of movement. [Even] if you have great stories, great characters, great music and great technology, it takes great artists to do that. When you have a combination of all these things, I think you ultimately make successful movies."

Schneider comes from a strong theatrical background, having spent 15 years creating theatrical productions. A graduate of Purdue University, where he majored in theatre directing, Schneider earned his credentials doing plays at New York's The WPA, Playwrights Horizon and Circle Repertory. From 1976 through 1980, he served as managing director for Chicago's renowned St. Nicholas Theatre, where he produced and managed more than 60 dramas and musicals.

Schneider next moved to London to serve as general manager for Apollo Theatre Productions. In that capacity, he was involved with a number of notable productions on the West End. In 1983, he headed to Los Angeles to direct the 1984 Olympic Arts Festival. The following year, he was named president of Walt Disney Feature Animation; in 1996, he took on the additional role of president of Walt Disney Theatrical Productions.

Crediting that background for his success at Disney, Schneider cites the similarities that exist between live theatre and feature animation. "In animation, which I feel is more analogous to running a theatre company than running a movie business, a lot of things I learned in the theatre business are being applied," he says. "It's very much like running a repertory theatre—the actors, the whole thing. And we've been very successful at developing new material, whether it be 'The Lion King,' 'Beauty and the Beast' or 'The Little Mermaid.' And that's using the same skills one has to have to be successful in theatre: the ability to develop materials with a collective process."

Looking back on the changes that have taken place in the animation industry over the past decade, Schneider says animation has again become a legitimate business. "At Disney [in the early '80s], no one cared about animation. There were only 150 to 200 artists working in animation. Today, there are more than 2,200. Clearly, the movies were not grossing any money, maybe $10 million or $20 million. Now they're grossing hundreds of millions of dollars."

One can expect more of the same from Schneider in the future. Even as "Hercules" is beginning its global release, Disney has eight animated features currently in production. Walt's grand tradition lives on.

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IMBESSONISM

Luc Besson, creator of "The Fifth Element" and "La Femme Nikita," garners Cinema Expo's Award of Excellence in Filmmaking

by Kim Williamson

I'm a fan of French cinema. I like the fact that they have 'freedom in their heads'—they're very free."

On a warm spring day, working inside the cool confines of James Cameron's Digital Domain facility in Venice, Calif., 38-year-old French filmmaker Luc Besson is defending the industry and country in which he gave birth to "Le Dernier Combat," "Subway," "The Big Blue" and "La Femme Nikita," the 1990 film whose global success established his reputation beyond Gaul's boundaries.

Back in fall 1994, as his first English-language and studio production, "The Professional," was about to hit theatres, Besson seemed to have less fondness for his French fellows, busy militating against Hollywood moviemaking. "I would love for the French to stop talking and work more. At 4 in the morning they're still in bed discussing the cinema. They should wake up at 8, take the pen, and work," Besson said then. Instead, the French "spend their time discussing, disagreeing.... And during this time the Americans make 200 movies."



Luc Besson (center) on the set of the Gaumont production "The Fifth Element."

But Besson, whose "The Fifth Element" (like "The Professional") is a French/American/Japanese co-production among Gaumont, Columbia and JVC, today praises French filmmakers as "artists. They take risks. They are visionary also. Since the beginning, since Cocteau and all those guys, it's always been very visionary."

As to why local European moviemaking seems to be flourishing these days, Besson says, "I think because the artist drives the movie, not the producer, not the money. When the movie is born in an office, something is wrong already. A movie needs to come from the heart. It can't be born between numbers."

Besson has had conflicts with the industry's business folks before—particularly during the stateside release of "The Big Blue" via the now-defunct Weintraub Entertainment Group, which recut the film to disastrous boxoffice—but he seems very happy with his current corporate partners. (In fact, on the day he speaks with **BOXOFFICE**, he is filming a commercial for JVC's diamond anniversary.) "Everybody was happy [with "The Professional"], so we do it again," Besson says. "And I have a special relationship with Gaumont because we try through the years to make everything as simple as we can. Which is: I write the script, I come, if they like it they say 'yes,' if they don't they say 'no.' And if they say 'yes,' it's because they have a good reason.

"And I respect them—I never throw money through the window, never. With the first movie I did, I had no money, and I know the price of everything. I have no pleasure in spending for nothing."

"The Fifth Element," which at $80 million is the most expensive French production ever, is a fivefold increase over Besson's previous budget high. But Besson remained calm during production ("If something costs $10, why pay $15? And if something costs $1 million because it costs $1 million, then let's spend $1 million"), and he remains calm as the film begins its worldwide rollout. "Why should I feel pressure? My work is finished when the film is finished. There's nothing I can do after that. I can give my blood for two years for the movie, but when the credits end and the movie is finished and it's over, that's it."

Asked why his films translate so well around the globe, Besson says, "Maybe because I feel as a human being. I don't think as a Frenchman, or a Parisian, or a South Parisian. [Besson was born in Paris in 1959.] I grew up in Greece and Yugoslavia, then I spent time in Paris, then I spent time in Tunisia with my father, and Rome, then in America, then in London.

"Art is the only country that is without a flag. Take a Picasso painting: No matter if you see the painting at the Guggenheim or the Louvre, it's a Picasso. It doesn't matter if Picasso was Spanish or French—it's a Picasso. I love this world of art, because it's the last safe country, where you don't need to be white or black or speak any English or French. All the people involved in an artistic process should be more aware of that: That we are lucky that we still have a country that's really free, with no frontier, and we can go from the future to the past. We can invent everything."

Regarding his Cinema Expo award, Besson says, "The only thing I understand is, a group of people somewhere love my work, and I'm happy. So it's great—it just gives me a little more pressure to make my movie better, and to open my eyes more and open my ears more, and be better on the script and things.

"My only goal if I do another one is, to make it better."

BOXOFFICE

SPECIAL REPORT:

CINEMA EXPO 1997

MULTIPLICITY

As in much of Europe, Irish exhibition is changing dramatically. BOXOFFICE talks to some of today's movers & shakers, and looks back at a fabled past.

by Tony Deane



STOMPIN' AT THE SAVOY: *The beautiful Savoy Cinema in Dublin is one of the last survivors from the early days of Irish exhibition.*

The Internet. What a wonderful vehicle for bringing people together. Case in point: our new Irish correspondent, Dubliner Tony Deane. Tony found us through **BOXOFFICE ONLINE** *(for those of you who've been dead these last three years, that's* http://www.boxoff.com*) and struck up such an interesting and insightful electronic correspondence that it was inevitable* **BOXOFFICE** *would make him our man on the Irish scene.*

We didn't make it easy for him—no sir, not us. Tony's first assignment was nothing less than a thumbnail sketch of Irish exhibition's entire history. We couldn't be more delighted with the results.

*Here then is an Irishman's view of exhibition in his own home country. We're proud to bring it to you, and we can promise you this: you'll be hearing more from Tony Deane in the very near future.—**Ray Greene, Editor-in-Chief,** **BOXOFFICE***

THE HISTORY

It's been called the land of saints and scholars, which is ok if you're living in a country that still holds on to its old ways. The Ireland of today is lightyears away from all of those old fashioned customs people love to hear about. It's the most westerly island in Europe, the next stop being the states, and while some foreigners often mistake it for part of mainline Britain it's as far away from Britain culturally as it could possibly be.

The Irish Republic has a population of between three and four million, and research shows that it has the youngest population in Europe, each average member coming equipped with his or her own vast amount of disposable income. This is spent mostly on entertainment of some sort, and the cinema comes high among entertainment priorities.

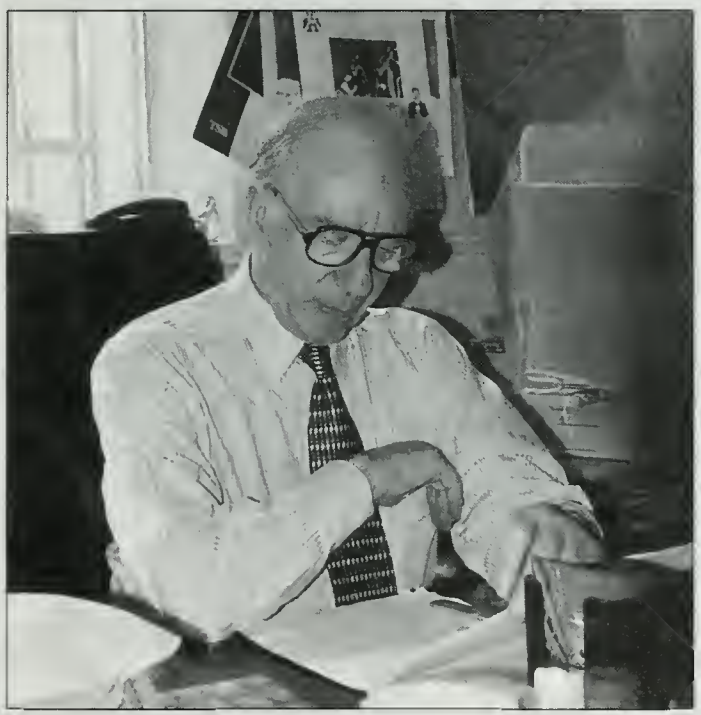
When Giuseppe Tornatore was writing the script for his film "Cinema Paradiso," he, like all Europeans of a certain age, he could draw on memories of a childhood when the local

Irish Extra:

With Albert Kelly, Irish Exhibition Legend

President of Ireland's Independent Cinema Owners Society, Albert Kelly is a soft-spoken, hard-hitting business man who came up in what he considers to have been more fiercely competitive Irish times. "When I started there was a cinema on almost every block," he says. "Now you can see the same movie in every multiplex, while back then, with the same amount of screens and all playing different films, I feel competition was stiffer." As one of the foremost figures in Irish exhibition, his over five decades plying the screen trade make him a sort of pocket history of growth and changes within the industry.

In 1940, Albert, who had started life in the cinema business as a projectionist, bought some 16mm soccer coaching films and offered to show them to local football clubs. He would show them for a fee, and some clubs who loved the idea of seeing the top players of the sport giving instruction put the word out about him.



Due to the club by-laws, Albert was not allowed to show the films to members of the general public or to advertise his product, but word got out and he soon had packed houses. Ironically for a future exhibitor, "This was not what I wanted," says Albert, "and on arriving at the town I was amazed to see posters stuck up [by the club members] on every tree." So successful was this operation that Albert went to the National Film Institute and hired out additional films for golf societies and other special occasions.

Inevitably, Kelly took to screening feature films for special functions, which proved to be very popular. This gave him an insight into how to book product, which was to be useful at a later stage in his life. He went back and worked in several cinemas before getting an opportunity to work for a company called Sundrive Cinemas Ltd. The proud owners of three suburban cinemas, Sundrive had 18 members on its board and a managing director who hated managers (he thought them an unnecessary expense, being an ex-projectionist himself). One day he offered Albert the job of manager in one of the cinemas and it took him four weeks to decide if he would take it or not. "As far as I was concerned," Albert says wryly, "this was the nearest position to the door."

Because Sundrive was closing one of its cinemas and Albert saw this as a potential threat to continuing job stability, he took the managing job. The Kenilworth was a cinema that held 1,115 patrons. Under Albert Kelly's stewardship, Sundrive was able to keep the house almost full most of the time.

One day Albert found Sundrive's managing director dead in the chair in his office. Immediately, his circumstances changed. "This was not the ideal way to get a promotion, but while I knew there were a lot of directors in the head office, not one of them knew how to book a film."

The years Albert spent hawking films around the clubs and booking features and shorts stood to him. Sundrive put Albert in charge, and he put his mark on both of its cinemas. When he suddenly found himself with the problem of not being able to get big commercial movies at one of the houses for 14 weeks due to its rural location and the fact that standard booking practices gave urban areas over three months of exclusivity on the titles they booked, he changed that screen into an art-house and it did very well.

But the "barring order" favoring urban houses kept working against the smaller companies. Sundrive began to feel the pinch because of the long delays in getting product, so it closed the cinemas and went into real estate, a venture which proved very successful. Albert was offered one of the cinemas as payback for all his hard work and started to rent a former Sundrive house called the Classic in 1976. It took him only two years to buy the cinema for £60,000 (US$90,000) and to this day he has never had a losing year.

Albert joined Ireland's NATO-like Independent Cinemas Association in order to fight the "barring order" and discovered that the only way to stop what was happening was to go to the Restrictive Practice Board. "As far as I was concerned, this was an injustice that had to be put right," he says, "and the only way to do this was to join the ICA. When the Restrictive Practices Board sat, I found that I received a lot of attention because I spoke out." The ICA and the RPB eventually worked out a plan, and 14 weeks was reduced to 12, then to eight, and eventually as it is today: equal terms for all with the city cinemas.

Never content to stand still, Albert started Ireland's first "midnight movie" screenings and was the first to put "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" up in that time slot. Sixteen years and five prints later it's still running. "We have all sorts coming to the show and some even have their stags' night here. I recall a hearse arriving one night unannounced. Several young men got out of the front and proceeded to carry the 'corpse' [who was to be married the following morning] into the cinema. They did a tour of the auditorium, much to the delight of the patrons, and then vanished into the night!"

Albert went to London and met with leaders of the film industry who never came to Ireland. He still looks them up, his outlook being that "it's the men at the top who make the decisions, and as far as I'm concerned, if they won't come here, then I will go to them."

Travel to all the industry tradeshows is the current love of his life. Albert talks about the exhibition trade with great feeling and has a twinkle in his eye when he talks about the people he meets outside Ireland—every one a personality, to hear him tell it.

For those who haven't had the chance to make his acquaintance, it's fortunate that Albert likes to get around. If ever you want to meet a gentleman in business, make sure you shake hands with Albert Kelly, no matter where you meet him around the world.

—Reported for **BOXOFFICE** *by Tony Deane*



A TRUE "CLASSIC:" *Irish exhibitor Albert Kelly (see sidebar) stands before his Dublin moviehouse.*

"flea pit," as Irish moviehouses were called, was a way of life. Children of all ages went to their local cinemas, which were in abundance if you lived in the city, and movies provided a central meeting place for those who lived in the country. In the '50s, the island had at least 300 exhibition sites, each with a single screen, and only about three prints of any given film to divide between them. This caused a lot of delay for the less populated areas, as all the inventory would play in each of the cities for at least three to four weeks, with the country houses restricted from playing them until later on. By the time they got to the "sticks," the prints were in bad shape, but they would stay in rural circulation anyway for as much as the next three years.

Back then, there was a "barring order," which made sure films were not available to country cinemas because the distributors "barred" them until titles ran their course in the city. This gave city cinemagoers a guaranteed prime choice, and cinema owners everywhere else high blood pressure. The most popular genre was the western, which the Irish people went to in droves because they had an affinity for the great outdoors and the easy pace of "frontier" life. The Screen cinema (then called the Corinthian) in the heart of Dublin was nicknamed "the Ranch," because the staple diet on offer each week was the old "B" westerns.

As the capital city, Dublin held at least a third of the Irish Republic's population, and it was therefore the place where all the major exhibition and distribution companies had their offices. The largest Dublin moviehouse was the Royal, which held almost 4,000 people in one auditorium and showed a mixture of cinema and stage productions. The more sophisticated Metropole showed what would now be called "art-house" fare.

The '60s saw a change in the mood of the cinemagoing public, with the likes of Doris Day and Rock Hudson grabbing the attention. As in the states, the Irish exhibition industry was rocked by the advent of a new technology: a tiny little box called "television."

The opening of the National Television Station on New Year's Eve 1961 was almost the end for most rural cinemas, which had made due with inferior presentation conditions for decades. People liked what they could see for nothing, especially since many rural theatres had been restricted by the "barring" regulations into giving second-rate service. Almost 160 sites closed in the space of eight years, leaving only about 120 houses by 1969 to cater to the small trickle of available moviegoers. Double features became things of the past; the audience's attention span had shortened due to TV, and a two-hour program with trailers was all the public could take.

Things looked bad for the moment. But Irish exhibitors, like their American cousins, found a way out of the abyss: the "twinning" of the Savoy theatre marked a monumental occasion for Irish exhibition.

TWINNING

In the early '70s, Dublin's second largest cinema, the Savoy, was turned into a twin. Originally, the Savoy held over 2,000 patrons; when it was split, it held 800 downstairs and 1,000 upstairs. The first films shown on the "twinned" Savoy's screens were "Anne of A Thousand Days' and "Airport," both of which turned out to be Irish blockbusters. The Savoy also held a restaurant (as did most cinemas of the day). This was later turned into a 200-seat cinema, much to the horror of other exhibitors.

Brendan McCaul, vice president and general manager for Buena Vista International (U.K.) Ltd., recalls his days with Rank Cinemas, which owned the Savoy. "At the time we had committed both cinemas to two films, 'Eye Of the Needle' and 'The French Lieutenant's Woman.' We had no place for a little movie called 'Bugsy Malone,' so we put it into the 200 seater. It filled the cinema from the afternoon until late evening, seven days a week." The trade was startled at what had happened at the Savoy, and by 1978 most of the surviving larger cinemas were being split into some sort of extra capacity.

Gone was the 4,000-seat Royal which, like the Regal Rooms, had been sold to make way for an office building. Gone too were many of Dublin's fine central cinemas: The Capital was converted from an opera house to a shopping center; the Metropole also was converted to retail space.

Meanwhile, the Savoy kept subdividing, eventually growing to house six theatres. Across the road, its competition at the Carlton grew to five screens, while the Carlton's sister

cinema, the Adelphi around the corner, enlarged to six. But the city still retained some single-screen cinemas which showed art-house and independent movies; in total, 24 Dublin screens were available to the public by the '80s.

The advent in the 1980s of home video created an unexpected problem for Irish exhibitors. A flood of pirated U.S. videotapes showed up in pubs and local hostelries, some located almost on the doorstep of the big urban houses. So called "art-house" cinemas, which showed foreign films with some sort of nudity, suffered most because the videos showed everything, which was against the censorship laws applied to the local cinema. The fact that you could see a first-run film in a public bar before a cinema got a chance to book it caused its own form of havoc.

In the suburbs, things were also changing. The local cinema was vanishing, replaced by supermarkets in most instances. Other exhibitors attempted to keep up with the public's appetite for entertainment by turning their houses into bowling alleys, skating rinks and bingo parlors. The one plus for those exhibitors who stayed the course was that public transport improvements and the fact that more people had motor cars were making it easier to get into the city to see the wide range of films on offer there.

UCI AND THE RISE OF THE IRISH MULTIPLEX

Fifteen successful years after existing cinemas began in earnest to split their large auditoriums into several screens, Ireland's first custom-built, dedicated multiplex was erected on the south side of Dublin in a place called Tallaght by European powerhouse UCI, and Ireland entered the modern exhibition age. Despite intensifying competition, the theatre is still one of the most important in Ireland. "It has had a tremendous effect," says Buena Vista's Brendan McCaul, "because it has become our number one grossing hall. It's also in the top three in Europe for UCI Cinemas. They were turning over one to two million admissions per year, and as a mean average [for Tallaght] you could multiply that by three. Take 40 percent of that figure and it gives you an idea of the [volume of] concession sales."

A disparaging comment circulated when the Tallaght cinema opened was that because of high unemployment in the area people had nothing better to do than to go to the movies. McCaul scoffs at such an idea. "The fact of the matter is that more people are travelling from surrounding country areas to shop in [the surrounding shopping] complexes, and while there they take in a movie. This is good for the shopper and for the owners of the sites that are adjacent to the cinemas, because both benefit."

UCI next opened a nine-screen complex on the north side of the city. While this second build didn't quite equal Tallaght's success thanks to steeper competition, it still captured the public's imagination with its state-of-the-art facilities. Several months ago, UCI opened yet another nine-screen complex in the southwest part of the city. Opened in the off-season, the new build has yet to catch on, even though it contains a wine bar. But Buena Vista's McCaul is optimistic for this new cinema. "I believe we have not seen the best of it yet," he says. "When the summer comes along, the likes of 'Batman,' 'Con Air,' 'Men In Black' and 'Jurassic Park 2' will bring people out in their droves to the cinema."

UCI's ambitious building spree changed the math dramatically for other Dublin exhibitors. Cinemas in the city were hard hit; in less than two years, they had new competition from three state-of-the-art multiplexes housing 27 new screens. Rumors abounded in the trade about the impending closure of the Carlton and the Adelphi—by this time national institutions—which shared management as part of what was then MGM's European circuit. The Carlton/Adelphi ownership reported that it had been impacted by the new multiplexes, but it intended to open a multiplex of its own, which would bring people back.

True to their word, they opened a nine-screen complex in the heart of the city, which was to have been called the MGM Multiplex. Right from the start, the MGM was dogged by all sorts of trouble. Owing to a variety of snafus at the corporate level, the cinema was finished but not opened for 18 months. By then,

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the complex had changed hands along with all the other MGM cinemas in Europe. When it finally opened its doors, the MGM Multiplex had a new name reflecting its changed status: it was now The Virgin Multiplex.

WARD-ANDERSON AND ABBEY FILMS

The new complex was up against the very well known and reliable Savoy's six cinemas, which include the largest screen in the country (four stories high and 60 feet in width) and the latest in digital sound. The Savoy was by now a flagship for the Ward-Anderson group, which runs it under the company's exhibition arm, Abbey Films. With over 100 screens around the country, Ward-Anderson represents a force to be reckoned with. Its history in Ireland offers a unique view of the Irish approach to the medium.

Leo Ward, who was a footballer of note in the late '40s, went into distribution with a film called "The Hills of Donegal"—a risky venture that paid off, according to his son Paul Ward, director of Abbey Films. "No one wanted to know about this movie, so my father took it to Cork [the second largest city in Ireland] and it ran for over three weeks. Suddenly, everyone wanted it."

Leo made several visits to London and picked up the rights to show a few older films. When the popular British "Carry On" comedies and the Chinese-made Bruce Lee features came out, Leo went into distribution in a big way. But the Ward family's exhibition roots went even deeper.

"The first cinema the family got involved in was in the mid-'50s in Lucan," Paul Ward



Paul Ward, Director, Abbey Films, Dublin.

remembers. "The previous owner wanted to leave the country. He had debts of £8,000 [US$12,000], and my father took over the debts and gave him £10,000 [US$15,000]."

From then on, Lee Ward and his partner Kevin Anderson took partial interests in local cinemas. They had a good working relationship with the local owners, who continued to run the cinemas for the sake of the local townfolk. In Cork city, Ward-Anderson took over the Pavilion Cinema, which then took over the Capital and the Lee. For the first time, Ward-Anderson assumed 100 percent of each business, and an exhibition empire began to spread. "I came into the business in the '70s," says Paul Ward, "when we had about 20 cinemas and solid distribution deals. But because there was a glut of films, not all of them were good."

Leo Ward had a cinema outside Dublin called the Green. Because it was not in the exact city center but about a mile away, it was classed as a second-run cinema and could not get first-run films. Necessity being the mother of invention, Leo again went to London, this time buying rights to the first seven Bond movies for about £500 [$750] each.

He ran them from week to week and took in 10 times their cost. To put a bit of icing on the cake, he then double-featured them and made yet another killing. The distributors saw the potential of the Green and allowed Ward first-run movies. Leo Ward was no longer out in the cold.

The day after Ward-Anderson took over the Savoy they reduced admissions for the day to £1 [US$1.50], and five thousand people turned up at the cinema. 'We realized [from that] that there was a pricing problem," says Paul Ward, "and reduced the afternoon performances to £2

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As I went to sit in my seat
my hands held a drink cold & sweet,
but when I sat down
my face showed a frown,
cause my drink spilled all over my feet.

Since then I have been to a place
that provides me a neat little space,
where I can sit back
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US$3], which was half the price of the evening performance." Again the public came, and the other cinemas followed by reducing their prices.

With a £40 million [US$60 million] turnover, the Ward-Anderson group employs almost 1,000 people. They are at the moment putting multiplexes up in several Irish cities. One plan for next year is to have a 12-screen state-of-the-art cinema in the south of Dublin, where there are now some pre-existing family dwellings. "I expect there to be some objections to the plan," says Paul Ward, "but this will be our flagship cinema, with as much attention as possible to what the public wants. We intend to have everything you could want in a cinema complex."

Unlike the mighty UCI operation, Abbey Films does not have large amounts of cash to invest in cinema complexes, so it finds other methods. When the builders of a north city shopping center which included a multiplex in its design offered the site to Abbey, a deal was struck between the two companies, which saw the builders getting 50 percent of the boxoffice after the Abbey group equipped the nine-cinema complex—a "win-win" for all the parties involved. In the rural parts of the island, where construction costs are far lower than in the cities, Abbey took another route, building its own cinemas.

While UCI remains a formidable competitor, "Virgin is the company to watch" in the urban market, according to Paul Ward. "They don't buy, they rent. It's possible that they will rent the new 18-cinema complex which is going up in Quarry Vale, which is not too far away from UCI's Blanchardstown cinemas."

The north of Ireland has always been seen as a place that has a lot of troubles, but Abbey has seven cinemas there too. "The north was a natural progression for us because this is an island and the distance is not that far," says Ward. "If it had been England, it would have not been as easy for us to defend our market."



Brendan McCaul, V.P./Gen. Mgr., Buena Vista Int'l (U.K.)

Both Paul Ward and Buena Vista's McCaul agree that multiplexes have put new life into cinemagoing. "People in their '30s and '40s who have not visited a cinema in years are coming back," states Ward, "and I'm sure this will also extend to the older bracket."

Last year alone there were over 12 million admissions to cinemas on the small Irish island. Since the average ticket price runs at around £5 [US$8], almost twice the U.S. figure, Irish exhibition is looking up. Several factors point toward an even greater upsurge and a booming industry, which looks as if it is going to continue to grow well into the next century. Chief among these is the expanding economy in the Irish south, which has made Ireland one of the most economically desirable of all the European destinations.

American architects are now planning the next generation of Irish cinemas from their New York offices. The door into Europe begins in this small country, which is why there are so many computer companies setting up here, and so many Irish who emigrated to the European continent and the U.S. during leaner economic times returning home.

For the returnees and the general population, a changed moviegoing experience is what's waiting on the Irish isle. To be able to sit in an Irish cinema that is the equal of any other theatre in the world is a unique pleasure, all its own.

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"FROM WHERE I SIT..."

Our Forum For Readers Just Like You



EAST EURO BIZ 101

by Norm Schneider

When I stepped off the airplane in Moscow for the first time, I knew the trip would be exciting. Like any other country, Russia proved to possess some things that were familiar and others that were very different from what I had expected. There's also anticipation in visiting a country rich in culture and history that I had read about and enjoyed in music, art, films and literature. You know that you are in one of the world's most important cities.

With the change of government to democratic policies, there is a hustle and bustle to adapt to the new environment of free enterprise and entrepreneurship in business. Construction is everywhere, and new businesses are opening in large numbers. This energy is apparent in most of the ex-Soviet countries. But the change is causing some problems.

The economy of many Eastern countries has been hard hit by the transition, and capital is hard to obtain. Cinemas in the large cities are mostly historic buildings that are single-house theatres that hold from 750 to 1,500 patrons. Multiplexes are starting to pop up with the aid of foreign investors that can finance such ventures and bring expertise in the operation of this form of cinemas. Stereo sound systems were rare until recently, and they have been sold and installed primarily by Western companies from Germany, America and others. Because very few products for stereo systems were manufactured in the Soviet countries, most of the systems were monaural, and installation expertise was not generally available. That is all changing!

With the expanded travel from East to West, theatre owners are building state-of-the-art cinemas with the latest technology in picture and sound. Renovation of existing cinemas is increasing as private and government-owned cinemas try to attract customers with first-class presentations.

Some areas of Eastern Europe are more progressive in their plans and progress than others. Countries like Hungary, Poland and Slovakia are moving along much faster than are Bulgaria, Romania and others in terms of the renovation and upgrading of existing sites and in the construction of new cinemas. This

Cinemas in the large cities are mostly historic buildings that are single-house theatres that hold from 750 to 1,500 patrons. Multiplexes are starting to pop up with the aid of foreign investors.



EAST SIDE THEATRE, WEST SIDE SOUND: *Moscow's Cinema Khudojestvenny, one of Russia's moviehouses to have received Western sound upgrades.*

is partly due to the stronger support of the government in countries where culture is considered to be as important as industry.

Progressive governments understand that culture is a continuing priority, and they do not limit their resources to basic needs such as highways, schools, transportation and services. Some governments will participate in the cost of renovation in order to privatize former government-owned facilities or to help theatre owners update to current technology. The amount of support varies from country to country.

Western movies are quite popular in the East where home video is king. Major film producers are establishing new distribution channels to expand their market. This creates a greater need for stereo sound equipment and for local movie studios to offer stereo soundtracks for the theatres that have stereo playback capability. Many theatres now have one or more of the digital playback systems to present their movies in digital sound. Adding digital means a complete upgrade of the supporting components because the few, older systems cannot handle the dynamics of digital sound.

The people of the Eastern countries are optimistic and excited about the future of cinemas in their homelands. I have made many trips to this region and have developed great friendships and strong business relationships with my new contacts. I was delighted to discover the warm, hospitable and friendly nature of people in the East. It's easy to see the problems they face in trying to transition to a new way of doing business, and it makes one want to "pitch in" and help.

Norm Schneider is the chief executive officer of Norcross, Ga.-based SMART Devices, Inc., a manufacturer of cinema sound products and systems. Schneider recently oversaw the installation of SMART's "Total Support" sound system in the Cinema Khudojestvenny, the premier (and Premier!) moviehouse—six blocks from the Kremlin—at which the Moscow Film Festival is held.

A NOTE TO OUR READERS: Our "From Where I Sit" section is designed to provide professionals working in the motion picture business and related industries a forum for the exchange of ideas. Think of it as a space where you can unveil a new idea or approach, or discuss how traditional methods might best evolve as moviemaking and moviegoing change.

Those who would like to contribute essays of up to 1,000 words for publication in **BOXOFFICE** should write to the magazine at 6640 Sunset Blvd., Suite 100, Hollywood CA 90028, or fax us at (213) 465-5049, or send via E-mail to boxoffice@earthlink.net. Also, mail a black-and-white photograph and a short biography when you make your submission.

As the production and exhibition industries move into their second century, and the modern world prepares for its 21st, there are plenty of issues facing the business. Some have been with us since the dawn of the movie theatre: For example, how can exhibitors attract more patrons more frequently, and how can they make moviegoers' stays more exciting—and how can they grow profits at the same time? Others are more specific to our era: E.g., As megaplex operators build out America, will neighborhood competition increase?

Sound, picture, projection, seating, architecture, zoning, concessions, legal and social issues, even the movies themselves—these and more are all topics for debate. Let's hear from you on one of them!

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IF THEY KNEW WHAT YOU WERE MISSING: *Part Two*

WHY TODAY'S MOTION PICTURE SOUND SYSTEMS FAIL TO MAKE THE GRADE AND WHY THEY CAN'T SOUND BETTER

by John F. Allen

Motion picture sound is critically important in setting the emotional atmosphere of a film. Sound alone is often the determining factor in an audience knowing if a scene is a comedy or tragedy. Obviously, the better the theatre's sound presentation, the better the film works. If sound is, as some insist, fully half the show, how can exhibitors best exploit its potential? BOXOFFICE contributing writer John F. Allen continues his important series of articles exploring the current state of movie theatre sound and providing some valuable guidance. Part one was published in the April 1997 issue of BOXOFFICE; parts three and four will follow later this year.

Part one of this series was devoted to a detailed analysis of the current state of the sound systems in today's movie theatres and some of the many complex reasons that preclude them from being able to reproduce digital soundtracks. Much of the article covered speakers used behind motion picture screens and explained why the majority of these loudspeakers are simply too small. Although all the visual action takes place on the screen, the sound system is installed throughout the theatre. The all-important surround speakers are often overlooked as one of the most vital components of the experience that attending a theatre is supposed to be. In this installment, I shall explain why the surrounds usually fail to deliver what they should, as well as discuss subwoofer and power amplifier deficiencies that audiences are also to likely to endure.

WHAT IS BAD SOUND?

Perhaps I should once again state what I believe should qualify as "bad sound." Understandable dialogue is certainly essential for telling a story, but it is hardly enough. Any sound reproduction that is unnatural or colored in tone, or is lacking in fullness or dynamic range, or that is unfaithful to the recording in any way, should not be regarded as acceptable. Presentations often encountered in which music or background sounds are too loud, too dull or altogether inaudible should not be regarded as acceptable. Phony, distorted and inadequate bass is widely prevalent in this industry. (Just think of all the subwoofers that have failed.) Finally, it must be understood that the typical "honky" dialogue sound so prominent in movie theatres for so many years is *bad sound*. Voices simply don't sound that way unless someone is speaking through a hose.

SURROUND SPEAKERS

It's hard to imagine a mistake one could make in designing or installing a surround array or surround speakers that is not commonplace in today's movie theatres. Many—all too many—surround speakers have required replacement, sometimes repeatedly, over the years. It would almost seem that we are now quite accustomed to hearing of such failures with virtually every opening of a new action picture, particularly those with a digital stereo track.

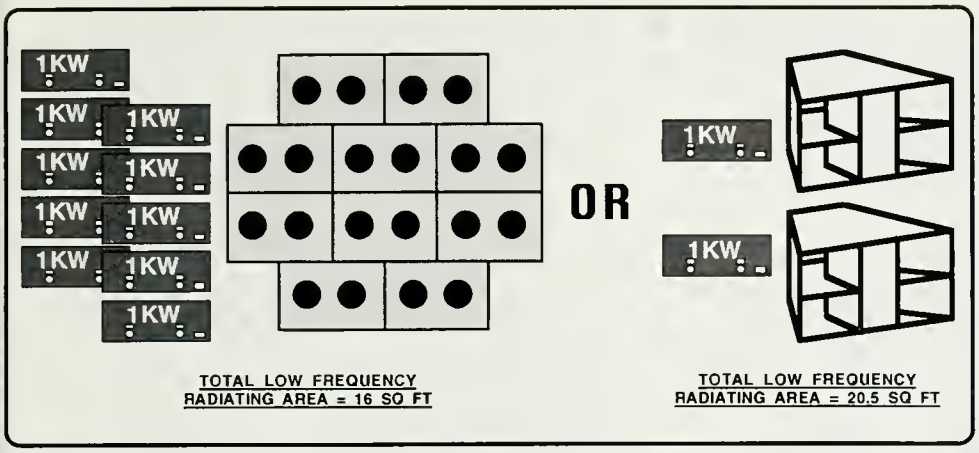
There ought to be no debate that a safety margin of some amount is mandatory. But there is debate as to how much the safety margin should be.

Surround speakers serve a critical role by bringing the audience into the film. Surrounds create the atmosphere. In addition, films like "Twister" and "Independence Day" use the surrounds for some enormous sound effects. These effects can demand bass levels that exceed those produced at the same time by the subwoofers. Yet surround speakers typically fail to produce anything beyond some kind of noise during the loudest scenes. The rest of the time they hardly sound like they're on at all, even though they are supposed to be. (How often has that complaint been heard?) The sound of the surrounds should match the sound from the screen.

Of course, the final issue that must be faced is that, due to poor placement among other things, most surround systems don't ultimately surround anything. Listeners all too often localize to, and can even feel attacked by, the surround speaker or group of speakers to which they're closest. (See "Why Surround Systems Don't Usually Work," BOXOFFICE, March 1983, p. 68.)

Returning to the theme that most theatre speakers are too small, the vast majority of surround systems installed today are also lacking in size and performance. For theatres equipped for either Dolby SR or digital, I would advise that surround speakers with anything smaller than a 12-inch woofer should not be considered. Beyond that, surround presentations cannot improve until far more attention is paid to speaker placement. The goal should be that no localization to individual speakers or wall of speakers should occur from any seat in the house.

Due to their height restrictions, theatres with stadium seating and balconies require a far greater level of skill and understanding of coverage geometries than is generally available to this industry at this time. The usual practice of locating surround speakers in theatres by habit and mere guessing needs to go the way of the hand-cranked projector. The bottom



MAXIMUM OUTPUT AT 50 FT / 16.5 M = 121 dB SPL

Figure 1

line is this: If you're in a theatre where you can "feel surrounded" only in the center seats, the surround system in that theatre, by definition, fails to surround everyone not seated in the center. This is, of course, virtually the entire audience for every show, every day, week after week.

Surround speakers of sufficient size, output and quality, properly placed for zero localization, can and do significantly—almost magically—enhance the motion picture experience for all films, large and small.

SUBWOOFERS

As noted earlier, the number of subwoofer failures this industry has experienced is very high indeed. Frankly, there is no excuse for this. If a sound system is properly designed and equipped, its loudspeakers should never fail. I repeat, *never*. As with both the screen and surround speakers, most theatres are presently outfitted with terribly inadequate subwoofer systems—how inadequate depends on the theatre. We do know that subwoofers are required to deliver peak levels of at least 115 dB sound pressure level (SPL) in the center of a theatre. To do this in, say, a 100-foot-long theatre, the subwoofer system must be able to deliver 139 dB SPL at 1 meter, according to the inverse square law and actual measurements done in a theatre. Adding a 6 dB safety margin is a good design practice. This protects the drivers from damaging overloads and also allows for real-world signal conditions that will actually push the subwoofer higher than the theoretical peak levels. This brings the total output requirement at one meter to 145 dB SPL in a theatre 100 feet long. Subwoofer amplifiers must also be equipped with clipping protection or limiting for those occasions when even this isn't enough. Believe me, it does happen.

Because typical subwoofers quit at around 124 dB, theatres need more than one or two to do the job. In fact, a 500-seat, 100-foot-long theatre requires 10 standard subwoofers or two high-efficiency subwoofers. Either approach will provide the power output required. The radiating area of 10 standard subwoofers is 16 square feet vs. more than 20 for the two high-efficiency units, but they are at least closer. (See Figure 1, above.) If one is using direct radiator subwoofers, systems with 18-inch drivers would make a better choice. Most theatres are equipped with only one or two standard subwoofers if they have them at all, so the shortfall in subwoofer power in these theatres is truly severe. (See "Digital Subwoofers," **BOXOFFICE**, June 1995, p. 48.)

If a sound system is properly designed and equipped, its loudspeakers should never fail. I repeat again: Never!

AMPLIFIERS

Another of the more important factors contributing to the lack of performance in motion picture theatre sound systems is the power amplifiers. As with most of the installed loudspeakers, the amplifiers often found driving them are too small for their task. Determining the power required for any channel in any sound system is a very straightforward exercise. Using the speaker's one watt, one meter sensitivity, the maximum peak SPL of the program material involved and the distance at which that level must be delivered, we can quickly calculate the power in watts required. We then add 6 dB, or multiply the watts by four; this adds a safety margin so that the amplifiers never run out of power and clip. This is critically important in assuring a long life for the speakers as well as, obviously, keeping the sound clean.

There ought to be no debate that a safety margin of some amount is mandatory. But there is debate as to how much that safety margin should be. Some have said it can be as little as 3 dB, which is twice the power demanded by the peak levels. In the real world, however, this is not enough, for at least two good reasons. The first is that, due to its complex nature, real program material can frequently use more power than theoretical calculations indicate. Second, and just as important, is that we are dealing with equalized sound systems. If the equalization requires the bass control to be turned up just 3 dB, as is often the case, that 3 dB immediately doubles the amplifier power required. Some common surround speakers need a 6 dB bass boost. These equalizations cannot be ignored. So, when designing a sound system, one must factor in the typical amount of equalization anticipated by the speakers employed and increase the amplifier power accordingly.

SO HOW LOUD DO MOVIES GET?

Peak levels for digital motion picture soundtracks are 105 dB SPL for each screen channel, 102 dB SPL for each surround channel and, as stated earlier, 115 dB SPL for the subwoofer channel. Adding 6 dB brings the design criteria up to 111 dB SPL, 108 dB SPL and 121 dB SPL respectively, as measured in the center of the theatre. Sound systems built to these specifications will not clip and can be considered reliable.

Unfortunately, these common-sense practices are seldom followed. As an example, one 500-seat theatre I visited advertised its sound as "state-of-the-art." In some sense, I suppose, you could say it was, as it just poured out distortion with films like "Twister" and "Independence Day." Doing the math, I calculated that the clipping levels for this sound system were 102 dB SPL for the screen channels, 99 dB SPL for the surround channels and 103 dB SPL for the subwoofer. At a minimum, this meant that the screen and surround channels were 50 percent too small. The subwoofer channel was a whopping 94 percent too small. If one were to include a 6 dB safety margin, these shortfalls become four times worse.

Clearly, it is an appalling situation for this industry when such a system can be sold as a quality digital-ready package. One reason this continues to happen has been a reluctance on the part of some to own up to the real power demands of digital stereo—even though anyone with a calculator could figure it out for themselves. On separate occasions, two manufacturers have stated to me their feeling that if they told the truth "no one would buy" their processors. I strongly disagree. The industry is far better served by the most honest and forthcoming advice. Without it, everyone on both sides of the boxoffice loses out.

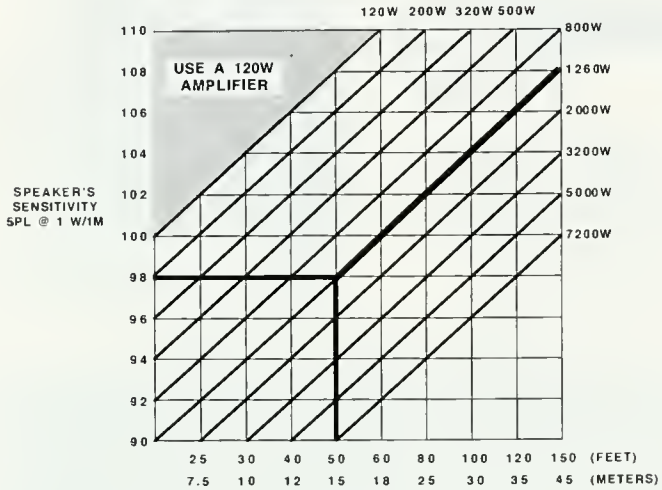
The following text is offered as a ready-to-use amplifier power specification for exhibitors and others responsible for installing motion picture sound systems. And, published for the first time anywhere, Tables 1, 2 and 3 provide a quick reference for the minimum amplifier power requirements for cinema sound systems.

AMPLIFIER POWER SPECIFICATION

The power amplifier requirements in [name of theatre circuit]'s sound systems shall be calculated solely using the inverse square law. Tests have shown that, in the center of the theatre, the peak sound pressure level (SPL) for a single screen channel is 105 dB SPL, 102

RECOMMENDED STAGE SPEAKER POWER REQUIREMENTS

(6 dB HEADROOM, SPEAKERS AND AMPLIFIERS SAFE)

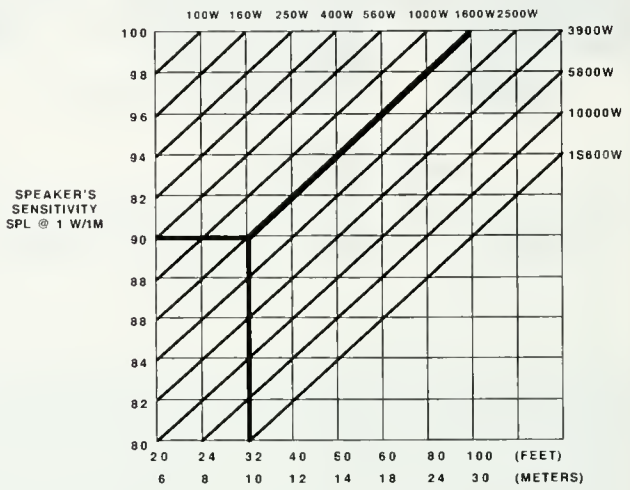


SINGLE SCREEN CHANNEL POWER REQUIREMENTS
FOR 111 dB SPL @ 1/2 BACK FROM SCREEN

Table 1

RECOMMENDED SURROUND CHANNEL POWER REQUIREMENTS

(6 dB HEADROOM, SPEAKERS AND AMPLIFIERS SAFE)



SINGLE SURROUND CHANNEL (LEFT OR RIGHT) POWER REQUIREMENTS
FOR 108 dB SPL AT THE CENTER OF A THEATRE

Table 2

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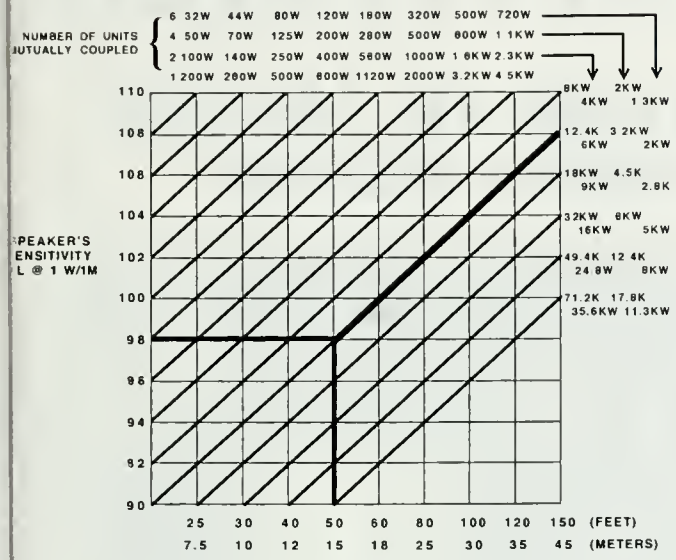
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LENGTH OF THEATRE FROM SCREEN TO BACK WALL

SUBWOOFER CHANNEL POWER REQUIREMENTS
FOR 121 dB SPL @ 1/2 BACK FROM SCREEN

Table 3

dB SPL for each surround channel and 115 dB SPL for the subwoofer channel. An additional 6 dB of headroom shall also be required to provide the loudspeakers with sufficient power headroom to prevent amplifier clipping.

Therefore, each full-range screen channel shall be powered to produce levels in the center of the theatre of at least 111 dB SPL as the amplifier(s) reach(es) maximum power. Each left and right surround channel shall be powered to deliver levels of at least 108 dB SPL in the center of the theatre as the amplifier(s) reach(es) maximum power.

The subwoofer channel shall be powered to deliver a level of at least 121 dB SPL in the center of the theatre as the amplifier(s) reach(es) maximum power. No power compression, self protection limiting action or bandwidth limiting action shall occur in a subwoofer channel at levels less than 121 dB SPL in the center of a theatre as calculated using the inverse square law.

Finally, a note about speaker sensitivity: Some speaker manufacturers provide a sensitivity specification as measured with a 1 watt input. Others show a 2.83 Volt input. There is a significant difference that must be taken into consideration. If a speaker under consideration is specified at 2.83 Volts, the speaker's minimum impedance specification must checked. If the minimum impedance is 8 ohms, the speaker's rated sensitivity may be used directly when calculating the required power according to the inverse square law.

If the minimum impedance is found to be around 4 ohms, then a 2.83 Volt input is actually 2 watts. In this case, a 3 dB deduction shall be made from the given 2.83 Volt sensitivity specification to get the speaker's true 1 watt sensitivity.

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John F. Allen is the founder and president of High Performance Stereo, headquartered in Newton, Mass. He is also the inventor of the HPS-4000 cinema sound system and, in 1984, was the first to bring digital sound to the cinema.

Part three of this series will appear in the November issue.

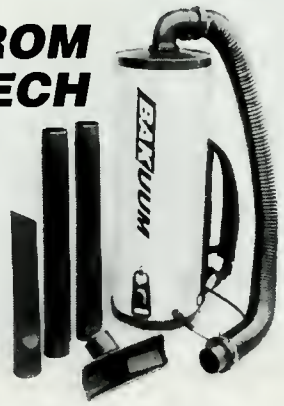
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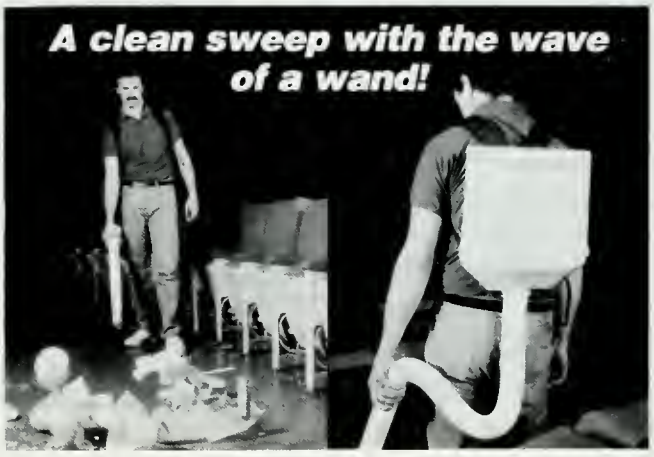
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OUT OF THIS WORLD

Berlin Movie Fans See Films Via 'Satellite' at the Sputnik *by Melissa Morrison*



THEATRE TO THE REUNIFIED : *The entrance to Berlin, Germany's Sputnik Theatre which is neighbor to the infamous, and now defunct, Berlin Wall.*

In the early '60s, the Sputnik Theatre's owners faced a unique and traumatic marketing problem: Somebody built a huge wall through the cinema's Berlin, Germany neighborhood, and half of the Sputnik's patrons were threatened with death if they tried to cross it.

Needless to say, admissions suffered.

Eight years ago, however, revolution tore the Berlin Wall down, and Sputnik's owners, Filme-X, faced another challenge: how to run a profitable cinema for two distinct communities—one rich, the other poor; one worldly, the other starving for Western entertainment.

The resulting strategy, implemented by Filme-X's young managers, seems one more of ad hoc tinkering than textbook formula. When Filme-X took over Sputnik in 1984, it programmed art films. When that didn't fly, the program changed more successfully to mainstream movies, with special programs highlighting, for example, children's films and German films.

The new approach seems to be working. The Sputnik has broken even for the last three years, says Martin Protze-Zwick, a deputy director at Filme-X. And despite the fact that it's not exactly raking in the Deutsche marks yet, the company is in no hurry to unload the theatre, which is a beloved fixture of the neighborhood and of architectural aficionados.

Built in 1954 in the north Berlin region of Wedding, the 300-seat cinema was first named the Clou and outfitted with early Cinemascope technology, as well as one of the first wide screens. It had a simple and elegant design that writers praise as a perfect example of '50s architecture, including kidney-shaped motifs and a quilted diamond pattern on the auditorium walls. When the pharmaceutical company Schering paid for a DM 500,000 (US$335,000) renovation in the early '90s (as an act of charity to preserve a valuable landmark), it didn't change a facet of what a government official, in a 1992 article in the newspaper Der Tagesspeigel, called "one of the last preserved creations of a cinema culture which has already been forgotten."

Before the Wall was built, the Clou was popular with East Germans, who could pay East German marks to see Western films. The

theatre was considered one of the "capitalist propaganda weapons at that time," according to the 1992 Der Tagesspeigel article.

After the Berlin Wall was constructed about a mile away, the theatre went into a tailspin. It changed its identity several times, including stints as a porn house and a Turkish cinema, and it had a succession of owners. "We know of about 11," says Protze-Zwick. "We're the longest owners in 30 years." Somewhere along the way, the theatre's name was changed to Sputnik.

With flaring white eaves over its glass-wall entrance, the Sputnik somehow evokes the flying nun. Inside, the pale-yellow lobby is spacious, with rounded corners instead of hard edges. Sinuous brass-colored railings lead the few steps up to the auditorium's two entrances.

On a winter weekday evening, the lobby is dead. "This is normal," shrugs an overall-clad projectionist before returning to her booth from the snack bar, where she's been chatting with the concession attendant.

Like classic movie houses everywhere, the Sputnik has had to adjust to changes in the neighborhood. Today, the area is tidy and quiet and home to many Turkish families. Across the street from the Sputnik is a wedding-dress shop that features in its window an elaborate pink creation with a Muslim-style headdress.

"It's very difficult, because it's in a quarter of Berlin that doesn't have a lot of businesses around the cinema," says Cordula Bester, a distributor liaison. "People live there but don't shop there. They go to the Ku'damm." The Ku'damm is named for Kurfurstendamm street, the area's major artery through what is the center of former West Berlin. In Berlin, the Ku'damm is cinema central, and is where East Berliners first went when the Wall came down to see all the glitzy capitalist propaganda denied them under communism.

Bester says the public's initial enthusiasm for the Ku'damm has waned a bit since then, but they haven't necessarily transferred their moviegoing to the more conveniently-located Sputnik. "It takes time for people to [discover the Sputnik] again," she says. "The young people don't know to go there."

Reunification isn't complete in other aspects as well. Ticket prices are still lower in the former East Berlin, around 9 marks (US$6), while in former West Berlin they're 10 to 12 marks, and 15 to 16 marks at Zoo Palast. (The Sputnik charges 10 marks.)

The theatre is grappling with other forces besides reunification. The Wall fell about the same time the multiplex arrived in Europe. "You can't tell the effects apart," says Protze-Zwick.

Filme-X is soon to join the multiplex wave. The company, which currently operates seven cinemas—five in Berlin, one in the East Berlin suburb of Potsdam, and one in Hamburg—is working with a partner to convert an East Berlin two-screen cinema called the Coliseum to a 10-screen that's scheduled to open in October.

Despite the company's plans, both Protze-Zwick and Bester betray some suspicion of the multiplex phenomenon. Twenty-five multiplexes are planned for Berlin by UCI, Warner, German companies and other industry leaders, Protze-Zwick says.

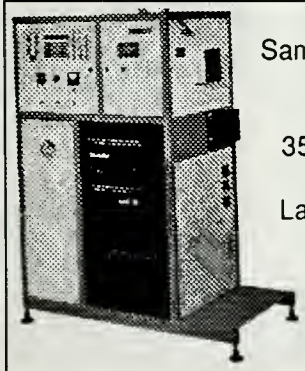
"If all those are realized," he says, "many will go broke because you can imagine if there are about 50,000 seats in Berlin, every Berliner has to go 10 times a year to the cinema. Currently, it's three times a year."

"It's crazy," Bester says.

Filme-X sees a future for single-screen cinemas like Sputnik. A recent German government study found that for older cinemas to survive the advent of the multiplex, they have to be kept technologically up-to-date and carve out audience niches with special programs. That pretty much sums up what Filme-X is doing.

"We have to think about the program and perhaps schedule special events to draw the people, such as music," Protze-Zwick says. "We tried, but we have to do it more."

The Sputnik's made it this far, and plans to get through the next few years while the two parts of Berlin complete the process of fusing into one and the local cinema industry adjusts. The Sputnik survived the Cold War and the Berlin Wall. Filme-X is confident it can survive the invasion of the multiplex as well.



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GOOD AS GOLD

BOXOFFICE covers the Cannes festival's 50th anniversary

(CANNES)—Although it didn't take the Palme d'Or (which was shared by Abbas Kiarostami's "The Taste of Cherries" and Shohei Imamura's "The Eel," reviewed below), Atom Egoyan's "The Sweet Hereafter" emerged from Cannes bearing the most prizes. The Canadian production garnered the Grand Prix, the Ecumenical Jury Prize and the Fipresci critics nods. Although Johnny Depp's directing debut, "The Brave," fared poorly with audiences, actor-turned-filmmaker Gary Oldman saw his "Nil By Mouth" bring Kathy Burke a best actress win. Other key prizes: Sean Penn, best actor for Nick Cassavetes' "She's So Lovely"; Wong Kar-wai, best director for "Happy Together"; James Schamus, best screenplay for "The Ice Storm," reviewed on P. 81; filmmaker Manuel Poirier, the Jury Prize for "Western"; and cinematographer Thierry Arbogast, the Technical Prize for "She's So Lovely" and "The Fifth Element," reviewed on P. 91.

SUNDAY ★★★★

Starring David Suchet, Lisa Harrow and Jared Harris. Directed by Jonathan Nossiter. Written by James Lasdun and Jonathan Nossiter. Produced by Jonathan Nossiter and Alix Madigan. A CFP release. Drama. Unrated. Running time: 92 min.

Sunday is a day of rest, generally the least eventful day of the week. But filmmaker Jonathan Nossiter has constructed a Sunday of a very different stripe, one on which people collide in intriguing and unexpected ways.

Sundays hold little significance for Olive (David Suchet); a former IBM employee left homeless by a layoff, he finds it just another day to kill until returning to the shelter where he sleeps. But when he crosses paths with Madeleine (Lisa Harrow), a high-strung actress who is no longer young, she mistakes him for a famous director. Attracted to her and flattered, Oliver plays along; he becomes "Matthew Delacorta" and spends the day with her. Together, these two slightly off-kilter people develop a fantasy—or is it a *folie a deux*?—in which both can hope for career and personal redemption. But Madeleine's estranged husband (Larry Pine) and the other men who share Oliver's shelter present forces of reality that threaten to sour this fragile accord.

One of "Sunday's" strengths is that the audience can never tell whether Madeleine and Oliver are doing something healthy or dangerous together; one is constantly unsure of what will happen next. Powerfully honest and risky performances from Suchet and Harrow propel the film, which provides as bleak a view of the streets and row houses of Queens as may be imagined. Writer/director Nossiter, in his debut feature film (he previously helmed the well-received documentary "Resident Aliens"), shows a deft touch with suspense, character and milieu. "Sunday" is a film filled with small pleasures: a lovely scene in a Greek Orthodox church; an exchange of stories between the leads in which truth takes on the power of fiction. Ultimately, this thought-provoking work adds up to a unique and memorable experience, one well worthy of the two awards it took at Sundance.—*Cathy Thompson-Georges*

THE EEL (UNAGI) ★★1/2

Starring Koji Yakusho and Misa Shimizu. Directed by Shohei Imamura. Written by Motofumi Tomikawa, Daisuke Tengan and Shohei Imamura. Produced by Hisa Iino. No stateside distributor set. Drama. Japanese-language; subtitled. Running time: 117 min. Shared the Palme d'Or.

The eel is the beloved pet of Takuro (Koji Yakusho), who's been paroled after spending eight years in prison for stabbing his unfaithful wife and her lover to death. Outside, he saves a young woman (Misa Shimizu) who has attempted suicide; she is hired to work at his shop and they predictably fall in love. Both of their pasts threaten to destroy the relationship.

Yakusho gives a good performance in the lead role, but the screenplay doesn't go beneath the surface of the characters. Writer/director Shohei Imamura more deservedly won the Palme d'Or in 1983 for "The Ballad of Narayama." Here, however, he tries unsuccessfully to mix different styles. Fantasy scenes (oddly reminiscent of "Trainspotting") in which Takuro imagines himself swimming with his pet are an imaginative contrast to his daily routine. But scenes in which a neighbor makes elaborate plans to greet an alien spaceship and a climatic slapstick fight with police ruin the serious mood set by the main love story.—*Ed Scheid*

★★★★★ OUTSTANDING
★★★★ VERY GOOD
★★★ GOOD
★★ FAIR
★ POOR
(no stars) BOMB

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THE ICE STORM ★★1/2

Starring Kevin Kline, Sigourney Weaver, Joan Allen, Christina Ricci and Elijah Wood. Directed by Ang Lee. Written and produced by James Schamus. A Fox Searchlight release. Drama. Rated R for sexuality and drug use, including scenes involving children, and for language. Running time: 112 min. Won the best screenplay prize at Cannes.

A cold, somewhat distant yet oddly intriguing film from director Ang Lee, "The Ice Storm" is aptly named. Based on Rick Moody's satirical novel and set on Thanksgiving weekend of 1973, the film portrays two suburban American families who, despite smiley-faced exteriors, are emotionally frigid.

Living comfortably in New England, Ben Hood (Kevin Kline) and his wife Elena (Joan Allen) are raising two teenagers. They are good friends with their neighbors Janey and Jim Carver (Sigourney Weaver and Jamey Sheridan)—although, unbeknownst to Elena, Ben is sleeping with Janey. Meanwhile, hormones rage through the Carver and Hood children alike: Wendy Hood (Christina Ricci), buzzing at the prospect of sexual discovery, has set out to seduce both Mikey Carver (Elijah Wood) and his younger brother, while Paul Hood (Tobey Maguire) lusts after a prep school co-ed. Their lies and indiscretions are all revealed one freezing night on which their region is hit by the worst ice storm in 30 years.

"The Ice Storm" has several redeeming features: the performances are uniformly solid, the production design and costumes impressively authentic, and the direction aptly understated. Ang Lee, who turned his lens on Taiwanese family matters in the comedy "The Wedding Banquet" and British domestic ways in "Sense and Sensibility," shows an astute eye for American family politics. Rather than self-consciously announcing its evocation of the '70s, the details of the era come through piecemeal: in conversation (couple-swapping is trendy), on TV (Nixon insists that he is not a crook), in their furniture (the Carvers have a waterbed). The cinematography by Frederick Elmes ("Blue Velvet") is appropriately crisp and clean, lit in a way that effectively conveys glacial familial relations. Unfortunately, however, the film has the same effect on the viewer. Rather than being moved or transfixed, one feels frozen and impartial, almost as disengaged as the characters themselves.—***Lael Loewenstein***

THE BLACKOUT 1/2

Starring Matthew Modine, Dennis Hopper, Claudia Schiffer and Beatrice Dalle. Directed by Abel Ferrara. Written by Marla Hanson, Christ Zois and Abel Ferrara. Produced by Edward R. Pressman and Clayton Townsend. No stateside distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 97 min.

For "The Blackout," Abel Ferrara has moved from the dark New York streets of "King of New York" and "Bad Lieutenant" to the bright colors of Miami. Judging from the disappointing results of the film, the trip was not a success. Matty (Matthew Modine) is a famous movie star addicted to drugs and alcohol. Modine is not believable as an addict; he has too amiable a screen persona to be convincing as someone deep in the depths of drug and alcohol dependency. Beatrice Dalle ("Betty Blue") and supermodel Claudia Schiffer (in her feature debut) are adequate as the one-dimensional women in Matty's life.

Dennis Hopper plays a sleazy filmmaker who has videotaped many of Matty's activities. Matty's decadent lifestyle is too much, even for his uninhibited girlfriend Annie (Dalle). Matty is so devastated by a revelation from Annie that he uses even more drugs and blacks out. Eighteen months later, Matty is amazingly clean and sober and living in New York with Susan (Schiffer), who doesn't get high or drink. But Matty begins to have nightmares that he might have committed a murder; he returns to Miami to learn whether he is indeed a killer.

In previous films, Ferrara used his characters' dissipation to explore their emotional torment and provided strong roles for many actors, including Harvey Keitel, Christopher Walken and Chris Penn. In his latest, the characters and situations are superficially developed. The dialogue is insipid and at times is almost drowned out by throbbing music. "The Blackout" has uncharacteristically slack pacing for a Ferrara work, and the film is further spoiled by pretentious ranting by Hopper's character. Many scenes are so melodramatic and overdone that the film becomes unintentionally funny, especially in the ludicrous ending borrowed from a Hollywood classic.—***Ed Scheid***

PRIVATE CONFESSIONS (ENSKILDA SAMTAL) ★★★★1/2

Starring Pernilla August, Max von Sydow and Samuel Froler. Directed by Liv Ullmann. Written by Ingmar Bergman. Produced by Ingrid Dahlberg. No stateside distributor set. Drama. Swedish-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 135 min.

Liv Ullmann, who acted in nine films of Ingmar Bergman, is now the director of Bergman's script for "Private Confessions." (Ullmann has cut the film from a longer version that appeared on Swedish TV.) "Private Confessions" continues Bergman's exploration of his parents' troubled marriage that began in "The Best Intentions," which won the Palme d'Or at Cannes in 1992.

The film begins in 1925. Anna (Pernilla August) feels stifled in her marriage to Henrik (Samuel Froler), a minister. (Both August and Froler played the characters in "The Best Intentions.") Now, Anna has a younger lover (Tomas Hanzon). The film is structured on conversations about the relationships Anna has with her confirmation priest (Bergman regular Max von Sydow), her husband, her lover and a female friend. The last conversation is a flashback between the 18-year-old Anna and the priest.

The perceptive script continues Bergman's probing into the complexities and frequent deceptions involved in relationships. A scene in which Anna confesses the affair to her husband is particularly strong: A calm conversation gradually explodes into anger and violence. Ullmann's direction (this is her third turn behind the camera) is superb. As in her films with Bergman, the lens explores what Ullmann calls the "geography of faces" to subtly reveal a character. The impeccable images are from Sven Nykvist, Bergman's longtime cinematographer.

August's performance is extraordinary, showing the wide range of Anna's passionate feelings; her work surpasses even her turn in "The Best Intentions," which won her the Best Actress prize at Cannes. Von Sydow gives his character a warm compassion—his final reunion with Anna as he is dying is particularly affecting—and Froler is impressive as the volatile husband.—***Ed Scheid***

THE TRUCE (LA TREGUA) ★★1/2

Starring John Turturro and Rade Serbedzija. Directed by Francesco Rosi. Written by Francesco Rosi, Stefano Rulli and Sandro Petraglia. Produced by Leo Pescarolo and Guido De Laurentis. No stateside distributor set. Drama. Shown in English- and Italian-language versions. Running time: 115 min.

"The Truce" is an adaptation of the memoirs of Primo Levi, an Italian chemist who was imprisoned in Auschwitz. The film follows Levi ("Quiz Show's" John Turturro) through the chaotic times after Auschwitz is liberated in 1945. Levi lives in a Soviet resettlement camp and follows a labyrinthine journey through Eastern Europe to return to his home in Italy. He begins to reconnect to his emotions, which he had kept dormant during his time in Auschwitz.

With his gaunt appearance, Turturro is convincing as a concentration camp inmate. He expertly conveys both Levi's pain and the strength to survive as a witness to the suffering. A weakness of the screenplay keeps Levi a passive observer reacting to other characters, including a Greek prisoner played with vitality by Rade Serbedzija ("The Saint"). The most successful scenes are large-scale, like the opening in which the gates of Auschwitz are pulled down, or when the euphoric former prisoners begin their train ride home. But "The Truce" contains too many characters and scenes that are familiar from other films set in the same period.—***Ed Scheid***

THE WELL ★★★1/2

Starring Pamela Rabe and Miranda Otto. Directed by Samantha Lang. Written by Laura Jones. Produced by Sandra Levy. No stateside distributor set. Suspense/drama. Not yet rated. Run time: 101 min.

Based on a novel by Elizabeth Jolley, "The Well" is a notable feature debut for Australian director Samantha Lang. The film shows the chilling consequences when a car driven by a young woman ("Love and Other Catastrophes'" Miranda Otto) runs over a man on a deserted road.

Hester ("Paradise Road's" Pamela Rabe), a middle-aged woman, has hired the

FESTIVAL REVIEWS

much younger Catherine (Otto) to help with the work on her isolated farm. A surprisingly close friendship develops. After the car accident, Hester hides the body in an unused well; they later discover that money they had hidden is missing and believe that the dead man was the thief. One of them must go down the well to retrieve their cash.

Jones has shot striking scenes set in a stark Down Under landscape that is an effective reflection of Hester's repression. Rabe and Otto are a potent combination as the possessive Hester and the uninhibited Catherine, and the film becomes an absorbing story of dependence and manipulation that takes some very clever and unexpected turns.—*Ed Scheid*

WELCOME TO SARAJEVO ★★★1/2

Starring Stephen Dillane, Woody Harrelson and Marisa Tomei. Directed by Michael Winterbottom. Written by Frank Cottrell Boyce. Produced by Graham Broadbent and Damian Jones. A Miramax release. Documentary/drama. Not yet rated. English- and Bosnian-language; English subtitles. Running time: 100 min.

One of the most acclaimed films at Cannes, "Welcome to Sarajevo" is a complex, deeply moving story of life in Sarajevo during the Bosnian war. As told from the perspective of several English-speaking journalists stationed in Sarajevo, and with the help of actual news footage, the war is portrayed in its unrelenting and inexplicable violence. Yet the film never feels like a documentary; as directed by Michael Winterbottom ("Jude"), it's an extraordinarily affecting, personal, at times uplifting tale.

The choice to have the story unfold through the British and American journalists' eyes is especially effective; they serve as the audience's surrogates and interpreters. Not only do they help to render understandable much of the Bosnian political situation, they also draw us into the tale. A motley crew comprised of seasoned news correspondent Michael Henderson (stage actor Stephen Dillane), hard-working producer Jane Carson ("Shallow Grave's" Kerry Fox), novice reporter Annie McGee ("The River Runs Through It's" Emily Lloyd) and jaded, cynical correspondent Flynn (Woody Harrelson), the press corps strive to maintain their objectivity. When Henderson begins to broadcast daily from a local orphanage, however, it soon becomes clear that objectivity is impossible. And when a young American aid worker ("The Perez Family's" Marisa Tomei) arrives to help some of the children escape, Henderson decides to smuggle out a girl to whom he has become attached.

"Welcome to Sarajevo" is a flawed but potent film. At times its emotional pull (desperation etched on the orphans' faces) is so strong it threatens to overwhelm you, yet Winterbottom maintains a careful balance between sentiment and fact. And there's a powerful lesson here. The news footage of the wounded Sarajevans is brutally shocking, but perhaps no more shocking than the footage of actual politicians and diplomats, showing the blind eye turned on Bosnia by a world too busy to help.—*Lael Loewenstein*

DAYS OF EUROPEAN FILM FESTIVAL

THE WONDERFUL YEARS THAT SUCKED ★★1/2

Starring Libuse Safrankova and Ondrej Vetchy. Directed by Petr Nikolaev. Written by Jan Novak. Produced by Jiri Jezek. A Space Films production; no stateside distributor set. Comedy. Czech-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 109 min.

This film ("Bajecna Leta Pod Psa") is based on a popular Czech novel by writer Michal Viewegh, and something was lost in the translation from book to screen. It's about a family trying to keep it together despite the indignities and absurdities of life in communist Czechoslovakia. The movie covers three decades, which perhaps accounts for its choppiness: Events occur whose impacts aren't felt in the next scene; characters disappear abruptly; chunks of time elapse at hyperspeed.

The major pleasure is its quirky family members. Dad (Ondrej Vetchy), a happy-go-lucky economist, eventually cracks under the strain of being "politically visible." His modest wife ("Kolya's" Libuse Safrankova) schedules herself to give birth on a day she knows no male doctors are on duty. And son Kvido (played as a child by Jan Zahalka, as a teen by Jakub Wehrenberg) uses his prematural vocabulary to comment perceptively on his parents' struggles, even as he's befuddled by his own life's events.—*Melissa Morrison*

ANOTHER MOTHER ★★

Starring Janis Reinis and Arys Adamsons. Directed by Paula van der Oest. Written by Paula van der Oest and Stan Lapinski. Produced by Rene Scholten. A Studio Nieuwe Gronden production; no stateside distributor set. Drama. Dutch- and Latvian-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 96 min.

The symbolism isn't exactly subtle in "Another Mother" ("De Nieuwe Moeder"), which contrasts life in Western and Eastern Europe. Such crudeness can be forgiven as long as characters remain flesh and blood, which they do here until the last fifth of the movie. But the ending is groan-inducing mush—which is a shame, because the film is a Kleenex-clutcher till that point.

Fed up with post-Communist Latvia's scarcities, a father, Juris, takes off with his mute young son, Elvis. The two travel to Holland—Juris being fueled by decades-old correspondence with a Dutch penpal, Marie, who has told of a country of opportunity. As the pair draw closer, voiceovers of her letters describe her life's trajectory. Along the way, Juris and Elvis encounter Western Values, as embodied by a socialist hippie, neofascists and, finally, Marie's materialistic family. It's in Juris' encounter with Marie's Lolita-esque daughter—those darn sexually rapacious 15-year-olds!—in the inevitable "seduction" of the East by the West that reality flees the movie.—*Melissa Morrison*

SEATTLE/WOMEN IN CINEMA FESTIVAL

WEDDING BELL BLUES ★★★

Starring Illeana Douglas, Paulina Porizkova and Julie Warner. Directed by Dana Lustig. Written by Annete Goliti-Gutierrez. Produced by Ram Bergman, Dana Lustig, Carole Curb Nemoy and Mike Curb. A Legacy release. Romantic comedy. Rated R for sex-related content. Running time: 104 min.

"I didn't know turning 30 was terminal," declares single, commitment-phobic Jasmine ("Grace of My Heart's" Illeana Douglas), thus summarizing the impetus for "Wedding Bell Blues." This first flick from director Dana Lustig is an above-average romantic comedy laden with well-delivered yuks that also has something smart to say about aging, relationships and the pressure on women to marry young. Fed up with men, Jasmine and her two roommates—Micki ("Doc Hollywood's" Julie Warner) and Tanya (supermodel/actress Paulina Porizkova, currently in "Female Perversions")—embark on a road trip to Las Vegas. Their mission: to find husbands, marry, and quickly divorce. Their fast-approaching thirtieth birthdays will be easier to stomach, they reckon, as glamorous divorcees than old maids.

"Wedding Bell Blues" owes much to a ingenious script by Annete Goliti-Gutierrez. She builds the story not only upon the protagonists' relationships with their male counterparts but also upon their relationships with each another. The benefit is a fool-proof framework from which to pull genuine laughs and character development. Lustig's direction remains focused on resolving the women's issues, and her film generates an engaging momentum; the distaff demo is likely to chuckle knowingly about such common topics as bridesmaid dresses, pregnancy tests, and men.

Also to Lustig's credit, even such seen-it-before moments as cruising the Vegas Strip seem fresh rather than cliched, and she extracts superb performances from the entire cast. Leading the pack is Douglas, who's never been saucier, with Warner and Porizkova not far behind. Each actress slips with ease into a character she clearly understands. Rounding out the ensemble is a fine supporting cast.—*Ian Hodder*

I LOVE YOU...DON'T TOUCH ME ★★★1/2

Starring Marla Schaffel, Mitchell Whitfield and Meredith Scott Lynn. Directed and written by Julie Davis. Produced by Julie Davis and Jennifer Chaiken. A Goldwyn release. Romantic comedy. Not yet rated. Running time: 87 min.

Surprise reigned at a festival screening when Julie Davis revealed that she made "I Love You, Don't Touch Me" for less than $200,000. Davis, a 28-year-old director/editor/screenwriter/producer, is a Hollywood hyphenate who handles each of her

FEST REVIEWS

inematic duties with the ut-
ost competence and econ-
my. This most auspicious
inematic debut is about the
exual awakening of Katie
Marla Schaffel), a mid-twen-
ies virgin with a defeatist
ttitude toward romance. Be-
ide Katie stand her unrequited
best friend," Ben (Mitchell
Vhitfield), and libidinous crony
anet (Meredith Scott Lynn).

What unfolds is a fresh per-
pective on contemporary rela-
onships that is bursting with
tellar performances, smart dia-
ogue and well-crafted chuck-
es. Davis draws laughs not only
om words but also with clever,
ow-tech special effects—for
xample, the lone bed at an un-
xpected sleepover jumps from
ne screen. Davis maintains a
risk pace even as she packs her
lm with perfect measures of
motional heft and light-hearted
iggles. Constructed with an ap-
ealing slickness, "I Love
ou...Don't Touch Me" is a
augh-out-loud romantic com-
dy that leaves one breathless
ith anticipation for Julie Davis
lms to come.—*Ian Hodder*

CCIDENTAL LEGEND ★1/2

*Starring Niu Cheng-tse and
hang Shih. Directed and
ritten by Wang Shau-di. Pro-
uced by Hsu Li-kong and
uang Li-ming. No stateside
istributor set. Drama. Tai-
anese-language; English
ubtitles. Not yet rated. Run-
ing time: 129 min.*

A Taiwanese film based on
n episode of Chinese history,
Accidental Legend" is a diffi-
ult film for unilingual Ameri-
an moviegoers. Even the most
ttentive Anglophone will be
ost after three minutes of con-
oluted plot and lightning-fast
ubtitles. During the movie's
rst half, viewers are eager to
ecipher what's going on—ap-
arently, two sticky-fingered
ids from a paupers' village
nger the local nobility, who are
bsessed with apprehending the
egion's fabled trickster—but,
s "Accidental Legend" enters
s second hour, this once-en-
aging fairy tale begins to bore.

The key problems are direc-
orial restraint and pacing. Di-
ector/writer Wang Shau-di
ums the plot into the first and
nal 15 minutes, which means
ie movie's remainder works
ke undisciplined filler. In
anslation, the acting and dia-
ogue seem crude replicas of
hat are probably satisfactory
performances. But "Accidental Legend" is not without merit—including snatches of fine cinematography and a smattering of intriguing dramatic snippets—but one suspects that "Accidental Legend" is too long in any language.—*Ian Hodder*

THE BUTTERFLY LIFTS THE CAT ★★★1/2

Starring Arjan Kindermanns, Marjolein Beumer and Rik Launspach. Directed by Willeke Van Ammelrooy. Written by Carel Donck, Sander Vos and Willeke Van Ammelrooy. Produced by Stichting De Vlinder. No stateside distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 113 min.

Dutch actress Willeke Van Ammelrooy, best known in America as the titular heroine of the Oscar-winning "Antonia's Line," steps behind the camera for "The Butterfly Lifts the Cat." Crammed with complexities, it's a tough assignment for a first-time director, but Van Ammelrooy meets the challenge. That's fitting, because this film is about overcoming life's unpredictable obstacles. It concerns, specifically, thirtyish David (Arjan Kindermanns) and his relationships with ex-girlfriend Linda (Marjolein Beumer) and brother Anton (Rik Launspach).

David and Linda reunite 10 years after a sudden break-up, and both have a surprise for each other: David is stricken with multiple sclerosis; Linda has an adolescent son, who wants to meet his father. Mercifully, Van Ammelrooy avoids milking audience emotions, trusting instead her skillful cast and script to unfold the drama in a wholly realistic manner. Were it not for its often wonderful cinematography, "The Butterfly Lifts the Cat" could pass as a gripping documentary about a rough period in the life of three friends. Every scene rings true.—*Ian Hodder*

GOODBYE ★★★

Starring Johanna Ter Steege and Guy Van Sande. Directed by Heddy Honigmann. Written by Helena Van Der Meulen and Heddy Honigmann. Produced by Suzanne Van Voorst. No stateside distributor set. Drama. Not rated. Run time: 113 min.

The opening sequence of "Goodbye"—in which Jan (Guy Van Sande) encounters, follows home, and makes love

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to Laura ("Wyatt Earp's" Johanna Ter Steege)—is so original and exuberant that the whole film warrants recommendation for its beginning alone. After Jan and Laura consummate their unspoken courtship, they introduce themselves, and Jan reveals, "I'm married." What follows is the mother of all on-again/off-again relationships, as the forbidden lovers grapple with a passion that neither of them understands.

Director and co-writer Heddy Honigmann reveals a wonderful intuition for complementing her characters' emotions with camera motion—variously caressing, running and staring. And it's unimaginable that Honigmann could have picked more controlled yet emotive leads than Van Sande and Ter Steege. "Goodbye" would have benefited from one less breakup and reunification, regardless of how true-to-life this drawn-out pattern is. It's a rare film, however, that can realistically portray all-consuming passion without descending into absurdity or going straight over the top.—*Ian Hodder*

TORONTO FILM FESTIVAL

FIRE ★★★1/2

Starring Shabana Azmi, Nandita Das and Ranjit Chowdhry. Directed and written by Deepa Mehta. Produced by Bobby Bedi and Deepa Mehta. A Zeitgeist release. Drama. Unrated. Running time: 104 min.

Deepa Mehta rebounds from her last misfire, the little-seen Jessica Tandy/Bridget Fonda starrer "Camilla," with a much better take on a friendship between two women. Set in contemporary Bombay, "Fire" is a probing and sensitive look at the continuing clash between traditional and modern Indian values, typified by the strong relationship between Radha (Shabana Azmi), an unhappily married older woman, and Sita (Nandita Das), a young and vibrant addition to the household who stirs her in ways she has not experienced before.

Unlike Mira Nair's "Kama Sutra," "Fire" is imbued with real passion and conviction. Though shot in English, it never feels stilted; Mehta's direction and plotting are pleasingly subtle. She even throws in some effective comic bits featuring Ranjit Chowdhry as a perpetually horny boarder. The other men in the film, such as Sita's faithless husband Jatin (Jaaved Jaaferi), are given their due, too. In its quiet way, "Fire" packs an emotional wallop.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

THE DELTA ★

Starring Shane Gray and Thang Chan. Directed and written by Ira Sachs. Produced by Margot Bridger. A Charlie Guidance production; no stateside distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 80 min.

Set in the new South, this pedestrian and amateurish drama looks at the gay life of two individuals in the Mississippi Delta. One, a white suburban teen (Shane Gray) who has a girlfriend, is given to sneaking off to pick up male hustlers. A Vietnamese man (Thang Chan) with whom he gets involved at the film's beginning falls in love with him, and the two undertake an odd, uncertain relationship that ends in tragedy.

The American South remains an underused subject of stateside film, and its gay aspects have remained almost completely untouched. But "The Delta" is such a flat, slow and uninflected movie that it undermines any provocative observations it would like to make. Shot in 16mm, with nonpros as actors (writer/director Ira Sachs met his leads in a pool hall), "The Delta" leaves no impression at all, so its interest to audiences, whether straight or gay, is likely to be negligible.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

DOG RUN ★★1/2

Starring Brian Marc, Craig DuPlessis and Lisa Ristorucci. Directed by D. Ze'ev Gilad. Written by Brian Marc and D. Ze'ev Gilad. Produced by Jeffrey Feldman, Brian Marc and D. Ze'ev Gilad. No stateside distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 104 min.

Stuck working in New Orleans for a drug dealer, teenagers Eddie (Brian Marc) and Miles (Craig DuPlessis) leap at the chance when their boss orders them to transport some heroin to Manhattan. Once there, they're left stranded with no place to go.

"Dog Run" is an authentic-looking movie, a warts-and-all depiction of the squatters, drug addicts and homeless kids fending for themselves on the streets of New York. But director/co-scripter D. Ze'ev Gilad is on shakier ground when he tries to dramatize the situation. As Eddie and Miles become involved with two women, drug addict Tara (Lisa Ristorucci) and college student Rachel (Elizabeth Horsburgh), the film becomes less realistic and more contrived. The relationship between Miles and Rachel is especially unbelievable, a fake "West Side Story" for the '90s. A first-time helmer, Gilad demonstrates a talent for atmosphere, but he'll need a better screenplay next time around if he expects his film to score.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

FLOATING LIFE ★★★

Starring Annette Shun Wah, Annie Yip and Anthony Wong. Directed by Clara Law. Written by Eddie L.C. Fong and Clara Law. Produced by Bridget Ikin. No stateside distributor set. Drama. Chinese-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 95 min.

An aptly titled, uneven yet emotionally affecting work that deals with areas of the immigrant experience seldom explored in contemporary films, "Floating Life" was shot mostly in Australia (where director Clara Law and her husband/co-writer, Eddie Fong, now reside). The film chronicles a Chinese family from Hong Kong that has scattered to the winds on the eve of reunification with mainland China.

Eldest daughter Yen settles in Germany with her husband and daughter; youngest sibling Bing obtains a huge house Down Under with her husband, and there the rest of the family—including a crop of teenagers—turns up (however uncomfortably) to live; oldest son Gar Ming stays in Hong Kong at the old family home awaiting his own immigration papers. Law shifts her story from house to house to explore the dislocations, tensions and longing for a sense of home. Placed in a suburb that's stuck in endless space with all that harsh light, the levels of that displacement are obvious, and it's both funny and sad, especially when contrasted with Gar Ming's loneliness in Hong Kong's teeming crowds and Yen in Germany's darker shadows.

What most makes "Floating Life" refreshing is the way it tackles the subject of emigration. Rather than making the family into victims of racist rejection at the hands of the Aussies, the film—as did Paul Mazursky's "Moscow on the Hudson"—looks deeper into a more complex type of homesickness brought on by leaving one's cultural roots behind. Law's work occasionally lapses into melodrama (as in Bing's battles with her family), but it reaches incongruently comic heights also (as when Pa confronts a kangaroo on his street).—*Kevin Courrier*

LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT ★★★

Starring William Hutt, Martha Henry, Peter Donaldson and Tom McCamus. Directed by David Wellington. Written by Eugene O'Neill. Produced by Daniel Iron and Niv Fichman. No stateside distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 173 min.

Probably the greatest of all American plays, Eugene O'Neill's autobiographical Irish-American saga "Long Day's Journey Into Night" has been made into a handsome and faithful work by Canadian helmer David Wellington ("A Man in Uniform"). Based on the 1994 Stratford Theatre Festival production, Wellington has shot this "Long Day's Journey" in autumnal colors and in Panavision; meanwhile, a lonely, spacious family home itself becomes a character.

William Hutt, as miserly patriarch James Tyrone, gives a sturdy and powerful performance as a man who cloaks his despair in a haze of alcohol and blarney. As Mary, the morphine addict who opens the spiritual wounds that lay the family bare, Martha Henry is better here than she was in the stage version (though she still exhibits the kind of technical brilliance that reminds audiences they're watching a performance). Tom McCamus, as younger brother Edmund, a struggling writer who is ill with consumption, conveys his brooding and melancholic humor with true lyricism. But Peter Donaldson (as older brother Jamie, a man who has failed to live up to his father's—and his own—expectations) in the final act, when he confronts Edmund with his darkest secret, plays so inebriated that it slurs the potency of O'Neill's prose.

This take might not have the sweeping power of the only other theatrical film version, the great 1962 interpretation directed by Sidney Lumet and starring the amazing ensemble of Katharine Hepburn, Ralph Richardson, Jason Robards and Dean Stockwell. But it still stands on its own as a fine adaptation.—*Kevin Courrier*

CINEMA OF CD

by Ann Kwinn

Now that the marriage between Hollywood and Silicon Valley is no longer front-page news and the couple are not quite newlyweds, some behavior patterns have emerged in the relationship. In the case of CD-ROMs based on movies, studios have become much more cautious, not viewing as many titles as appropriate for the conversion. Some interactive departments have come and gone.

The way the interactive medium is being used—the approaches, models and paradigm—is narrowing. There are fewer cinematic or narrative titles, such as "Johnny Mnemonic." There are fewer adult edutainment titles like the "Braveheart" CD-ROM, which gave information about medieval Scotland and background information about the film. Instead, the studios have largely pointed their efforts toward creating true games. And most studios have given game-making back to the professionals: top performers such as Activision, 7th Level and Acclaim Entertainment. This trend is so strong that some titles, such as "Space Jam," are created for proprietary game hardware such as the Sony PlayStation or the Sega Saturn as well as for CD-ROM use.

Still, movie-based CD-ROMs haven't vanished. Following are reviews of some recent titles from the genre.

DISNEY'S ANIMATED STORYBOOK: TOY STORY ★★★★1/2

Disney Interactive and Pixar Animation Studios; Windows and Macintosh; $35-$40.

Wow. Pixar Animation Studios (whose CEO and main stockholder is Apple Computer co-founder Steve Jobs) introduced 3-D animation to animation festgoers with "Luxo," a short subject about the relationship between a high-intensity desk lamp and a rubber ball. Pixar later created the hilarious "Tin Toy," in which toys cower in the shadow of a drooling, bumbling baby who doesn't really mean to toss them around and in the end wants to play only with the packaging. And the first completely computer-generated feature film, Pixar's "Toy Story," delivered stunning images, humor and excitement.

That means the bar has been raised for children's CD-ROM titles. Yet Pixar amazes the eyes again with a wonderfully choreographed dance of light on the CRT with its Disney Animated StoryBook version of "Toy Story." On an average multimedia computer, this title seamlessly animates 3-D characters on many areas of the screen.

Designed for children ages three through nine, "Toy Story" is the fourth in Disney Interactive's Animated StoryBook series and features the talents of Annie Potts, Jim Varney, Wallace Shawn and Don Rickles, who voice the same characters they played in the movie—the toys of a six-year-old boy named Andy. But the CD-ROM also features new animation and content, especially in the form of activities.

The Broderbund Living Books format has been improved upon with integrated puzzles throughout the (toy) storybook. For example, youngsters can click on Buzz Lightyear's buttons to see what they do. Selecting Buzz at various points makes the spaceman catch Dance Fever or lift into the Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairies.

Scenes from the movie are reworked into activities. For example, in the movie's final scene, Buzz and Woody chase the moving van that is transporting Andy's family to a new home. Here, in an effort to bring the two on board, all the toys have to help. If you choose the wobbly little Fisher Price people to help, they say, "Get real. We have no arms." This product is very well done—although a title about toys can give you the sneaking suspicion that you are being marketed to!



CD SENTINELS: *Woody and Buzz stand ready to entertain again, this time via Disney/Pixar's "Animated StaryBook: Toy Story."*

FORREST J. ACKERMAN'S MUSEUM OF SCIENCE FICTION, HORROR AND FANTASY ★★★1/2

Marlin Software; Windows and Macintosh; $42.95.

For starters, Forrest Ackerman's apparent unconcern for what others think of him and his simultaneous desire to be known and liked make him an interesting character. Add to that his having edited 190 issues of Famous Monsters of Filmland magazine plus other fanzines, won six Hugo awards and two Gold Saturns, acted in 52 sci-fi, horror and fantasy films, and been a literary agent for more than 200 writers, including Ray Bradbury—and you have an icon.

Ackerman is known to such movie megafigures as Steven Spielberg, John Landis, George Lucas, Joe Dante and Stephen King, some of whom have put him in bit parts in their movies. A fan of wordplay, he coined the expression "sci-fi," and he can be seen on the sci-fi convention circuit, gracious to new fans and old, no matter how freakish, showing them his mummy ring—a prop from an old B&W horror flick.

Ackerman has one of the world's largest collections of sci-fi movie memorabilia, certainly risen in value since the days when Forry hung with Vincent Price and Bela Lugosi. Housed in his home, the Ackermansion, are 300,000 items, including 100,000 photos, 50,000 books, and original artwork by sci-fi artists. He's guided 25,000 fans on tours through this private showroom.

The collection is the basis for this CD-ROM program. It includes interviews, video clips, artwork, rare photos, seven full-length novels, and props and miscellany from seven decades of collecting. The four-CD set is grouped by three areas—science fiction, fantasy, and horror—and presents the material in a virtual museum something like the original. A whole room is devoted to Ackerman's fave flick, "Metropolis."

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This CD and its subject seem well matched to a target audience; among the ranks of high-level computer users are many sci-fi fans. The media richness of the CD format and its common "searching through space" metaphor are much like searching a museum. Because the museum in question is a media one, cataloging the fields of comic books, novels, film, etc., multimedia is the perfect vehicle.

This product features 3-D animation and Apple's QuickTime VR (virtual reality) technology, but the real beauty the Marlin Software developers have added to the artifacts are 2-D collages surrounding them.

THE ULTIMATE JAMES BOND: AN INTERACTIVE DOSSIER ★★★1/2

MGM Interactive; Windows; $39.95 (includes "GoldenEye" vidcocassette).

This product is simple, slick, well-organized and informative. A sort of interactive version of a Bond encyclopedia, like Steven Jay Rubin's "The Complete James Bond Movie Encyclopedia," it uses video footage from the movies and hyperlinks users to textual information from basic categories in the main menu, such as Missions, Women, Allies, Villians, Q-Branch, Vehicles, and HMSS Trivia Challenge. There is some minimal animation for panache. Imposed limitations set a focused tone and purpose to this title: Access the data quickly and tastefully—just as James would like it.

The interface is a fantasy image of what one might conjure if asked to think of "spy software," and it leads to information about the characters more than the films' actors or creators. It is the proverbial "must have" for Bond fans. There is new footage of Desmond Llewelyn, the actor who played Q in almost all of the Bond movies. The actor speaks directly to the user to explain how to use the software. The Q-Branch section gives the specs of such items as an exploding gas keychain, exploding milk bottles, and a KGB panic watch (and those are all from one movie, "The Living Daylights").

The material was compiled by two Bond experts who went into the United Artists vaults to find more than 200 behind-the-scenes production stills and more than a thousand photographs. (The cover photos prove that, without a doubt, all the Bonds after Sean Connery had clefts in their chins.)

SPACE JAM ★★★

Acclaim Entertainment; Windows (also Sony PlayStation, Sega Saturn); $39.99.

Creating another basketball CD-ROM title was a good play for Acclaim Entertainment. Its NBA "Jam" series is the best-selling sports video game franchise of all time.

The Warner Bros. film, "Space Jam," stars basketball superstar Michael Jordan, who can fly through the air like a huge predatory bird, and just about any of the Looney Tunes characters one can think of: Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Porky Pig, Elmer Fudd, the Tasmanian Devil, Marvin the Martian, Foghorn Leghorn, Wiley Coyote and the Roadrunner, Michigan J. Frog, Sylvester and Tweety, and Yosemite Sam. The Chicken Hawk wasn't on the court, but he might have been in the stands. It's a virtual curtain call for the entire collection of characters and feels like a stroll through a Warner Bros. store. The movie also introduces a new character, Lola Bunny, who is sexy and athletic and doesn't like to be called "Doll." This means, of course, that Bugs doesn't have to dress up in drag to advance the plot. Yet all this didn't make the movie the "license to print money" some thought the expensive film would be.

The CD-ROM version consists of a basketball game interspersed with side games and puzzles at the quarters, with names like: Space Race, Locker Room Challenge and the Trophy Room, which hearken back to the movie. On the court, you can run, pass, shoot, jump or switch in a three-on-three against either the Looney Tunes characters (The Tune Squad) or the Monstars, evil alien creatures (from the movie) who have stolen the talent of professional players. In individual play, the basketball ball pretty much always goes into the basket. One just presses the arrow key to move down the court, and then the alt key to shoot. Alternatively, one can use game peripherals such as a joypad, which is a joystick with buttons at the base, or a Gravis Grip, a pad with buttons. Like basketball itself, it's for youngsters or adults.

Before the basketball game starts, the players come onto the court with characteristic flourishes. For example, Daffy pulls out a sign from behind his back that reads, "I'm available for endorsements." As in the movie, it's hilarious to see Elmer Fudd, in shorts and headband, flying toward the baseboard with a look of murder on his face. A lumpy witch and a bespectacled granny serve an cheerleaders, leaping high with huge smiles on their faces. The audio is perfect: The sound effects and voiceover announcer are as real as in a real game.

At installation, a user has the option of installing 4, 55 or 147 MB of data onto the hard drive. The game runs fine with only a minimum installation. Many bosses will be "overwhelmed" to know that the CD also offers PC-networked play for up to six players. On those nights when the staff seems to be really motivated to work late, they may just be playing "Space Jam."

MUPPET TREASURE ISLAND ★★

Activision; Windows, Macintosh; $39.95.

This title stars the muppet (a cross between a marionette and a puppet) species made popular on "Sesame Street," a TV show big kids pretended not to be watching when their younger siblings had it on. Like Colm Meaney, who moved from one "Star Trek" series to another, Kermit the Frog was the only muppet to make the leap to "The Muppet Show," which aired on prime time with star (human) guests and a less educational mission. "Muppet Treasure Island" the movie, like the other muppet films, is based on the "Muppet Show" characters.

The "Muppet Treasure Island" CD-ROM is an example of great material in search of a treasure: an appropriate interactive model,

SPECIAL FORMATS

which is never quite found. The developers were probably striving to create a title that would appeal to young kids and adolescents, like the movie did. One failing is that the game doesn't make much sense to people who did not see the movie, which explains, for example, that if a pirate receives a paper with a "black spot" on it he will be killed in the night.

Users are dropped into the Benbow Inn, where they hear a cry—"the black spot!"—without being told at the outset the goal one is to accomplish. This makes it hard for young children to figure out the program. One good feature is the constant presence of Stevenson the Parrot, who will give some help when clicked on. The muppets race around attractive, off-kilter backgrounds with multiple perspectives, like a Grandma Moses painting. The title is technically advanced, so much so that some computers may have trouble displaying all the images and synching up the sound and picture.

Thankfully, the movie's silly humor is here. Click on a portrait of a motherly type, and one hears: "Billy, did you remember to say 'thank you' after stealing the treasure map?" Some actions move the story along, while others are diversions. The format is more involved than an electronic book but is more frustrating. For example, a hint in the jewel-case booklet reads: "In order to get aboard the ship, you need to acquire the Seal of Passage from Squire Trelawney, son of the Bristol's master shipbuilder. Before the butler will let you in to see the Squire, you must be dressed in a 'Monsieur Edouard' original. In order to buy a Monsieur Edouard original, you need to earn some money. And the only way you can earn some money is by helping Pops shoot pies at pirates at Pops' Potpourri." Finding a hidden treasure sure is hard work!

SCI FI MOVIE MACHINE ★★1/2

TDC Interactive; Windows and Macintosh; $34.95.

Computer users like to be active, at least at the wrist. They don't like to watch long expository segments—or at least that is the accepted wisdom. Some developers have found success in providing material or structures that users can more freely manipulate. For example, Davidson and Associates' "Kid Works" series lets children create their own stories and draw their own pictures. A spate of music video CD-ROMs have come out on various proprietary platforms that let users assemble video clips in time to a song. And "Steven Spielberg's Director's Chair" (see our Oct. 96 issue) lets CD-ROM users piece together their own "movies."

"Sci Fi Movie Machine" is TDC Interactive's first title in its Cinemaker CD-ROM series, which also includes "Bimbo Movie Bash." The "Sci Fi Movie Machine" has an attractive interface and gives instruction, in the sci-fi theme of the program, on how to use it. (The program warns: "Online help android now activated. Click here to annihilate sequence.") Users just have to choose clips from within the "preview bay" and drop them into the "sequencer" in any desired order and then watch the assemblage.

The CD includes hundreds of digitized film snippets from actual sci-fi movies, including footage of rockets, robots, dinosaurs, aliens, scientists and spaceships. There is no limit on the length or number of movies someone can create. And, once they are strung together, they can be watched over and over again. Youngsters will probably enjoy this title, especially the feature that lets them speed up or slow down the movie, but it's likely too simplistic for adults, who won't feel they have really created something but have merely rearranged it.

ACE VENTURA ★★★1/2

7th Level and Morgan Creek Interactive; Windows; $39.99.

Ace is back. Love him or hate him, the Ace Ventura character has been transferred intact from the movies "Ace Ventura: Pet Detective" and "Ace Ventura: When Nature Calls" to a CD-ROM game, complete with a loud Hawaiian shirt, pompadour, swagger and adolescent humor. Those who love Ace have helped the Jim Carrey-starring films to gross more than $300 million worldwide. The "Ace Ventura" CBS Saturday-morning cartoon series consistently ranks high in the ratings.

Likewise, the CD-ROM "Ace Ventura" is animated, not live action. But the development company, 7th Level, is about the best in the business when it comes to creating humorous two-dimensional animation for CD-ROMs. The color, speed and quality of movement and expression of character are excellent. The voice actor is not Jim Carrey, but Michael Hall (who plays the character on the TV show) mimics Carrey's vocal style to a T.

The program does a good job of maintaining the childishly irreverent humor of the movies and keeping the action simple. To move forward, players must do such things as clicking on Ace to get a rope for climbing down a mountain or click on him for a key so that an apartment door can be unlocked. It's quite do-able for children or teenagers.

Although obnoxious, Ace has a good heart and does his best to protect the furry, four-legged and finned creatures of the earth in brand-new scenarios. One can travel to an underground Alaskan factory on Ace's monster snowmobile to solve a case of missing Huskies, or engage a deranged whalenapper in an underwater chase, swimming to avoid floating garbage. The four villains (one is named Phatteus Lardus) are all animal haters.

All told, butt-yodeling Ace and a monkey named Spike take players through three investigative cases comprising 34 complex scenarios in which one must collect items and clues to crack the case. Mazes must be navigated and puzzles solved along the way as well.

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BOXOFFICE REVIEWS

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DAY AND DATE: JULY 25

ALIVE AND KICKING ★★1/2

Starring Jason Flemyng and Anthony Sher. Directed by Nancy Meckler. Written by Martin Sherman. Produced by Martin Pope. A First Look release. Drama/romance. Rated R for some strong sexuality, and for nudity and language. Running time: 110 min. Opens 7/25 ltd.

"Indian Summer," this film's original title, is more evocative and better suited to the mood here than the more jaunty "Alive and Kicking" moniker under which the film is now being released. Despite the provocative energies of its leading couple, this story of love in the face of illness needs its sense of melancholy transience to resonate in order to affect audiences fully. Sometimes it succeeds, but at other times the deeper feelings twirl away in teasing superficiality, much in the way Jason Flemyng's character leads his life before he meets his match.



Jason Flemyng stars in First Look's "Alive and Kicking."

Both Flemyng ("Stealing Beauty") as Tonio, a glamor boy dancer, and Anthony Sher as Jack, a plain theropist, give lively, starry performances in which their indulgences are more often entertainingly surprising rather than merely showoff turns. As they try to bring the surface and interior of their couple's lives into harmony, they prove a discordant but compelling couple in a love story that's appealing in its awkward intensity.

Playwright Martin Sherman ("Bent") has created well-etched, multi-layered characters. It's easy to envision the love story of Tonio and Jack just being played out duet style on stage, without any need for the scenic backdrops that a film work demands. But the issue of AIDS, which underlies their life choices, and the milieu of the English dance world, around which the story is set, are not as fully realized as the lead roles. Also, little new terrain is covered, though both Anthony Higgins as a dying superstar and Dorothy Tutin as an addled prima donna catch their own brief spotlights with bright and touching wit.—***Bridget Byrne***

'TIL THERE WAS YOU ★

Starring Jeanne Tripplehorn, Dylan McDermott and Sarah Jessica Parker. Directed by Scott Winant. Written by Winnie Holzman. Produced by Penney Finkelman Cox, Tom Rosenberg and Alan Poul. A Paramount release. Romance. Rated PG-13 for sensuality, language and drug references. Running time: 113 min.

Any romantic movie that chooses to incorporate a clip of "Brief Encounter" into its storyline must be very sure about what it's doing. "'Til There Was You" is not. This attempt at a modern-day love story is a mushy and ill-formed mess, uncomfortably inept whether trying to be sentimental or satiric. Combining ideas and themes much better explored in films as diverse as Claude Lelouch's "And Now My Love" and Steve Martin's "L.A. Story," the script fails to weave together its myriad threads into anything other than a tangled lump.

A jerky plotline follows an intended couple as chance, circumstance and plot contrivance keep them apart as they grow into trendy Los Angeles adults. The characters are weakly drawn and the symbolic landscape of their lives heavy-handedly conceived. Jeanne Tripplehorn, as struggling writer Gwen, and Dylan McDermott, as aspiring architect Nick, both lack oomph, so the movie clings to other surfaces. This is a movie in which the back history is a collection of hairstyles and the future, presumably, a smoke-free zone. In between is just thirty-something delusion.—***Bridget Byrne***

NIGHT FALLS ON MANHATTAN ★★1/2

Starring Andy Garcia, Richard Dreyfuss and Lena Olin. Directed and written by Sidney Lumet. Produced by Thom Mount and Josh Kramer. A Paramount release. Drama. Rated R for violence and language. Running time: 110 min.

Corruption, within both the police department and the legal system, has provided fertile ground for Sidney Lumet in the past; witness "Serpico," "Prince of the City" and "Verdict." With "Night Falls on Manhattan," Lumet again sets out to explore issues of personal and public responsibility, moral compromise, culpability and the nature of justice. But this time he stumbles.

This Spelling production concerns an idealistic young street cop turned Manhattan district attorney (Andy Garcia) whose moral principles are tested during an investigation into police corruption. The fact that Garcia's character goes from being a wet-behind-the-ears lawyer to DA so quickly is only one of many implausible plot points upon which the story rests. Also thrown into the mix is a romantic subplot involving a civil rights attorney (Lena Olin); not only is the romance pointless, there is zero chemistry between Garcia and Olin.

Heavy on melodrama and scenery-chewing performances (especially by Ron Liebman as a DA overseeing Garcia's fast rise), the film at least tries to tackle important issues: the collapse of traditional morality in America, the nature of justice in a corrupt world, the conflict between the greater good and the moral infractions sometimes necessary to achieve it, and the price to both the public and the individual of making those compromises.—***Jean Oppenheimer***

REVIEWS

BUDDY ★★

Starring Rene Russo, Robbie Coltrane and Alan Cumming. Directed and written by Caroline Thompson. Produced by Steve Nicolaides and Fred Fuchs. A Columbia release. Comedy/drama. Rated PG for some threatening animal action. Running time: 84 min.

"Buddy" is a difficult—even painful—film to watch, which is most certainly not what the folks behind the project intended. Based on a true story, as recounted in Gertrude Linz's book, "Animals Are My Hobby," this first feature from Jim Henson Productions concerns an eccentric socialite in 1920s New York who surrounded herself with animals she raised as children.

Gertrude "Trudy" Lintz (Rene Russo, poorly served by Caroline Thompson's script) is a wealthy, generous woman whose achilles heel is that she thinks she knows what is best for everyone—including Buddy, a sickly baby gorilla she nurses to health. She attires Buddy in human clothes, forces him to walk upright, makes him sleep in a bed and generally sets out to civilize him, blind to how unhappy and lonely the growing ape is becoming and failing to recognize his child-like attachment to her.

Well-intentioned though Trudy might be, her insensitivity comes across as cruelty, and that proves an insurmountable problem in the film. Thompson, who wrote Tim Burton's "Edward Scissorhands" and "The Nightmare Before Christmas" and adapted and directed "Black Beauty," is drawn to creatures who are outsiders, which is perhaps why Buddy and fellow chimpanzees are the most developed, empathetic characters here. Scottish actor Alan Cumming is the only human to bring any depth to his role, and the normally lovable Robbie Coltrane, as Trudy's extraordinarily tolerant husband, is flat and dull. Although beautifully shot and bearing first-rate production design, this Henson effort proves to be a sad disappointment.—***Jean Oppenheimer***

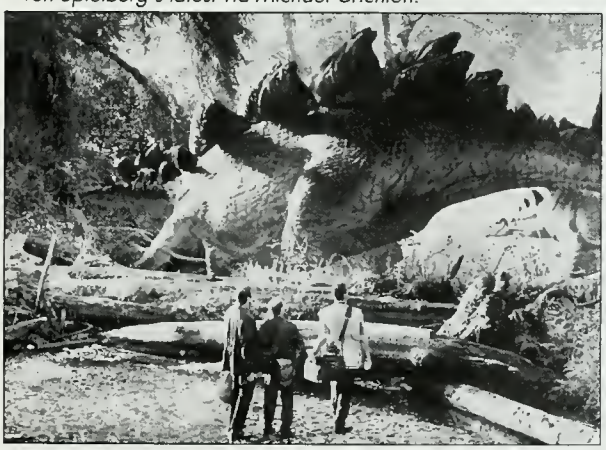
THE LOST WORLD: JURASSIC PARK ★★★★

Starring Jeff Goldblum, Julianne Moore, Pete Postlethwaite, Arliss Howard and Richard Attenborough. Directed by Steven Spielberg. Written by David Koepp. Produced by Gerald R. Molen and Colin Wilson. A Universal release. Fantasy/adventure. Rated PG-13 for intense sci-fi terror and violence. Running time: 129 min.

After "Jaws," Steven Spielberg publicly scorned the making of sequels as a "cheap carny trick." His decision to direct the inevitable "Jurassic Park" sequel himself, rather than assigning it to another filmmaker, was partly a protection against a cheesy followup to what is the biggest global blockbuster in movie history. Spielberg amply delivers the goods with Amblin Entertainment's "The Lost World: Jurassic Park," a beautifully crafted series of nightmarish set pieces with no other goal in mind than to scare and delight the audience. If the film ultimately seems more efficient than inspired, with less emotional and visceral impact than such classic Spielberg suspensers as "Duel" and "Jaws," its popular appeal vindicates his return to escapist entertainment following "Schindler's List."

Perhaps it's a spillover effect of "Schindler's List" that makes this dinosaur movie much darker in look and feel than "Jurassic Park." "Schindler's List" cinematographer Janusz Kaminski gives "The Lost World's" jungle scenes the subtly fantastic haze of Corot paintings. Spielberg makes no attempt to replicate "Jurassic Park's" awestruck contemplation of the majesty of prehistoric beasts, concentrating instead on unrelentingly creepy and horrific images of genetic engineering gone awry.





LOST WORLDS: *The 1925 silent version of Arthur Conan Doyle's tale (above), and Steven Spielberg's latest via Michael Crichton.*

The unruly dinosaurs on Site B, the island where the beasts of Jurassic Park were bred, have far more interaction with the human characters than did their predecessors. Dinosaur creators Dennis Muren, Stan Winston and Michael Lantieri outdo themselves with astonishingly believable creatures moving and breathing with utter physical dexterity and abandon.

The dialogue and structure by screenwriter David Koepp ("Mission: Impossible") substantially improve on Michael Crichton's dull and perfunctory source novel. But, with the exception of the edgily heroic Malcolm (a returning Jeff Goldblum) and an enigmatic big-game hunter ("Dragonheart's" Pete Postlethwaite), the characterizations remain stubbornly two-dimensional. The film occasionally exhibits a winning strain of self-satire, as in Malcolm's running stream of ironic asides and an uproarious finale in San Diego that plays like a spoof of a 1950s monster movie.—***Joseph McBride***

ADDICTED TO LOVE ★★★

Starring Matthew Broderick, Meg Ryan, Tcheky Karyo and Kelly Preston. Directed by Griffin Dunne. Written by Robert Gordon. Produced by Jeffrey Silver and Bobby Newmyer. A Warner Bros. release. Romantic comedy. Rated R for sexual content. Running time: 100 min.

Revenge is Sweet and Hell Hath No Fury Like a Woman Scorned are popular cinematic themes these days. (See "The First Wives Club" and "Waiting to Exhale" for other recent movies that would be apt to elicit an exuberant cry of "you go, girl!" from some of the more overenthusiastic audience members.) "Addicted to Love's" Maggie (Meg Ryan), the former fiancee of an exploitive, arrogant French waiter-turned-restaurateur named Anton ("La Femme Nikita's" Tcheky Karyo), adds another colorfully vengeful archetype to film's pantheon of jilted Jills. And Matthew Broderick plays simpy Sam, whose love of his life, Laura ("Jerry Maguire's" Kelly Preston), left him for Maggie's Anton.

Sam moves into an abandoned apartment next door to the paramours' residence to spy. On her quest to decimate her ex, the intimidating Maggie moves into Sam's spy hovel against his wishes but soon persuades him to join her in her devious plot to break up the happy couple. Wacky schemes ensue, and Sam and Maggie begin to bond while reveling in conspiratorial glee. Eventually, though, they must come to terms with the fact that what they thought would make them happy doesn't seem to be doing so.

Ryan takes a refreshing 90-degree turn from her usual screen persona as the aggressive yet cool, eclectically garbed, tough-as-nails Maggie (though there's sensitivity beneath), while Broderick's perennial puppy-dog appeal and subtle sardonic delivery fit him perfectly into the role of Sam. And Karyo as Anton delves with relish into his role as an egomaniacal dictator-type who, through ascendingly outrageous humiliations, is reduced to being a painfully pathetic loser. Although ultimately predictable and in need of a wider array of inventive revenges, "Addicted to Love" is fun, spirited and frequently clever.—***Christine James***

REVIEWS

LA PROMESSE ★★★★

Starring Jeremie Renier, Olivier Gourmet and Assta Ouedraogo. Directed and written by Jean-Pierre Dardenne and Luc Dardenne. Produced by Luc Dardenne and Hassen Daldoul. A New Yorker release. Drama. French-language; English subtitles. Unrated. Running time: 93 min.

For more than 20 years, Belgian brothers Luc and Jean-Pierre Dardenne have been making documentaries together. Their subject matter has usually centered on the Leftist worker movements of the 1960s, their preference a directorial style admittedly "theatrical" and subjective. Now, moving away from the constraints of "reality, to which we were accountable," the duo has turned to fiction features. With "La Promesse," their third, they've created a work of great emotional depth and impact that ironically draws much of its power from low-key, naturalistic performances captured with a shooting style more often associated with traditional documentary making.

Set in the post-industrial limbo of a dead factory town, "La Promesse" follows 15-year-old Igor, a boy learning how to be a small-time hustler from his father Roger. Together they toil in the town's only growth industry: the exploitation of illegal immigrants by providing them with false papers, flophouses and off-the-books construction work. Igor's moral awakening comes with a covered-up accidental death of an African illegal. Igor must either betray his father or the promise he made to the dying man to look after his wife and infant.

The Dardennes have written a compelling, believable script and have drawn excellent performances from mostly unknown or inexperienced actors. But the truly wonderful thing about "La Promesse" is how the film's style and structure seem spontaneous, almost casual, obscuring all the thought and work necessary to achieve that effect. The camera is always in just the right place, with many scenes shot in continuous handheld takes that move with and pan between actors in place of cutting. And the brothers have the courage to allow emotionally significant events to transpire in wide unbroken shots, often with a major character's back to camera. This type of approach could easily seem gimmicky in less skillful hands, but here it's an integral part of a remarkable achievement.—*Alex Albanese*

GRIND ★1/2

Starring Billy Crudup and Adrienne Shelley. Directed by Chris Kentis. Written by Laura Lau and Chris Kentis. Produced by Laura Lau. A Castle Hill release. Drama. Unrated. Running time: 96 min.

A worthless effort displaying egotism rather than talent, "Grind" is indeed a grind—torpid, bland, lifeless and hollow. Its worst aspect is the pretentious sensibility of writer/director Chris Kentis, who makes labored attempts to integrate existential elements in a simple film noir character study.

Billy Crudup ("Sleepers") tries mightily to overcome the colorless role the script provides him, and he nearly succeeds. He plays an ex-con who moves in with his older brother (a one-note Paul Schulze) after being released from prison. Predictably, the parolee falls for his brother's wife (a pretty but vapid Adrienne Shelley) as he toils in a monotonous factory job when he's not drag racing. He gets into even more trouble when he partners with his brother and a crooked boss in a car insurance scam that goes awry.

Already cursory narrative exposition is further damaged by a lack of character development and motivation and by a lack of chemistry between Crudup and Shelley. Kentis' helming is long on amateurish staging and slack pacing—and long on pauses that are supposed to be pregnant with meaning. His idea of alienation and ennui is to have the actors stare into space or to have scenes suddenly fade out, condemnably faux artistic daring.—*Dale Winogura*

RUDYARD KIPLING'S THE SECOND JUNGLE BOOK: MOWGLI & BALOO ★

Starring Jamie Williams, Bill Campbell and Roddy McDowall. Directed by Duncan McLachlan. Written by Bayard Johnson and Matthew Horton. Produced by Raju Patel. A TriStar release. Adventure. Rated PG for some mild adventure violence and brief mild language. Running time: 90 min.

In the past, Disney has released two versions of the Rudyard Kipling classic "Jungle Book." The first was animated, the latter live-action. But this live-action film is really more a prequel to the animated work, albeit without songs and talking animals.

Set in the 1890s, this latest Kipling reworking opens with Mowgli (newcomer Jamie Williams) as a 10-year-old wild boy living with his wildlife family in the jungles of India. In a pitiful performance, Roddy McDowall ("Planet of the Apes") takes the pre-King Louie throne as King Murphy. Mowgli's jungle teacher, Baloo the bear, and his protector, Bagheera the panther, are back, but the filmmakers seem to overlook the fact that, as characters in a prequel, they need introduction. A supposition that audiences will already be familiar with Mowgli & co., given that this film is aimed at single-digit ages, is probably unwarranted.

A simple plotline has two monkeys trying to kidnap Mowgli and bring him back to their king. A circus talent scout ("The Rocketeer's" Bill Campbell) also wants Mowgli, but the scout's quest requires the aid of Mowgli's uncle, who has his own hidden agenda. None of this has any dramatic zest; if not for the bumbling antics of the monkeys, there would be no relief from a long and lingering boredom the film endengers. Any adults along to accompany the kids will be put off by the film's low-budget low-techery, in which the closeups of actors and animals are superimposed or spliced together.—*Dwayne E. Leslie*

PREVIOUSLY REVIEWED: *JUNE, JULY AND AUGUST RELEASES*

In light of our continuing commitment to bring you reviews as early as possible, we now provide a reader guide to upcoming releases we've already critiqued. The alphabetical list below notes the issue of* BOXOFFICE *in which the review appeared, gives its star rating, and provides updated distributor and release date information.

"Bandwagon" ★★★1/2: CFP, 8/15 ltd; see April 1997.
"Bliss" ★★★★: Triumph, 6/6 ltd; see May 1997.
"Box of Moonlight" ★★1/2: Trimark, 7/25 NY, 8/8 LA; see Nov. 1996.
"Brilliant Lies" ★★★: Castle Hill, 7/11 NY; see April 1997.
"Different for Girls" ★★: First Look, 8/15; see March 1997.
"Dream With the Fishes" ★★1/2: Sony Classics, 6/20 NY; see June 1997.
"Fall" ★★★: Orion, 6/20; see April 1997.
"Forever Mozart" ★★★★: New Yorker, 7/4; see Jan. 1997.
"For Roseanna" ★★★: Fine Line, 6/18 NY; see March 1997.
"The Full Monty" ★★★★: Fox Searchlight, 8/15; see April 1997.
"Gabbeh" ★★★: New Yorker, 6/25 NY; see Feb. 1997.
"Guantanamera" ★★★1/2: CFP, 7/2; see April 1997.
"Hamsun" ★★★1/2: First Run, 8/6; see March 1997.
"The Innocent Sleep" ★★1/2: Castle Hill, 6/27; see June 1996.
"In the Company of Men" ★★1/2: Sony Classics, 8/8; see April 1997.
"La Rencontre" ★★: Artistic License, July; see March 1997.
"Love Serenade" ★★1/2: Miramax, 6/20 NY/LA; see Aug. 1996.
"Mon Homme" ★★★: Artificial Eye, August; see March 1997.
"Mouth to Mouth" ★★★1/2: Miramax, 6/6 NY/LA; see Sept. 1996.
"Paperback Romance" ★★1/2: Goldwyn, 8/1; see May 1997.
"The Pillow Book" ★★★: CFP, 6/6; see July 1996.
"Shall We Dance?" ★★★1/2: Miramax, 6/27 NY/LA; see May 1997.
"Temptress Moon" ★★★1/2: Miramax, 6/13; see May 1997.
"Timothy Leary's Dead" ★★: Strand, 6/6 LA; see May 1997.
"Ulee's Gold" ★★★★: Orion, 6/13 NY/LA; see April 1997.
"When the Cat's Away" ★★★★: Sony Classics, 6/20 NY; see Feb. 1997.

REVIEWS

THE FIFTH ELEMENT ★★★

Starring Bruce Willis, Gary Oldman, Ian Holm, Milla Jovovich and Chris Tucker. Directed by Luc Besson. Written by Luc Besson and Robert Mark Kamen. Produced by Patrice Ledoux. A Columbia release. SF. Rated PG-13 for intense sci-fi violence, some sexuality and brief nudity. Running time: 125 min.

In his most recent films—"La Femme Nikita," "The Professional" and now "The Fifth Element"—an index of filmmaker Luc Besson's artistic success has been the amount of romantic frisson generated by his story. In his newest, in which a 23rd century taxi driver (Bruce Willis) must protect a young/old gamine (Milla Jovovich) who as the eternal and DNA-reincarnated perfection of life is the world's only hope against an evil force, that success is more modest. Fortunately, a concomitant success index—of Besson's ability to dazzle audiences with action pyrotechnics—has not lessened.



FARE "FIFTH": *Luc Besson transports audiences to a 23rd-century Manhattan.*

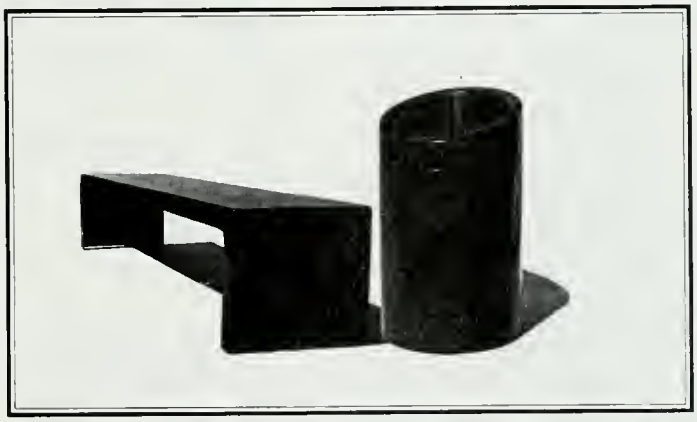
"The Fifth Element" affords Besson a galactic stage—and a fivefold increase in budget (French production company Gaumont prices it at $80 million, Gaul's most expensive cinema effort ever)—and with it Besson creates an especially "movable" feast. Even when the film is idling, the design team led by Dan Weil and costumer Jean-Paul Gaultier ("The City of Lost Children") make sure plenty is going on visually.

As with most SF, the story is high-school simple. (Besson conceived the idea when he was 16.) Perhaps it's the intervening 22 years that allowed Besson time for elaboration. So wonderfully overwrought are the heavy-metal kinetics of the narrative presentation that the audience is unlikely to worry much about whether the story is cosmologically cohesive, or even logical. That's fortunate, for the answers are no.

As the antihero, Bruce Willis is much less challenged here than in the similar-genre "12 Monkeys," but his cocky smirk is all that is required. More important to the success of "The Fifth Element" than any performer, however, is composer Eric Serra.

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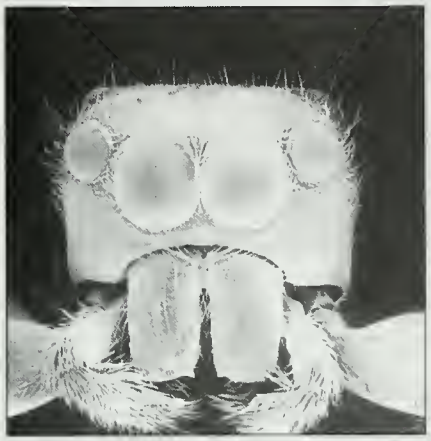
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SPECIAL FORMATS

FOUR MILLION HOUSEGUESTS ★★★1/2

Starring Charlotte Sullivan and C. David Johnson. Voice work by James Garner. Directed by Paul Cox. Produced by Mitey Cinema, Sally Dundas, Barbara Kerr and Lorne Orleans. An Imax Corp. release. Documentary/drama. Unrated. Running time: 45 min. Format: IMAX 3-D.



JUMPIN' JIMINY: *A leaping spider (viewed via electron microscope) in IMAX's "Four Million Houseguests."*

Four million houseguests sounds like the kind of intrusion that could occur before a wedding or during a natural disaster. In this case, it's a new IMAX 3-D offering.

This kind of movie can deliver at least two things: eye strain and hat hair. Its images are made three-dimensional via a relatively new technique: An infrared light is sent from 36 transmitters at the top of the giant screen to sensors on audience members' 3-D glasses. This sets off the "opening" and "closing" of left and then right virtual shutters in the glasses. The shutter effect is created by liquid crystal lenses that become black and clear. This, of course, all happens very quickly: 95 times per second.

At a recent California screening at the Edwards IMAX 3-D Theatre at its Irvine 21 Megaplex, director Paul Cox was on hand to answer the important questions of children in the audience, such as, "Where did you get all that stuff?"

"All that stuff" includes time-lapse photography of molding fruit, Schlieren photography revealing patterns of heat in the air, reptiles and insects changing color, and the star of the show: fantastic high (up to 40,000x) magnification, high-contrast black-and-white images from an electron microscope that made moths and spiders look like film noir actors. But the film conveys a great sense of wonder and whimsy. Through the use of high-tech microscopes and low-tech mechanical toys, it encourages children and adolescents to explore. Cox reminds that "3-D goes in, not just out. It embraces you, brings you in."

This movie deserves a tremendous kudos for its heavy use of synch sound and an emphasis on character over scenery. The director describes it as "a small film on a very large screen." The tone is purposeful, the movement unhurried. The movie's personae are calm and caring. Contrasting his characters with others, Cox states, "So many people in films are not the kind of people I would like to spend my life with." This is true enough. You just wish that one of these nice people would toss you an aspirin.—***Ann Kwinn***

MEXICO ★★★

Narrated by Martin Sheen (in English) and Enrique Rocha (in Spanish). Directed and produced by Lorena M. Parlee. Written by Carlos Fuentes, Carlos Blanco Aguinaga and Lorena M. Parlee. A Sol films production. Documentary. Unrated. Running time: 43 min. Format: IMAX.

Vivid and fast-moving, "Mexico" is a colorful montage exploding with color, music and legend. From the tall, futuristic skyscrapers in its modern cities to the 3,000-year-old ruins of its ancient civilizations, "Mexico" weaves together the country's many diverse cultural aspects in presenting an elaborate 70mm mosaic. It was selected for Oscar consideration in 1995, and it was the first IMAX film chosen to screen at the annual Montreal fest.

Technically, the film is a visual masterpiece: Award-winning documentary producer/director Lorena M. Parlee (who made Showscan's "Concerto for the Earth" and the Emmy- and CINE Golden Eagle-winning documentary "Ballad of an Unsung Hero") has assembled an impressive, internationally recognized team of feature and documentary filmmakers. Three cinematographers contribute bold shots—veteran IMAX DP David Douglas ("Blue Planet," "Rolling Stones: At the Max"), Oscar winner Haskell Wexler ("One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest," "Bound for Glory") and Ariel-winning Mexican cinematographer Alex Phillips ("Evita," "Murphy's Law")—and James Neihouse provides beautiful, sweeping aerial photography. To that, composer Daniel Valdez ("La Bamba," "Zoot Suit") adds an original score of music integrating ancient rhythms with modern life sounds. Actor Martin Sheen provides a poetic recitation of Mexican novelist Carlos Fuentes' inspiring text.

The result: "Mexico" is a gorgeous film to watch. For those unfamiliar with the country's sights, however, it falls short by failing to identify many locations it fleetingly visits. In creating an aura of mystique about the country, "Mexico" has inadvertently contributed to keeping it in the dark. With the simple addition of titles, this film could be a useful vehicle in promoting the many resources that Mexico has to offer.—***Pat Kramer***

REVIEWS

His music here—as always, rather like assembly-line machinery come to life after hours and riffing the night away—is so integral to the progression of each scene that one could imagine the script and the score being written at the same time, note after word, note after word. As for Besson, the talented Frenchman here stripmines rather than excavates his usual dark concerns. In "The Fifth Element," the blackest he gets is beige.—*Kim Williamson*

FATHERS' DAY ★★1/2

Starring Robin Williams, Billy Crystal, Charlie Hofheimer, Julia Louis-Dreyfus and Nastassja Kinski. Directed by Ivan Reitman. Written by Lowell Ganz and Babaloo Mandel. Produced by Joel Silver and Ivan Reitman. A Warner Bros. release. Comedy. Rated PG-13 for some sex-related humor and drug references. Running time: 101 min.

This farcical comedy, based on the French film "Les Comperes," is really just a set-up for two star comedians—"The Birdcage's" Robin Williams and "Forget Paris'" Billy Crystal—to riff and roll off each other while they steer moviegoers through a simple story about two very different men on the road together searching for a teenage runaway, Scott ("Boys'" Charlie Hofheimer), who one of them might or might not have sired 17 years earlier.

This is not the successful translation that "The Birdcage" (based on French film "La Cage aux Folles") was for Williams. "Fathers' Day" lacks the unique and classy mix of hilarious physical comedy churned with charmingly emotional sentiment. Williams and Crystal are funny, but the sheer nature of their personalities overwhelms this mild-mannered movie, and neither ever completely settle into his role.

Director Ivan Reitman ("Junior") gets sidetracked by his stars and forgets to make the story believable, real or understandable. Nastassja Kinski ("Faraway, So Close!") is wasted in an inexplicable role as Collette, the former amour who sets the wheels in motion. Apparently, this mom is able to track down two long-lost lovers and set them on the trail of Scott, but she's completely incapable of even trying to find her son on her own; that's some kind of maternal parenting. No wonder "Fathers' Day" opened on Mother's Day.—*Susan Lambert*

BREAKDOWN ★★★1/2

Starring Kurt Russell, J.T. Walsh and Kathleen Quinlan. Directed by Jonathan Mostow. Written by Jonathan Mostow and Sam Montgomery. Produced by Martha De Laurentiis and Dino De Laurentiis. A Paramount release. Thriller. Rated R for strong violence and terror, and for language. Running time: 95 min.

The gutsy, cathartic "Breakdown" mercifully avoids the smug, arch quirkiness of such pseudo-thrillers as "Fargo" and "Lost Highway." As did such makers of classic "B" movies of the 1950s like Phil Karlson and Don Siegel, writer/director Jonathan

REVIEWS

Mostow builds dramatic intensity and visceral suspense that plugs into contemporary paranoia over personal isolation and victimization. Allowing a bare minimum of genre hokum, he creates a nightmarish reality that grips even as it chills.

In perhaps his finest performance yet, Kurt Russell keenly expresses a range of emotion and involvement as Jeff Taylor, a caring husband driving through the American Southwest desert with his wife Amy (an assured turn by Kathleen Quinlan) one hot day. When their car suffers a breakdown miles from nowhere, a kind-seeming truck driver, Red Barr ("Sling Blade's" J.T. Walsh), offers to take Amy to the nearest diner so she can call for a tow. After they leave, Jeff manages to start the car again and drives to the diner, yet on arrival his wife is nowhere to be found. Found on the road ahead, Red denies ever seeing her.

That's but the beginning of a cataclysmic series of ingeniously integrated plot twists. Aided by co-writer Sam Montgomery, Mostow maintains tension and terror within the banal yet bizarre scenario. Even though the film uses a conventional story structure, and some later contrivances are a bit too neat to believe, Mostow's direction delivers every action setpiece and startling shock with finesse.—*Dale Winogura*

AUSTIN POWERS: INTERNATIONAL MAN OF MYSTERY ★★★

Starring Mike Myers and Elizabeth Hurley. Directed by Jay Roach. Written by Mike Myers. Produced by Suzanne Todd, Demi Moore, Jennifer Todd and Mike Myers. A New Line release. Comedy. Rated PG-13 for nudity, sex-related dialogue and humor. Running time: 89 min.

Skewering Bond films and '60s sensibilities seemed like the perfect construct for the talented and oft-anglophilic comic actor/scripter Mike Myers ("Wayne's World"). The high-energy film opens three decades ago, with Myers decked out as the ostentatiously garbed Austin Powers, a hipster superspy. Living out the sort of scene that exists only in musical films of the flower-power era, Powers and the youths of London spontaneously engage in a groovy dance number. This deliciously over-the-top send-up promises a high level of hilarity.

What follows falls short of that mark. The story: Dr. Evil (also Myers) escapes capture by having himself cryogenically frozen and shot into space; our champion altruistically has himself frozen as well, to protect a future generation from the villain's tyranny. Thirty years later, Evil returns, plotting to steal a nuclear weapon and hold the world hostage.

For all of Myers' exuberance, masterful cheek and funny delivery of outdated vernacular, his writing just isn't up to the possibilities. Elizabeth Hurley ("Dangerous Ground") is cringingly unappealing as Myers' sidekick Vanessa; and Mimi Rogers as Powers' former partner (now Vanessa's mother) might look great in a leather Emma Peel bodysuit, but she can't maintain the English accent even for the few lines she has. The movie also doesn't go far enough

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FLASHBACK: *JANUARY 5, 1959*
What BOXOFFICE *said about...*

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

[Because it looks unlikely James Cameron's "Titanic" will sail this summer, we thought we'd at least bring our readers a look at a four-decade-old retelling of the sea disaster itself then four decades past. In February 1959, Rank brought Walter Lord's book to the big screen memorably with "A Night to Remember." Notably, exhibitors were already worrying about another see disaster: TV.]



One of the greatest catastrophes of modern times—the sinking of the "unsinkable" Titanic after it struck an iceberg in the Atlantic in 1912—has been superbly recreated on film in almost documentary fashion by the Rank Organization. If heavily exploited, this two-hour feature should do fine business, particularly in key cities. Although Walter Lord's best-seller was the basis for an outstanding live TV show, plus a live repeat, a few seasons ago, Rank producer William MacQuitty maintains that these merely serve as trailers for this far more complete and frighteningly realistic film. After 40-odd years, this astonishing tale still has tremendous impact, especially for patrons who remember or had read or heard about the events of that awful night. The picture is splendidly directed by Roy Baker, and Eric Ambler's screenplay evenly divides the screen footage between the nautical side of the disaster and the human angle. The technical credits, including the sharp black-and-white photography and the special effects, could scarcely be surpassed. Kenneth More, who plays the heroic second officer, is the best-known player, but Laurence Naismith (as the Titanic's captain), Michael Goodliffe, Anthony Bushell and John Merivale all makes their scenes count. Frank Lawton and Harriette Johns co-star.

EXPLOITIPS

For local engagements, advertise for Titanic survivors, who could be honored guests and give interviews about that tragic night. Bookshops will cooperate with window displays of Walter Lord's best-seller, and fashion shops might display ladies' styles of that era along with copy for the picture. Kenneth More starred in "Genevieve" and "Doctor in the House" and is in the forthcoming "The Sheriff of Fractured Jaw."

CATCHLINES

A Picture You'll Never Forget...The True Story of the World's Great Sea Disaster—Brilliantly Told by Walter Lord in His Best-Selling Novel—Now Comes to the Screen...The Full, Fantastic Story of the Night the Titanic Went Down in an Icy Sea.

REVIEWS

with its fish-out-of-water time-warp mayhem, and though there are many hilarious moments (especially those that parody the cheesier aspects of '60s spy flicks) just as many miss the mark.—*Christine James*

WARRIORS OF VIRTUE ★★★

Starring Angus Macfadyen, Mario Yedidia, Marley Shelton and Chao-Li Chi. Directed by Ronny Yu. Written by Michael Vickerman and Hugh Kelley. Produced by Dennis Law, Ronald Law, Christopher Law, Jeremy Law and Patricia Ruben. An MGM release. Fantasy. Rated PG for fantasy action violence and some language. Running time: 102 min.

Essentially a cross between "The Neverending Story" and "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles," "Warriors of Virtue" could be the most impressive Hollywood debut yet for a Hong Kong director, although lackluster writing and a needlessly muddled storyline somewhat tarnish the effort. Talented newcomer Mario Yedidia stars as Ryan, a standard-issue misfit adolescent whose fertile imagination propels him into a mystical world of martial arts and magic known only as the land of Tao. The once tranquil paradise, however, is threatened by an evil tyrant named Komodo (Angus Macfadyen) who supports his power by draining Tao's Lifesprings to mine an element called Zubrium. Only one Lifespring remains, just outside Komodo's reach and guarded by the amazing Warriors of Virtue, aka Roo-Warriors. Nonetheless, the balance of power in Tao lies neither with the Roo-Warriors or Komodo, but with Ryan.

Skillfully blending popular motifs from both Hong Kong and Hollywood fantasy films, director Ronny Yu ("The Bride With White Hair") and his mostly Hong Kong crew lend "Warriors of Virtue" an exquisite look and feel. Expert martial arts action in the best Hong Kong tradition and first-rate Hollywood special effects and makeup work together to create a magical adventure. Although the Warriors themselves lack the strong personality traits and humor of the Ninja Turtles, they make for more compelling onscreen characters, helping to divert attention from a surprisingly amateurish and cliched script. Occasional lapses into overly technical Chinese philosophical jargon, though distracting, are forgivable in view of the overall theme.—*Wade Major*

ROMY AND MICHELE'S HIGH SCHOOL REUNION ★★★★

Starring Mira Sorvino, Lisa Kudrow, Janeane Garofalo and Alan Cumming. Directed by David Mirkin. Written by Robin Schiff. Produced by Laurence Mark. A Buena Vista release. Comedy. Rated R for language. Running time: 91 min.

Buena Vista's second high school reunion film in as many weeks, "Romy and Michele" is just as charming and quirky as "Grosse Pointe Blank," with a lighter yet equally witty script. Fun and funny are the adjectives that characterize the mood of the film (based on the stage work "The Ladies' Room," adapted by the playwright, Robin Schiff), with hilariously winsome performances by Mira Sorvino and Lisa Kudrow as the titular dimwit duet. Sorvino's talent for amusingly odd vocal inflections (which helped get her that Oscar for "Mighty Aphrodite") is key to Romy's Valley Girl appeal; Kudrow's Michele may be "Friends'" Phoebe redux, but it works well in this tale of two nonconformist but slackerly misfits who fabricate glamorous lives to impress their former school nemeses.

"Romy and Michele's High School Reunion" is replete with audiovisual delights; with our heroines' outrageous fashion sense and a soundtrack jam-packed with '80s hits, the film captures much of the glamor and glitter indigenous to Me Generation-era offspring. Yet, in addition to bubbly baubles, there are some real gems in the script, and in the performances as well. With clever flashbacks and wacky dream sequences, there's never a lag in the movie's humor or its pace.

If the film wants anything, it's probably more allusions to the last decade to sate the nostalgia of the target audience; more investigation into how everyone else's lives turned out; and more inventiveness regarding payback and karma.—*Christine James*

REVIEWS IN BRIEF

UNFORGOTTEN ★★★★

Narrated by Danny Aiello. Directed by Jack Fisher. Written by Stuart Warmflash. Produced by Danny Fisher. A Castle Hill release. Documentary. Unrated. Run time: 57 min.

A generation ago, before Special Olympics and community group homes, huge state-run institutions were society's way to care for, and deal with, the mentally retarded. In the massive budget-cutting of the late 1960s, one of those places—Willowbrook State School on Staten Island—had slipped into such a state of crisis that a staff doctor secretly gave a young local reporter named Geraldo Rivera a key. The images of human deprivation and suffering he broadcast on WABC News in 1972 caused such a shocked outcry that the Willowbrook facility was eventually closed, a federal court mandating the end of such institutional care.

Those horrible images are shown again in this documentary, subtitled "Twenty-Five Years After Willowbrook." It's a powerful, unflinching work, easily one of the most important films of the year. Following up on several Willowbrook survivors and their families, the film's most heartbreaking moments aren't the archival scenes; they are interviews with parents who thought they were doing the right thing, and siblings who grew up ashamed.

Despite the heaviness of subject, the film ultimately offers a good deal of hope, showing the day-to-day lives of three former residents who now live in group homes, two with a great deal of family contact. The focus is on how far they and we have come; but the considerable personal and logistical difficulties inherent in helping provide the severely disabled dignified lives is not glossed over.—***Alex Albanese***

RIDING THE RAILS ★★★★

Directed, written and produced by Michael Uys and Lexy Lovell. An Artistic License release. Documentary. Unrated. Running time: 72 min.

Hobo life during the Depression is at once romanticized and deglamorized in this fine, moving documentary that fluidly combines tough nostalgia with understated social consciousness. The obviously devoted filmmakers, Michael Uys and Lexy Lovell, expertly weave together threads—interviews with survivors, newsreel footage, archival stills and folks songs—into a loving cinematic tapestry.

The hardship and loneliness of living on trains among scores of fellow bums is strongly counterpointed by the lust for adventure and escape that these people express so fondly. The usage of a clip from William Wellman's good, little-seen 1933 drama, "Wild Boys of the Road," effectively illustrates how the movies can inspire young people's life decisions. Political causes are presented as just one aspect, because the film's focus is on humanity struggling to survive at a time when that was all there was to live for. It's a rare experience and treasure, beautifully shot in 16mm.—***Dale Winogura***

BOYS LIFE 2 ★★

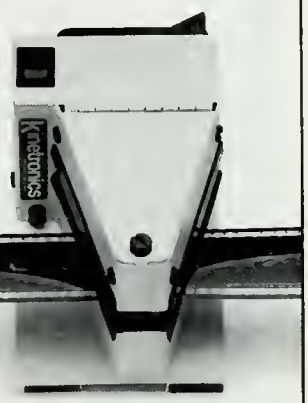
Starring Vincent D'Onofrio, Eileen Brennan, Mary Beth Hurt and Brett Barsky. A Strand release. Anthology. Unrated. Running time: 74 min.

A collection of four shorts with gay themes, "Boys Life 2" provides a wildly uneven cinematic mix. Nickolas Perry's "Must Be the Music" is a vapid story of boy meets boy at an under-age club; it has less plot and depth than most 30-second TV commercials. Tom DeCerchio's "Nunzio's Second Cousin" is a heavy-handed and utterly unfunny "comedy with a message" that unintentionally pits Eileen Brennan against Vincent D'Onofrio in a bad acting contest. It ends in a draw, each actor having bit off more scenery than he could chew.

More successful are Peggy Rajski's "Trevor," a bouncy comic short about a junior-high school student that basically comes off as a gay episode of TV's "The Wonder Years," and Mark Christopher's "Alkali, Iowa," the most thoughtful, interesting and formally inventive of the four. Focusing on a young man's search for the truth about his missing father, and himself, Christopher gets mostly first-rate cast performances and creates a good sense of time and place with low-key yet stylish directorial touches.—***Alex Albanese***

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Review Digest

Genre key: (Ac) Action; (Ad) Adventure; (An) Animated; (C) Comedy; (D) Drama; (Doc) Documentary; (F) Fantasy; (Hor) Horror; (M) Musical; (My) Mystery; (R) Romance; (Sat) Satire; (SF) Science Fiction; (Sus) Suspense; (Th) Thriller; (W) Western.

TITLE/MPAA DISTRIBUTOR	RUN TIME	GENRE	REVIEWED IN ISSUE	BOXOFFICE	VARIETY	H. REPORTER	L.A. TIMES	N.Y. TIMES	USA TODAY	AVERAGE	TOTAL BOXOFFICE $*
5 Excellent 4 Very Good 3 Good 2 Fair 1 Poor											
All Over Me **R** (FL)	89	D	2-97	3			3	3		3.0	0.1
Anaconda **PG-13** (Col)	90	Adv	6-97	2	2	3	3	3	3	2.7	56.0
Austin Powers **PG-13** (NL)	89	C	7-97	3	3	4	2	3	3	3.0	27.5
B.A.P.S **PG-13** (NL)	87	C	6-97	1	2	1	2	2	2	1.7	7.2
Breakdown **R** (Par)	95	Th	7-97	4	4	3	3	3	4	3.5	31.2
Broken English **NC-17** (SC)	91	D	4-97	3	3	3	3	3		3.0	0.2
Cats Don't Dance **G** (WB)	75	Ani	6-97	3	3	3	2	3	2	2.7	3.4
Chasing Amy (Mir)	105	D	4-97	3	3	4	4	3	3	3.3	7.0
A Chef in Love **PG-13** (SC)	98	C D	5-97	2	2	3	3	3		2.2	0.1
Children of the Revolution **R** (Mir)	100	C D	5-97	3		4		3	3	3.3	0.3
Dante's Peak **PG-13** (Uni)	108	Ac D	4-97	4	2	3	2	2	3	2.8	66.7
The Daytrippers (CFP)	90	C	8-96	3		2	3	3		2.8	1.3
The Devil's Own **R** (Col)		AcD	5-97	2	3	2	2	3		2.4	42.4
Donnie Brasco **R** (TS)	121	D	4-97	3	3	3	3	4	5	3.5	41.7
Double Team **R** (Col)	93	AcAd	6-97	4	3	2	3	2	2	2.7	10.7
8 Heads in a Duffel Bag **R** (Ori)	95	C	6-97	2	2	3	2		1	2.0	3.6
The English Patient **R** (Mir)	159	R	1-97	3	3	4	4	4	4	3.7	76.6
Fathers' Day **PG-13** (WB)	101	C	7-97	3	2	3	2	3	3	2.7	17.2
Female Perversions **R** (Oct)	114	D	11-96	2			3	2		2.2	0.2
Fifth Element **PG-13** (Col)	125	SF	7-97	3	2	2	3	2	2	2.3	34.2
Grosse Pointe Blank **R** (BV)	107	C	5-97	4	4	3	3	3	3	3.3	24.3
Inventing the Abbotts **R** (Fox)	105	D	6-97	2	3	2	2	2	2	2.2	5.7
Jerry Maguire **R** (TS)	138	D	2-97	4	4	2	3	4	4	3.5	151.2
Jungle 2 Jungle **PG** (BV)	105	C	5-97	2	3	3	3	2	2	2.5	55.1
Kissed **R** (Gol)	80	D	11-96	2	3		3	3		2.8	0.3
Kolya (Mir)	111	D	12-96	3	4	4	4	4		3.8	4.8
Leo Tolstoy's Anna Karenina **PG-13** (WB)	108	D	5-97	2	2	3	2	2		2.2	0.7
Liar Liar **PG-13** (Uni)	86	C	5-97	3	4	4	3	3	3	3.3	160.6
love jones **R** (NL)	110	R C	5-97	3			2	3		2.7	11.9
McHale's Navy **PG** (Uni)	108	C	6-97	1	2	1	2			1.5	4.3
Michael **PG** (NL)	105	R C	2-97	3	2	3	4	3		2.6	95.2
Murder at 1600 **R** (WB)	106	Th	6-97	3	3	2	2	2	3	2.5	23.1
Night Falls On Manhattan **R** (Par)	110	D	7-97	3	3	3	4		4	3.4	2.9
nowhere **R** (FL)	82	C D	5-97	1	3	3	3	2		2.4	0.1
101 Dalmatians **G** (BV)	103	C	2-97	3	3	3	2	2		2.6	136.2
Paradise Road **R** (Fox)		D	5-97	2	3	3	3	2	2	2.5	1.8
Private Parts **R** (Par)	109	C	5-97	3	4	4	4	3		3.7	40.7
Romy and Michele's High School Reunion **R** (BV)	91	C	7-97	4	2	3	3	3	2	2.8	22.3
The Saint **PG-13** (Par)	117	Ac	6-97	2	2	2	2	2	2	2.0	56.7
Scream **R** (Mir)	111	HorC	2-97	3	2	3	3	2		2.5	97.3
Selena **PG** (WB)	127	D	5-97	3	3	3	3	2	3	2.8	34 1
Shine **PG-13** (FL)	104	D	4-96	5	5	4	4	3	3	4.0	35.8
The 6th Man **PG-13** (BV)	108	C	6-97	3	3	3	3	2	2	2.7	13.4
Sling Blade **R** (Mir)	140	D	11-96	4	4	4	4	3		3.8	22.9
Sprung **R** (TM)	90	R C	6-97	3		3	3			3.0	3.0
That Old Feeling **PG-13** (Uni)	105	C	6-97	3	3	3	3	3	3	3.0	16.1
Turbo: A Power Rangers Movie **PG** (Fox)	100	Ac	6-97	2	2	3	3	2		2.4	8.0
Volcano **PG-13** (Fox)	105	Ac D	6-97	3	3	3	3	2	2	2.7	38.9
Waiting for Guffman **R** (SC)	82	C	11-96	3	3	3	4	3	4	3.3	2.2

** **Total boxoffice, in millions, as of May 20, 1997.***

REVIEWS IN BRIEF

FARE GAMES ★★1/2

Starring Russell Stewart and Eddie Estefan. Directed and written by Brian O'Hara. Produced by Isaac Agami. An Agami production; no distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 90 min.

A film about New York cabbies featuring nat ane but two older-man/younger-woman relationships sounds unappealing, but "Fare Games" is an inoffensive enough little indie. In fact, if it were less tasteful and well-meaning, it might be a mare interesting movie.

The premise is simple enough: Buddies Martin (Eddie Estefan) and Jimmy (Russell Stewart) both fall for fares—married Martin for a seductive college student (Marina Morgan) and Jimmy for a topless dancer with a heart of gold (Elizabeth Curtain). This seems contrived, ta say the least, but Estefan and Stewart bring something extra to their roles that makes them believable. Morgan and Curtain are alsa appealing, but their roles aren't written with the same plausibility.***—Cathy Thompson-Georges***

THE REAL THING ★★

Starring James Russo, Pat Gallagher, Dave Buzzotta, Emily Lloyd and Jeremy Piven. Directed by James Merendino. Produced by Kurt Mac Carley. A Windy City release. Thriller. Unrated. Running time: 89 min.

Designed to be a stylish thriller, this LLP production borrows from "Pulp Fiction" and "El Mariachi"—combining excessive bloodshed and black humor—to try to make its point. Unlike its creative progenitors, the latest by James Merendino ("The Upstairs Neighbor") never reaches even those dramatic heights, despite an interesting story-line about losers who band together to pull off a New Years Eve robbery.

James Russo ("Dannie Brasco") is Rupert Little, a screw-up factory worker who is fired by his boss (Gary Busey). With his younger brother in desperate need of a liver transplant, Little draws together a tag-team of misfits for a one-time, large-scale robbery. At the same time, petty thief Dexter (Pat Gallagher) by chance is scheming to rob the same club sa as to prove that he is "the real thing." The two forces collide at the scene of the crime, wrecking each ather's effort to run off with the dough. In the end, everyone loses—including the audience—with this bleak, uninspired drama.***—Pat Kramer***

AMAZON WARRIOR (no stars)

Starring J.J. Rodgers, Jimmy Jerman, Al Spencer, Katarina Facchino and Raymond Storti. Directed by Dennis Devine. Written by Steve Jarvis. Produced by Raymond Storti. A Scarborough Films production; no distributor set. Melodrama. Not yet rated. Run time: 77 min.

This movie reportedly was made for $4,000, and when you watch it you can't help wondering, "Where did all the money go?" Strictly bottom-of-the-barrel filmmaking in every respect, this futuristic yarn featuring battling babes in leather-and-fur bikinis would be very lucky to receive a home video release. At least there are plenty of cheesecake poses to slap on the box.

J.J. Rodgers, the titular "Angel of Death," is the last survivor of a ferocious tribe of virgin mankillers, fighting to stay alive against mole marauders. Even though civilization has been obliterated in the obligatory nuclear war (one laughably hokey special-effects shot of a melting downtown Los Angeles), Rodgers' Tara keeps stocked with strawberry-blonde hair dye, although not enough to hide her black roots.

An interminable 77-minute running time is filled with absurdly choreographed fight scenes between Tara and grunting, hairy musclemen sporting costumes from army surplus. Flashbacks show Tara's mother (Katarina Facchino) frolicking topless before being slain by a bad guy (Raymond Storti, also the movie's producer). The acting level makes one hope for the cast's sake that at least some appear under assumed names. Director Dennis Devine makes Ed Wood seem like David Lean.***—Joseph McBride***

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BOXOFFICE

	April	May	June	JULY (Current)
Buena Vista (818) 567-5000 (212) 593-8900	**Grosse Pointe Blank**, 4/11, Com, R, 107 min, Dolby SR, SR-D, SDDS, Flat. John Cusack, Minnie Driver, Dan Aykroyd, Joan Cusack. Dir: George Armitage. **Romy and Michele's High School Reunion**, 4/25, Com, R, 91 min, Dolby SR, SR-D, SDDS, Flat. Mira Sorvino, Lisa Kudrow, Janeane Garofalo, Elaine Hendrix. Dir: David Mirkin.	**Gone Fishin'**, 5/30, Com, PG, 94 min, Dolby SR, SR-D, Flat. Joe Pesci, Danny Glover, Lynn Whitfield, Rosanna Arquette. Dir: Christopher Cain	**Con Air**, 6/6, Act/Adv, R, ~112 min, Anamorphic. Nicolas Cage, John Malkovich, John Cusack, Steve Buscemi, Ving Rhames, Colm Meaney. Dir: Simon West **Hercules**, 6/14 excl. NY, 6/20 Chicago, 6/27 wide, Ani, G, ~91 min, Flat. Voices: James Woods, Danny DeVito, Tate Donovan, Susan Egan, Matt Frewer, Bobcat Goldthwait, Paul Shaffer. Dirs: Ron Clements, John Musker	**Nothing to Lose**, 7/16, Com, R, Flat. Martin Lawrence, Tim Robbins, John C. McGinley, Giancarlo Esposito, Kelly Preston. Dir: Steve Oedekerk. **George of the Jungle**, 7/18, Live Act, PG, Fl Brendan Fraser, Leslie Mann, Thomas Hayd Church. Dir. Sam Weisman.
Columbia (310) 280-8000 (212) 833-8500	**Das Boot** (1981 German reissue), 4/4, Dra, R. Jurgen Prochnow. Dir: Wolfgang Petersen. **Double Team** (formerly The Colony), 4/4, Act, R, 93 min, Dolby A, SR, SDDS, Jean-Claude Van Damme, Dennis Rodman, Mickey Rourke. Dir: Tsui Hark. **Anaconda**, 4/11, Adv, PG-13, 90 min, Dolby A, SR, SDDS. Jon Voight, Jennifer Lopez, Ice Cube, Eric Stoltz, Kari Wuhrer. Dir: Luis Llosa.	**The Fifth Element**, 5/9, SF, PG-13, 127 min, Dobly A, SR, SDDS, Anamorphic. Bruce Willis, Gary Oldman, Ian Holm, Milla Jovovich. Dir: Luc Besson.	**Buddy**, 6/6, Com, PG, ~90min, SDDS, Anamorphic. Rene Russo, Robbie Coltrane, Paul Reubens, Irma P. Hall. Dir: Caroline Thompson.	**Men in Black**, 7/2, SF, PG-13, Dolby A, SR, SDDS, Flat. Tommy Lee Jones, Will Smith, Linda Fiorentino, Rip Torn. Dir: Barry Sonnenfe **Air Force One** (formerly AFO), 7/25, Act, Dolb A, SR, SDDS. Harrison Ford, Gary Oldman, Glenn Close. Dir: Wolfgang Peterson.
MGM/UA (310) 449-3000 (212) 708-0300		**Warriors of Virtue**, 5/2, Act/Adv, PG, 104 min, DTS. Angus MacFadyen, Mario Yedidia, Marley Shelton, Chao-Li Chi. Dir. Ronny Yu		
Miramax (212) 941-3800 (213) 951-4200	**Cosi**, Com, 4/11 NY, LA. 100 min. Toni Collette, Barry Otto, Ben Mendlesohn, Rachel Griffiths, Pamela Rabe. Dir Mark Joffe **Nightwatch**, 4/25 wide, Dra/Thr. Nick Nolte, Ewan McGregor, Patricia Arquette, Josh Brolin. Dir: Ole Bornedal	**Children of the Revolution**, 5/1 NY/LA, Com, R, 102 min, Flat. Judy Davis, Geoffrey Rush, Sam Neill. Dir: Peter Duncan. **Brassed Off**, 5/23 NY LA, Dra,R, 107 min, Dolby SR, Flat. Pete Postlethwaite, Tara Fitzgerald, Ewan McGregor. Dir. Mark Herman.	**Mouth to Mouth** (Spain), 6/6, Com, R. Dolby SRD, Anamorphic, 110 min. Javier Bardem. Dir. Manuel Gomez Pereira. **Squeeze**, 6/13, Thr, R. Dir. Robert Patton-Spruill. **Temptress Moon**, 6/13, Dra, R, 115 min. Gong Li. Dir Chen Kaige. **Love Serenade** (Australia), 6/20, Com/Dra, R, 101 min. Miranda Otto. Dir: Shirley Barrett. **Shall We Dance** (Japan), 6/27, Com, PG. Koji Yasuyo. Dir: Masayuki Suo.	**Mimic**, 7/18 wide, SF/Thr, Mira Sorvino, Josh Brolin, Jeremy Northam, Charles Dutton. Dir: Guillermo del Toro. **Mrs. Brown**, 7/18, Dra, PG. Judi Dench, Bil Connolly. Dir: John Madden. **Seven Notes in Black** (1978 release as The Psychic, Italy), 7/25 NY/LA. Jennifer O'Neill Dir: Lucio Fulci.
New Line (310) 854-5811 (212) 649-4900		**Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery**, 5/2, Com, PG-13, 88 min, Dolby SR, SR-D, SDDS, Anamorphic. Mike Myers, Elizabeth Hurley, Mimi Rogers, Michael York. Dir. Jay Roach **Trial and Error**, 5/30, Com, PG-13, Dolby SR, SR-D, SDDS, Anamorphic. Michael Richards, Jeff Daniels, Rip Torn, Charlize Theron. Dir: Jonathan Lynn.		
Paramount (213) 956-5000 (212) 373-7000	**The Saint**, 4/4, Act/Adv, PG-13, 117 min, Dolby SR-D, DTS, Anamorphic. Val Kilmer, Elisabeth Shue, Rade Serbedzija. Dir. Phillip Noyce.	**Breakdown**, 5/2, R, 95 min, Dolby SR-D, Anamorphic. Kurt Russell, Kathleen Quinlan, J.T. Walsh. Dir: Jonathan Moslow **Night Falls on Manhattan**, 5/16, Dra, R. Andy Garcia, Richard Dreyfuss, Lena Olin, Ian Holm. Dir Sidney Lumet. **'Til There Was You**, 5/30, Rom/Com, PG-13, 114 min. Jeanne Tripplehorn, Dylan McDermott, Sarah Jessica Parker, Jennifer Aniston. Dir: Scott Winant.	**Face/Off**, 6/27, Act, Dolby SR-D, SDDS. John Travolta, Nicolas Cage, Joan Allen, Gina Gershon. Dir: John Woo.	**Titanic**, Rom/Adv. Leonardo DiCaprio, Kate Winslet, Bill Paxton, Billy Zane, Kathy Bates, Gloria Stuart, Suzy Amis. Dir: James Cameron. **Good Burger**, 7/25, Com. Kel Mitchell, Kena Thompson, Abe Vigoda. Dir: Brian Robbins
TriStar (310) 280-8000 (212) 833-8500		**Jungle Book 2**, 5/2 ltd. Bill Campbell, Jamie Williams, Roddy McDowall. Dir: Duncan McLachlan.	**My Best Friend's Wedding**, 6/27, Rom/Com, R, Dolby A, SR, SDDS. Julia Roberts, Dermot Mulroney, Cameron Diaz, Rupert Everett, Philip Bosco. Dir. P.J. Hogan	
20th Century Fox (310) 369-1000 (212) 556-2400	**Inventing the Abbots**, 4/4, Dra, R, ~120 min. Dolby SR, SDDS, Anamorphic. Liv Tyler, Joaquin Phoenix, Billy Crudup, Jennifer Connelly. Dir. Pat O'Conner **Volcano**, 4/25, Act/Adv, PG13, ~105 min, Dolby SR, SRD, SDDS, DTS, Anamorphic. Tommy Lee Jones, Anne Heche, Gaby Hoffmann, Don Cheadle, John Corbett, Keith David. Dir: Mick Jackson.		**Speed II: Cruise Control**, 6/13, Act, PG-13, ~135 min, Dolby SR, SDDS, DTS, Anamorphic. Sandra Bullock, Jason Patric, Willem Dafoe, Glenn Plummer, Temeura Morrison, Brian McCardie, Royale Watkins. Dir: Jan De Bont.	**Dut to Sea**. 7/2, Com, PG-13. Dolby SR Flat. Walter Matthau, Jack Lemmon, Brent Spiner, Dyan Cannon, Elaine Stritch, Hal Linden, Don O'Conner, Alexandra Powers. Dir. Martha Coolidge
Universal (818) 777-1000 (212) 759-7500	**That Old Feeling**, 4/4, Com, PG-13, 103 min, DTS. Bette Midler, Dennis Farina, Danny Nucci, Paula Marshall, Gail O'Grady. Dir: Carl Reiner. **McHale's Navy**, 4/18, Com, PG, ~101 min, DTS. Tom Arnold, David Alan Grier, Dean Stockwell, Tim Curry. Dir: Bryan Spicer.	**The Lost World**, 5/23, Adv, PG-13, ~130 min, DTS, Flat. Jeff Goldblum, Julianne Moore, Vince Vaughn, Pete Postlethwaite, Arliss Howard, Richard Schiff, Peter Stormare, Vanessa Lee Chester. Dir: Steven Spielberg		**A Simple Wish** (formerly The Fairy Godmother), 7/11 tent., Com, PG. Mara Wilson Martin Short, Kathleen Turner, Robert Pastorelli. Dir: Michael Ritchie.
Warner Bros. (818) 954-6000 (212) 484-8000	**Leo Tolstoy's Anna Karenina**, 4/4 ltd, Dra, PG13, 105 min, DTS. Sophie Marceau, Sean Bean, Mia Kirschner, Alfred Molina. Dir: Bernard Rose. **Murder at 1600**, 4/18, Thr, R, 106 min, DTS. Wesley Snipes, Diane Lane, Daniel Benzali. Dir. Dwight H. Little.	**Father's Day**, 5/9, Com, 101 min. Anamorphic. Robin Williams, Billy Crystal, Natassja Kinski, Julia Louis-Dreyfuss. Dir: Ivan Reitman. **Addicted to Love**, 5/23, Rom/Com, R, 101 min. Dolby SR-D, DTS, Flat. Meg Ryan, Matthew Broderick. Dir: Griffin Dunne.	**Batman and Robin**, 6/20, Act/Adv, PG-13, DTS. George Clooney, Chris O'Donnell, Alicia Silverstone, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Uma Thurman. Dir: Joel Schumacher	**Wild America**, 7/2, Adv, PG, 107 min, Dolby SI SR-D. Jonathan Taylor Thomas. Dir: Bill Dear. **Contact**, 7/11, Thr, DTS. Jodie Foster, Matthew McConaughey, John Hurt. Dir: Robert Zemeckis **Conspiracy Theory**, 7/25, Thr, DTS. Mel Gibson, Julia Roberts, Patrick Stewart. Dir. Richard Donner. **187**, 7/30, Dra, R, DTS. Samuel L. Jackson, Kelly Rowan, John Heard. Dir: Kevin Reynol

FEATURE CHART — JULY 1997

August	September	Forthcoming	
8/8, Com. Kevin Zegers, Michael ll Cobbs. Dir: Charles Martin Smith. **e** (formerly In Pursuit of Honor, Navy /15, Act.. Demi Moore, Viggo en, Anne Bancroft, Jason Beghe, on Bargen. Dir. Ridley Scott.	**A Thousand Acres**, Dra. Jessica Lange, Michelle Pfeiffer, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Jason Robards, Keith Carradine. Dir: Jocelyn Moorhouse. **Firelight**, Dra Sophie Marceau, Stephen Dillane, Kevin Anderson. Dir: William Nicholson.	**The Absentminded Professor** (formerly Flubber), Com. Robin Williams. Dir: Les Mayfield. **Deep Rising**, Act/Thr Treat Williams, Famke Janssen. Dir: Stephen Sommers. **Ishmael**, Dra Dir Jon Turteltaub. **Kundun**, Dra Tenzin Thutob Tsarong Dir: Martin Scorsese **The Little Mermaid** (reissue), Ani. Dirs: John Musker, Ron Clements. **Mr. Magoo**, Com. Leslie Nielsen, Kelly Lynch. Dir: Stanley Tong **Playing God** Fall, Dra, R, Flat Timothy Hutton, David Duchovny. Dir: Andy Wilson. **Rocket Man** (formerly Space Cadet), Harland Williams, Beau Bridges. Dir: Stuart Gillard. **Washington Square**, Dra. Jennifer Jason Leigh, Albert Finney. Dir. Agnieszka Holland. **The Horse Whisperer**, Dra Robert Redford, Kristin Scott Thomas, Scarlett Johansson. Dir: Robert Redford **Mulan**, Ani, Voices. Ming Na Wen. Dirs: Barry Cook, Tony Bancroft	**Buena Vista** (818) 567-5000 (212) 593-8900
Baggage, 8/15, Act/Adv, Dolby A, SR, Alicia Silverstone, Benicio del Toro, her Walken. Dir: Marco Brambilla.		**Gattaca** (formerly The Eighth Day), Fall, SF. Ethan Hawke, Uma Thurman, Jude Law Dir: Andrew Niccol. **I Know What You Did Last Summer**, 10/24 Jamie Lee Curtis, Sara Michelle Gellar, Jennifer Love Hewitt, Freddie Prinze, Jr. Dir: Jim Gillespie. **Les Miserables**, Dra, Xmas Liam Neeson, Uma Thurman. Dir: Billie August. **Bad Boys 2**, Act/Com. Will Smith, Martin Lawrence. Dir: Tom Dey **Close Encounters of the Third Kind** (1977 reissue). Richard Dreyfuss, Teri Garr Dir: Steven Spielberg **The Replacement Killers**, Act. Chow Yun-Fat, Mira Sorvino, Michael Rooker, Clifton Gonzales-Gonzales. Dir: Antoine Fugua. **Shut Up and Dance**, '98. Vanessa Williams. Dir: Randa Haines. **Homegrown**, Dra Billy Bob Thornton, Kelly Lynch, Hank Azaria Dir: Stephen Gyllenhall.	**Columbia** (310) 280-8000 (212) 833-8500
m (formerly Hoods), 8/29, Dra, R, aurence Fishburne, Tim Roth, Andy Vanessa Williams. Dir: Bill Duke	**The End of Violence**, Dra. Gabriel Byrne, Bill Pullman, Andie MacDowell. Dir. Wim Wenders.	**Hurricane** (tentative title), Dra, Fall Brendan Sexton III. Dir: Morgan J. Freeman. **Tomorrow Never Dies** (aka Bond 18), Xmas. Pierce Brosnan, Michelle Yeoh. Dir: Roger Spottiswoode. **Red Corner**, Xmas, Dra. Richard Gere, Bai Ling, Byron Mann. Dir: Jon Avnet **Breakers** (formerly Sirens), Com. Anjelica Huston, Alicia Silverstone **The Man In The Iron Mask**, Adv. Leonardo DiCaprio, John Malkovich, Gabriel Byrne, Gerard Depardieu, Jeremy Irons. Dir: Randall Wallace. **Sixteen Pleasures**. Dir: Michael Apted. **Supernova**, SF/Thr. Dir: Joe Nimziki. **The Ump**, '98 Sylvester Stallone. Dir Frank Dz.	**MGM/UA** (310) 449-3000 (212) 708-0300
l, 8/1, Dra. Sylvester Stallone, Robert Harvey Keitel, Ray Liotta, Janeane . Dir. James Mangold **Angels**, 8/8, Dra, PG-13, 97 min., Dolby y Walker, Vincent Perez. Dir: Nick Hamm. **o Lovely**, 8/15, Dra Sean Penn, Robin John Travolta Dir: Nick Cassavetes. **on Condor** (Hong Kong), 8/22 wide, , PG-13. Dir/Star: Jackie Chan.	**B. Monkey** 9/12, Dra. Asia Argento, Jared Harris, Rupert Everett, Thandie Newton. Dir: Michael Radford **Wide Awake**, 9/19, Dra, PG. Dana Delany, Denis Leary. Dir: M. Night Shyamalan. **Little City**, 9/26.	**The House of Yes**, 10/10, Dra/Com. Parker Posey, Josh Hamilton. Dir: Mark Waters. **Phantoms**, 10/24 wide, Hor. Peter O'Toole, Joanna Going. **The James Gang**, 11/7 Toni Collette. **Wings of the Dove**, 11/21, Dra. Helena Bonham Carter, Linus Roache, Terence Stamp, Alison Elliott. Dir: Ian Softley. **Artemesia** Michel Serrault, Miki Manojlovic. Dir: Agnes Merlet. **Full Tilt Boogie**, Doc. Dir: Sarah Kelly. **The Mighty**. Dra Sharon Stone, Gena Rowlands Dir: Peter Chelsom. **A Price Below Rubies**, Dra. Renee Zellweger. Dir: Boaz Yakin. **The Revenger's Comedies**, Dra. Sam Neill, Helena Bonham Carter. Dir: Malcom Mowbray. **Sonatine**, '98, Dra. Dir/Star: Takeshi Kitano. **Welcome to Sarajevo** (formerly Sarajevo). Dra. Stephen Dillane, Woody Harrelson. Dir: Michael Winterbottom. **Wishful Thinking**, Fall. Jennifer Beals.	**Miramax** (212) 941-3800 (213) 951-4200
, 8/8, SF. Michael Jai White, John mo, D.B. Sweeney Dir: Mark Dippe **Talks**, 8/22, Act/Com, R. Charlie Chris Tucker, Heather Locklear ett Ratner. **Nights**, 8/29 ltd, 9/5 wide, Com/Dra. Vahlberg, Julianne Moore, Burt Reynolds. ul Thomas Anderson.	**Dark City**, 9/19, Thr. William Hurt, Rufus Sewell, Richard O'Brien. Dir: Alex Proyas	**Most Wanted** (formerly America's Most Wanted), 11/7, Act/Com, R Keenan Ivory Wayans. Dir. David Hogan. **One Night Stand** (formerly One Night), 11/7, Dra. Wesley Snipes, Nastassija Kinski. Dir Mike Figgis. **Mortal Kombat II: Annihilation**, 11/21, Act. Robin Shou, Talisa Soto. Dir: John R. Leonetti **American History X** Edward Norton, Edward Furlong. Dir. Tony Kaye **Lost in Space**, '98. William Hurt, Gary Oldman. Dir: Stephen Hopkins **Pleasantville**, Com Tobey Maguire, Reese Witherspoon. Dir. Gary Ross. **Wag the Dog**, '98. Dustin Hoffman, Robert DeNiro. Dir: Barry Levinson. **The Wedding Singer**, Com. Adam Sandler, Drew Barrymore. Dir. Frank Coraci. **Woo**, '98, Rom/Com. Jada Pinkett, Tommy Davidson. Dir: Daisy Von Scherler Mayer.	**New Line** (310) 854-5811 (212) 649-4900
lorizon, 8/1, SF/Thr. Laurence rne, Sam Neill, Kathleen Quinlan. ul Anderson. **e Like Yours**, 8/15, Rom/Com, R. Greg r, Lauren Holly, Jay Thomas. ith Samples. **Man on Campus**, 8/29, Com. Tom Everitt, Mark Paul Gosselaar. n Cohn.	**The Magic Hour** (tentative), 9/19 Paul Newman, Susan Sarandon, Gene Hackman. Dir: Robert Benton.	**The Flood** Fall, Act. Christian Slater, Morgan Freeman, Minnie Driver, Randy Quaid. Dir: Mikael Salomon. **Going West in America**, Fall, Thr. Dennis Quaid, Danny Glover, Jared Leto. Dir: Jeb Stuart. **In and Out**, Fall, Com. Kevin Kline, Tom Selleck, Joan Cusack, Debbie Reynolds. Dir: Frank Oz. **Kiss the Girls**, Fall, Sus. Morgan Freeman, Ashley Judd, Alex McArthur, Cary Elwes. Dir: Gary Fleder. **The Truman Show**, Fall, Dra Jim Carrey, Ed Harris, Laura Linney, Noah Emmerich. Dir: Peter Weir. **Deep Impact**, Act/Thr. Tea Leoni, Elijah Wood. Dir: Mimi Leder. **Fairy Tale: A True Story** (formerly Illumination), Dra. Peter O'Toole. Dir. Charles Sturridge. **Kiss Me Guido**, Com. Nick Scotti. Dir. Tony Vitale. **The Rainmaker**, Dra. Matt Damon, Claire Danes. Dir: Francis Ford Coppola. **The Real Blonde**. Matthew Modine. Dir: Tom DiCillo. **Snake Eyes**, Thr Nicolas Cage. Dir. Brian DePalma.	**Paramount** (213) 956-5000 (212) 373-7000
rate Measures, 8/8, Act. Michael , Andy Garcia, Brian Cox, Marcia Gay . Dir: Barbet Schroeder. (formerly Stray Dogs), 8/29. Sean Billy Bob Thornton, Jennifer Lopez, olte, Powers Boothe. Dir: Oliver Stone		**Bloodline** (formerly Kilronen), Thr, Fall. Jessica Lange, Gwyneth Paltrow Dir Jonathan Darby. **Seven Years in Tibet**, 10/10, Dra. Brad Pitt, David Thewlis, B.D. Wong Dir Jean-Jacques Annaud. **Starship Troopers**, 11/7, SF, SDDS. Neil Patrick Harris, Denise Richards. Dir: Paul Verhoeven. **Apt Pupil**, Dra. Ian McKellen, Brad Renfro, Kevin Pollack, Joe Morton Dir: Bryan Singer **Forever** (formerly Amy Foster). Vincent Perez, Rachel Weisz. Dir. Beeban Kidron. **Godzilla** Hank Azaria, Matthew Broderick, Jean Reno. Dir Roland Emmerich. **Old Friends**, Dra. Jack Nicholson, Helen Hunt, Greg Kinnear Dir: James Brooks **The Mask of Zorro**, Act/Adv. Antonio Banderas, Anthony Hopkins, Catherine Jones Dir: Martin Campbell. **Stinkers**, Com. B.D. Wong, Bronson Pinchot, Jennifer Coolidge. Dir: Barnet Kellman.	**TriStar** (310) 280-8000 (212) 833-8500
Perfect, 8/1, Rom/Com,PG-13, ~105 olby SR, SR-D, Flat. Jennifer Aniston, Bacon, Olympia Dukakis, Jay Mohr, Illeana is. Dir: Glenn Gordon Caron.	**The Edge** (formerly The Wild, formerly Bookworm), Act./Thr, Dolby SR, SR-D, Anamorphic. Anthony Hopkins, Alec Baldwin, Elle Macpherson, L.Q. Jones, Harold Perrineau. Dir: Lee Tamahori.	**Soul Food**, 10/3, Dra, R. Vanessa Williams, Mehki Phifer. Dir: George Tillman, Jr. **A Life Less Ordinary**, 10/24, Dra. Cameron Diaz, Holly Hunter Dir: Danny Boyle **Anastasia**, 11/21, Ani. Voices: Meg Ryan, John Cusack. Dirs: Don Bluth, Gary Goldman. **Alien Resurrection**, 11/26, SF Sigourney Weaver, Winona Ryder. Dir: Jean-Pierre Jeunet. **Home Alone 3**, 12/19, Com Alex D. Linz. Dir. Raja Gosnell. **Great Expectations**, 12/31, Dra. Robert De Niro, Gwyneth Paltrow Dir Alfonso Cuaron. **Untitled Bulworth**, '98 Dir/Star. Warren Beatty. **Firestorm**, Act./Adv, R Howie Long Dir Dean Semler. **How Stella Got Her Goove Back**. Angela Bassett Dir Kevin Rodney Sullivan. **Doctor Dolittle**, Com. Eddie Murphy Dir Betty Thomas **Blackwood** David Duchovny, Gillian Anderson Dir: Rob Bowman. **The Newton Boys** Matthew McConaughey **Hope Floats**, Com. Sandra Bullock. Dir: Forrest Whitaker	**20th Century Fox** (310) 369-1000 (212) 556-2400
it to Beaver, 8/1, Com. Janine Turner, opher McDonald, Cameron Finley, Erik etten. Dir: Andy Cadiff. **ne Conqueror**, 8/29, Adv, PG-13 Kevin , Tia Carrere, Karina Lombard, Litefoot, as Ian Griffith. ohn Nicoella.		**Reach the Rock**, Fall, Dra/Com. Alessandro Nivola, William Sadler, Bruce Norris. Dir: Bill Ryan. **The Jackal**, 11/14, Thr. Bruce Willis, Richard Gere, Sidney Portier. Dir: Michael Caton-Jones. **The Boxer**, 12/26 ltd, 1/9/98 wide, Dra Daniel Day-Lewis, Emily Watson. Dir: Jim Sheridan. **For Richer For Poorer**, Dec, Rom/Com. Tim Allen, Kirstie Alley. Dir. Bryan Spicer. **Virus**, '98, Thr. Jamie Lee Curtis, Donald Sutherland, William Baldwin, Cliff Curtis. Dir: John Bruno. **Primary Colors**, Dra John Travolta, Billy Bob Thornton. Dir: Mike Nichols. **Meet Joe Black**, Rom/Dra Brad Pitt, Anthony Hopkins. Dir: Martin Brest. **Simple Simon**, Thr Bruce Willis Dir: Harold Becker	**Universal** (818) 777-1000 (212) 759-7500
ilty 3, 8/8, Fam/Adv,PG, DTS Jason Richter, August Schellenberg, Annie Dir: Sam Pillsbury. /15, Act/Adv, 105 min, DTS. Shaquille Judd Nelson, Annabeth Gish, Richard tree, Irma P. Hall. Dir: Kenneth Johnson.	**Fire Down Below**, 9/12, Act, DTS. Steven Segal, Marg Helgenberger Dir: Felix Enriquez Alcala. **Breaking Up**, 9/26 NY,LA,Tor Russell Crowe, Salma Hayek. Dir. Michael Cristofer.	**L.A. Confidential**, 10/3, Dra, R, 138 min. Kevin Spacey, Kim Basinger. Dir: Curtis Hanson **The Devil's Advocate**, 10/17, Dra Al Pacino, Keanu Reeves Dir Taylor Hackford **Home Fries** Com. Drew Barrymore, Gary Busey. Dir Dean Parisot. **Edwards and Hunt** Com. Chris Farley, Matthew Perry Dir: Christopher Guest. **Mad City** Dra. John Travolta, Dustin Hoffman. Dir. Constantin Costa-Gavras **Incognito**, Thr, Jason Patric. Dir. John Badham. **Pre**. Dra. Billy Crudup, Donald Sutherland. Dir: Robert Towne. **Fallen**, Dra. Denzel Washington, John Goodman. **Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil**. Dir. Clint Eastwood. **The Postman**, SF. Dir/Star: Kevin Costner. **Courtesan** (formerly Venice), Dra, R, 112 min. Catherine McCormack. Dir: Marshall Herskovitz. **Watch That Man** Bill Murray Dir: Jon Amiel. **Eyes Wide Shut** Tom Cruise, Nicole Kidman. Dir: Stanley Kubrick.	**Warner Bros.** (818) 954-6000 (212) 484-8000

BOXOFFICE Independent Feature Chart JULY 1997

JUNE

Castle Hill
212-888-0080

End of Summer, Dra. Jaqueline Bisset. Dir: Linda Yellen. 6/13 NY
Innocent Sleep. 6/27

CFP
212-995-9662

The Pillow Book, Dra, 126 min. Vivian Wu, Ewan McGregor. Dir: Peter Greenaway. 6/6

Cinema Parallel
410-442-1752

To Have (Or Not), Dra, NR, 93 min. Dir: Laetitia Masson.

Cinema Village Features
212-431-5119

Mondo Plympton, Ani. Dir: Bill Plympton.

Fine Line
212-649-4800

For Roseanna, Com, PG-13, 99 min. Jean Reno, Mercedes Ruehl. Dir: Paul Weiland. 6/18 NY
Head Above Water, Dra/Com, PG-13, 92 min. Harvey Keitel. Dir: Jim Wilson. 6/20 ltd

Kino Intl.
212-629-6880

M *(1931 German re-issue)*, Dra, 99 min. Dir: Fritz Lang. 6/13

Legacy
213-467-3700

Wedding Bell Blues, Com. Paulina Porizkova, Illeana Douglas. Dir: Dana Lustig. 6/13

Leisure Time Features
212-267-4501

Twisted, Dra, 100 min. Dir: Seth Michael Donsky.

Manga
415-975-5405

Tetsuo: Body Hammer. Dir: Shinya Tsukamoto.

New Yorker Films
212-247-6110

Gabbeh, Dra, 75 min. Abbas Sayahi, Hossein Moharami. Dir: Mohsen Makhmalbas. 6/25 NY

Orion Classics
310-282-0550

Ulee's Gold, Dra, R, 113 min. Peter Fonda, Patricia Richardson. Dir: Victor Nunez. 6/13

Orion Pictures
310-282-0550

Fall, Rom/Com. Star/Dir: Eric Schaeffer. 6/20

Roxie Releasing
415-431-3611

The Last Time I Commited Suicide, Dra, 92 min. Thomas Jane, Keanu Reeves. Dir: Stephen Kay.

Sony Classics
212-833-8851

Dream With the Fishes, Dra, R, 96 min. David Arquette. Dir: Finn Taylor. 6/20
When the Cat's Away *(France)*, Dra/Com, R, 95 min. Garance Clavel. Dir: Cedric Kapisch. 6/20

Strand
310-395-5002

Timothy Leary's Dead, Doc, 80 min. Dir: Paul Davids. 6/6 LA
Contempt *(1963 reissue)*. Dir: Jean-Luc Godard. 6/27 NY, 7/4 LA
Late Bloomers, Rom/Dra, 104 min. Dir: Julia and Gretchen Dyer. 6/27 LA, Houston, 7/18 NY

JULY

Artistic License
212-265-9119

La Renconter *(France)*, Dra, 80 min. Dir: Alain Cavalier.

Castle Hill
Brilliant Lies. 7/11 NY

CFP
Guantanamera, Com, NR, 124 min. Dirs: Thomas Gutierrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabio Rey. 7/2

First Look
310-855-1199

Alive and Kicking (aka Indian Summer). Jason Flemyng, Antony Sher. Dir: Nancy Meckler. 7/25

Fox Searchlight
310-369-4402

Star Maps, Dra, 90 min, R, Dolby SR. Dir: Miguel Arteta. 7/23 ltd

International Pictures
212-925-0404

Love's Debris, Doc, 120 min. Featuring Anita Cerquetti. Dir: Werner Schroetrer. 7/23 NY

Live
818-778-3174

The Winner, Thr, 89 min. Rebecca DeMornay, Frank Whaley. Dir: Alex Cox.

New Yorker Films
Forever Mozart, Dra, NR, 84 min. Madeleine Assas, Frederic Pierrot. Dir: Jean-Luc Godard. 7/4

Orion Classics
This World, Then the Fireworks. Billy Zane, Gina Gershon. Dir: Michael Oblowitz. 7/18 NY, LA

Strand
Latin Boys Go To Hell. Irwin Ossa, John Bryant Davila. Dir: Ela Troyano. 7/25 NY, LA

Theafilm
213-368-1778

Dirty Weekend. Lia Williams, Sylvia Syms. Dir: Michael Winner. 7/11 ltd

Trimark
310-314-3040

Box of Moonlight, 107 min. John Turturro, Sam Rockwell. Dir: Tom DiCillo. 7/25 NY, 8/8 LA

Triumph
310-280-8059

Masterminds *(formerly Smart Alec)*, Act/Com. Patrick Stewart. Dir: Roger Christian.

AUGUST

Artificial Eye
212-255-1922

Mon Homme *(France)*, Com/Dra, 95 min. Anouk Grinberg. Dir: Bertrand Blier.

CFP
Bandwagon, Com/Mus, NR, 103 min. Kevin Corrigna, Lee Holmes. Dir: John Schultz. 8/15 ltd.
Sunday, Dra, 93 min. David Suchet, Lisa Harrow, Jared Harris. Dir: Jonathan Nossiter. 8/22

Cinema Parallel
Talking To Strangers (reissue). 8/2

First Look
Different for Girls, Rom/Com, 97 min. Rupert Graves. Dir: Richard Spence. 8/15

First Run
212-243-0600

Hamsun *(Norway)*. 160 min. Max Von Sydow. Dir: Jan Troell 8/6

Fox Searchlight
The Full Monte, Com, ~95 min, R, Dolby SR, Flat. Robert Carlyle. Dir: Peter Cattaneo. 8/15

Goldwyn
310-282-0550

Paperback Romance *(formerly Lucky Break)*, Rom/Com. Anthony LaPaglia. Dir: Ben Lewin. 8/1
Napoleon, Ani, G, 82 min. Voices: Adam Wylie, Bronson Pinchot. Dir: Mario Andreacchio. 8/8

Gramercy
310-777-1960

How To Be a Player, Com. Bill Belamy, Lark Voorhies. Dir: Lionel Martin. 8/15

Kit Parker
800-538-5838

Coffy *(1973 reissue)*, Dra, R, 91 min. Pam Grier, Booker Bradshaw. Dir: Jack Hill. 8/29 NY

Live
Dirty Dancing *(1987 reissue)*, 97 min. Patrick Swayze Dir: Emile Ardolino.

Northern Arts
413-268-9301

Soul in the Hole, Doc. Dir: Danielle Gardner. 8/8 NY,LA, Sept exp

October
212-539-4000

Career Girls, Dra. Katrin Cartlidge, Lynda Steadman. Dir: Mike Leigh.

Sony Classics
In the Company of Men, Dra. Aaron Eckhart, Matt Malloy. Dir: Neil La Bute. 8/8

Strand
Nights of Cabiria *(1957 Italian reissue)*, Dra, 110 min. Giulietta Masina. Dir: Federico Fellini.

SEPTEMBER

CFP
Stag, Dra, 94 min. Andrew McCarthy, Mario Van Peebles. Dir: Gavin Wilding.

Dreamworks SKG
818-733-7000

The Peacemaker, Act/Adv. George Clooney, Nicole Kidman. Dir: Mimi Leder. 9/26

Fox Searchlight
Intimate Relations, Dra, 99 min, R, Dolby SR, Flat. Dir: Philip Goodhew. 9/5
Ice Storm, Dra, Dolby SR, Flat. Kevin Kline, Joan Allen. Dir: Ang Lee. 9/27
Cousin Bette, Dra. Jessica Lange, Bob Hoskins. Dir: Des McAnuff.

Gramercy
Going All the Way, Dra. Jeremy Davies, Ben Affleck. Dir: Mark Pellington. 9/19
The Matchmaker, Com. Janeane Garofalo. Dir: Mark Joffe.

Greycat
702-737-0670

David Searching, Com/Dra, 103 min. Anthony Rapp. Dir: Leslie Smith.

Live
Suicide Kings *(formerly Boys Night Out)*, Thr. Christopher Walken, Sean Patrick Flanery. Dir: Peter O'Fallow.

Manga
Gravesend, Dra. Dir: Sal Stabile.

Northern Arts
Withnail and I *(1987 British reissue)*, Com, 105 min. Richard E. Grant. Dir: Bruce Robinson.

October
Kicked in the Head. Linda Fiorentino, Michael Rapaport. Dir: Matthew Harrison.

Orion Pictures
The Locusts, Dra. Kate Capshaw, Ashley Judd. Dir: John Patrick Kelley. 9/12
Criminal Intent (formerly Gang Related), Dra, R. Tupac Shakur, Jim Belushi. Dir: Jim Kous. 9/17

BOXOFFICE Independent Feature Chart JULY 1997

Sony Classics
The Myth of Fingerprints, Dra. Noah Wyle, Julianne Moore, Roy Schneider. Dir: B. Freundlich. 9/9 NY

OCTOBER

Fine Line
Gummo, Dra. Chloe Sevigny. Dir: Harmony Korine. 10/3

Goldwyn
Welcome to Woop Woop *(formerly The Big Red)*, Com. Jonathan Schaech, Rod Taylor. Dir: Stephan Elliott. 10/3

Gramercy
Bean, Com. Rowan Atkinson. 10/24

Live
Wishmaster, Hor. Dir: Robert Kurtzman.

Manga
Tokyo Fist, Act. Dir: Shinya Tsukamoto.

New Yorker Films
Deep Crimson, Dra, 114 min. Daniel Gimenez, Marisa Paredes. Dir: Arturo Ripstein. 10/6

Northern Arts
Midaq Alley *(Mexico)*, Dra, 140 min. Salma Hayek, Ernesto Gomez. Dir: Jorge Fons.

Orion Pictures
Best Men *(formerly Independence)*, Dra. Dean Cain, Drew Barrymore, Luke Wilson. Dir: Tamra Davis. 10/24

Sony Classics
Fast, Cheap & Out of Control, Doc, 79 min. Dir: Errol Morris.

Theafilm
James Dean: Race With Destiny. Casper Van Dien, Robert Mitchum. Dir: Mardi Rustam. 10/3

Trimark
Eve's Bayou, Dra. Samuel L. Jackson, Lynn Whitfield. Dir: Kasi Lemmons. 10/17
Chairman of the Board, Com. Carrot Top. 10/24

FORTHCOMING

Artificial Eye
The Mother and the Whore *(France, 1973)*, Dra, 210 min. Dir: Jean Eustache. Fall
Happiness *(France)*, Com, 102 min. Michel Serrault. Dir: Etienne Chatiliez.

Artistic License
Riding the Rails, Doc. Dirs: Michael Uys, Lexy Lovell.

Cabin Fever
203-622-3449
The Elevator, Com. Martin Sheen.
The Secret Agent Club, Act.

Cinema Village Features
Cartoon Noir, Ani. Fall

Dove
310-786-1600
Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, Com/SF, 92 min. Douglas Adams. Dir: Neil Davies.

Dreamworks SKG
Mousehunt, Com/Ani. Nathan Lane, Lee Evans, Christopher Walken, Vicki Lewis. Dir: Gore Verbinski 11/14
Amistad (formerly Mutiny), Dra. Matthew McConaughey, Anthony Hopkins, Morgan Freeman. Dir: Steven Spielberg. 12/12 ltd, 12/19 exp
Ants, Ani. Voice: Woody Allen
Blue Vision. Dir: Neil Jordan.
Deep Impact. Tea Leoni, Elijah Wood. Dir: Mimi Leder.
El Dorado: City of Gold, Ani. Dir: Will Finn.
Paulie: A Parrot's Tale. Dir: John Roberts.
The Prince of Egypt, Ani. Voices: Val Kilmer, Steve Martin, Martin Short. Dirs: Simon Wells, Steve Hicker and Brenda Chapman. '98
Saving Private Ryan, Dra. Tom Hanks, Ed Burns. Dir: Steven Spielberg. '98

Filmopolis
310-914-1776
In a Strange City. Winston Chao, Kuei-mai Yang. Dir: Chi Yin.

Fine Line
Winter Guest, Dra. Emma Thompson, Phylidda Law. Dir: Alan Rickman. Fall
Deconstructing Harry, Com. Woody Allen, Kirstie Alley. Dir: Woody Allen.
Didier *(France)*. Alain Chabat. Dir: Alain Chabat.
Girl Talk, Dra/Com. Troy Beyer, Randi Ingerman. Dir: Troy Beyer.
The Legend of the Pianist on the Ocean, Dra. Tim Roth. Dir: Giuseppe Tornatore.
Letters of Love *(Japan)* (formerly Love Letters), Dra, 116 min. Miho Nakyama. Dir: Shunji Iwai.
The Sweet Hereafter, Dra. Ian Holm. Dir: Atom Egoyan.
Tears of Julian Po, Dra. Christian Slater, Robin Tunney. Dir: Alan Wade.

First Look
Mrs. Dalloway, Dra. Vanessa Redgrave, Rupert Graves. Dir: Marleen Gorris. Fall
Slaves to the Underground, Dra, 92 min. Marisa Ryan, Jason Bortz. Dir: Kristine Petersen. Fall
Keep the Aspidistra Flying, Dra/Com. Richard E. Grant, Helena Bonham Carter. Dir: Robert Bierman.
The Other Side of Sunday *(Norway)*, Dra. Bjorn Sundquist. Dir: Berit Nesheim.

First Run
Forgotten Silver. Mock Doc. Dirs: Peter Jackson, Costa Botes.
Project Grizzly, Doc. Dir: Peter Lynch.
Six O'Clock News, Doc. Dir: Ross McElwee.

Fox Searchlight
Oscar & Lucinda. Ralph Fiennes. Dir: Gillian Armstrong. Nov
Hard Men *(UK)*, Dra. Vincent Regan. Dir: J. K. Amalou. '97
Polish Wedding. Claire Danes, Gabriel Byrne, Lena Olin. Dir: Theresa Connelly. '98

Goldwyn
I Love You... Don't Touch Me, Com, 86 min. Marla Schaffel. Dir: Julie Davis.

Gramercy
The Big Lebowski. Jeff Bridges, John Goodman, Steve Buscemi. Dirs: Joel and Ethan Coen. Nov
Body Count, Act. Ving Rhames, Forest Whitaker, David Caruso. Dir: Robert Patton Spruill. '98
Land Girls. Gwyneth Paltrow, Catherine McCormack. Dir: David Leland.
Shakespeare's Sister. Kenneth Branagh, Madeleine Stowe.

Gurney Releasing
212-838-2929
Follow the Bitch, Com. Melissa Lechner. Dir: Julian Stone.

International Pictures
The Knowledge of Healing, Doc, 90 min. Dir: Franz Reichley.

Legacy
Leading Man. Jon Bon Jovi.

Live
Critical Care, Dra/Thr. James Spader, Albert Brooks. Dir: Sydney Lumet. Nov
No Way Home, Dra. Tim Roth. Dir: Buddy Gioviazzo. '98

Movieworld Ent.
510-244-5590
The Killing Kind, Dra. Kirk Harris
The Lost Woman. Jennifer Rubin

New Yorker Films
Beaumarchais *(France)*, Com, 100 min. Fabrice Luchini. Dir: Edouardo Molinaro. 12/19

October
Year of the Horse, Doc. Featuring Neil Young and Crazy Horse. Dir: Jim Jarmusch. Fall
Condo Painting, Doc. Featuring George Condo. Dir: John McNaughton. '98
Hearts and Minds, Thr, R, 105 min. Danny Keogh, Patrick Shai. Dir: Ralph Ziman. '98
Three Seasons, Dra. Harvey Keitel. Dir: Tony Bui. '98

Orion Classics
Storefront Hitchcock, Concert Doc. Robyn Hitchcock. Dir: Jonathan Demme. '98

Orion Pictures
Best Men *(formerly Independence)*, Dra. Dean Cain, Drew Barrymore, Luke Wilson. Dir: Tamra Davis. 10/24
Music From Another Room, Com. Brenda Blethyn, Jennifer Tilly, Martha Plimpton, Jeremy Piven. Dir: Charles Peters
Stella Does Tricks. Kelly Macdonald. Dir: Coky Giedroy.

Seventh Art Releasing
213-845-1455
The Long Way Home, Doc. Dir: Mark Jonathan Harris.
Things I Never Told You, Rom/Com. Lili Taylor, Andrew McCarthy. Dir: Isabel Coixet.

Shadow Distribution
La Petite Apocalypse *(France)*, Com/Dra, 110 min. Pierre Arditi. Dir: Costa-Gavras.

Sony Classics
Men With Guns, Dra. Federico Luppi, Mandy Patinkin, Kathryn Grody. Dir: John Sayles.
Tango Lesson. Dir: Sally Potter.

Strand
Full Speed, Dra, 85 min. Elodie Bouchez. Dir: Gael Murel. Fall
La Sentinelle *(France)*, Thr, 144 min. Emmanuel Salinger. Dir: Arnaud Desplechin. Fall
Self-Made Hero *(France)*, Dra. Matthieu Kassovitz. Dir: Jacques Audiard. Fall
The Tit and the Moon *(Spain)*, Com, 92 min. Biel Duran. Dir: Bigas Lunas. Fall

Tara Releasing
415-454-5838
Mushrooms *(Australia)*, Com, 93 min. Julia Blake, Simon Chilvers, Lynette Curran. Dir: Alan Madden.

Theafilm
Madam, the Grass Is High. Dir: Delbert Mann. Nov ltd

Trimark
Bombshell, Thr. Henry Thomas, Frank Whaley. Dir: Paul Wynne.
Prairie Fire. Natasha Henstridge.
Warrior of Waverly Street, SF. Joseph Mazzello. Dir: Manny Coto.

Zeitgeist
212-274-1989
Anthem, Doc. Dir: Shainee Gabel and Kristin Hahn.
Conspirators of Pleasure *(Czech)*, Com. Dir: Jan Svankmajer. Fall
Fire *(India)*, Dra. Shabani Azmi. Dir: Deepa Mehta.
My Sex Life... or How I Got Into An Argument *(France)*, Com. Dir: Arnaud Desplechin.

THE BOXOFFICE HOME RELEASE CHART

BOXOFFICE

JULY 1997

HOME VIDEO RELEASE DATE	TITLE	BOXOFFICE GROSS	SCREENS	THEATRICAL RELEASE	THEATRICAL/VIDEO DISTRIBUTOR
June 10	Beavis & Butt-head Do America	$63,000,000	2,417	December 20	Paramount
June 10	Marvin's Room	$12,700,000	1,158	December 18	Miramax/Buena Vista
June 10	Michael	$95,400,000+	2,141	December 25	New Line
June 17	Mars Attacks!	$37,800,000	1,955	December 13	Warner Bros.
June 17	My Fellow Americans	$22,300,000	1,915	December 20	Warner Bros.
June 24	Gridlock'd	$5,600,000	743	January 29	Gramercy/Polygram
June 24	In Love and War	$14,500,000	1,612	December 18	New Line
June 24	The Pest	$3,500,000	1,205	February 7	TriStar/Columbia TriStar
June 24	Ridicule	$2,000,000	74	November 27	Miramax/Buena Vista
June 24	Scream	$95,600,000+	1,994	December 20	Miramax/Buena Vista
June 24	Turbulence	$11,500,000	2,094	January 10	MGM
July 1	Beverly Hills Ninja	$30,800,000+	2,112	January 17	TriStar/Columbia TriStar
July 1	The Crucible	$7,300,000	344	November 27	Fox
July 1	Fierce Creatures	$9,100,000	1,620	January 24	Universal
July 1	Jackie Chan's First Strike	$14,500,000	1,344	January 10	New Line
July 8	Absolute Power	$48,700,000	2,568	February 14	Columbia/Columbia TriStar
July 8	Turbo: A Power Ranger Movie	$8,000,000+	2,113	March 28	Fox
July 8	When We Were Kings	$2,400,000+	90	October 25	Gramercy/BMG
July 15	Fools Rush In	$24,500,000	1,701	February 14	Columbia/Columbia TriStar
July 15	Metro	$31,900,000	2,005	January 17	Touchstone/Buena Vista
July 22	Sling Blade	$22,600,000+	1,020	November 27	Miramax/Buena Vista
July 22	Smilla's Sense of Snow	$2,200,000	135	February 28	Fox
July 25	The Relic	$33,900,000+	2,128	January 10	Paramount
August 3	Dangerous Ground	$5,100,000	808	February 12	New Line
August	The English Patient	$76,300,000+	683	November 15	Miramax/Buena Vista
August	Ghosts of Mississippi	$13,000,000	1,268	December 20	Columbia/Columbia TriStar
August	Hamlet	$4,500,000	92	December 25	Columbia/Columbia TriStar
August	Jingle All the Way	$60,600,000	2,404	November 22	Fox
August	Mother	$19,000,000+	621	December 25	Paramount
August	Shine	$35,700,000+	314	November 22	Fine Line/New Line
August	Vegas Vacation	$35,900,000+	2,054	February 14	Warner Bros.
August	The Beautician and the Beast	$11,500,000+	1,801	February 7	Paramount
August	Dante's Peak	$66,400,000+	2,657	February 7	Universal
August	That Darn Cat	$17,000,000	1,891	February 14	Walt Disney/Buena Vista
September	Jungle 2 Jungle	$54,800,000+	2,340	March 7	Hollywood/Buena Vista
September	Kama Sutra: A Tale of Love	$3,300,000+	79	February 28	Trimark/Vidmark
September	Liar, Liar	$156,500,000+	2,909	March 21	Universal
September	Private Parts	$40,600,000	2,127	March 7	Paramount
September	Rosewood	$12,900,000	991	February 21	Warner Bros.
September	Selena	$33,800,000+	1,873	March 21	Warner Bros.

Compiled by BOXOFFICE MAGAZINE. Numbers for *Boxoffice Gross* represent total domestic boxoffice grosses to the nearest $100,000; + signs indicate that films remain in theatrical release. Number of *Screens* indicates the maximum number of screens in widest, simultaneous release. Entries in the *Theatrical/Video Distributor* column list two names when the video releasing company is different from (or releases through a subsidiary different from) the theatrical distributor. Exact day-and-date specific entries for *Home Video Release* are confirmed; in all other cases, the month indicated for a release is forecast by the editors of BOXOFFICE. BOXOFFICE is not liable for errors or omissions in the chart.

Boxoffice Magazine presents



MovieFone's Moviegoer Activity Report

For the Month of April 1997

MovieFone® (777-FILM®) and its sister service, MovieLink® Online, are now the single largest source of movie showtime information in the country, providing information to over 12 million moviegoers each month. The following information represents the most requested theatres and exhibitors on MovieFone.

Top 10 Exhibitors & Theatres

Most Requested Exhibitors

Rank	Exhibitor	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
1	United Artists	676,325	1
2	Sony	584,914	3
3	Cineplex Odeon	565,844	2
4	AMC	539,183	4
5	General Cinema	360,439	5
6	Century	208,517	6
7	Cinemark	165,298	7
8	CinAmerica	138,520	9
9	National Amusements	134,185	8
10	Regal	111,202	10

Most Requested Theatres

Rank	Market	Theatre	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
1	NY	Sony Lincoln Square	47,395	1
2	BO	Sony Cheri	31,337	2
3	NY	Sony 19th St. East	30,229	9
4	BO	Sony Assembly Square	29,559	6
5	LA	AMC Century 14	26,197	3
6	BO	Sony Copley Place	26,023	8
7	LA	GCC Beverly Connection	25,099	25
8	PH	UA Riverview Plaza	24,088	4
9	NY	Sony Village 7	24,059	16
10	NY	CO Worldwide	23,797	13

Most Requested Theatres Per Screen

Total Requests	Rank	Theatre (# screens)	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
New York	1	CityCin 86th St. East (2)	14,081	35
1,113,744	2	UA East (1)	6,547	2
	3	CO Ziegfeld (1)	6,360	1
Los Angeles	1	GCC Avco (3)	20,753	4
587,949	2	CinAm Bruin (1)	6,891	13
	3	GCC Beverly Connect.(6)	25,099	8
Dallas	1	AMC Highland Pk (4)	7,079	7
508,017	2	Granada Movie Grill (1)	1,747	5
	3	GCC Northpark 1 & 2 (2)	3,207	13
San Francisco	1	Blm Regency I (1)	5,385	28
312,709	2	Blm Regency II (1)	4,994	23
	3	Century Geneva D-I (4)	12,442	7
Miami	1	Cobb Kendall (9)	14,667	1
281,533	2	Cobb Miami Lakes (10)	16,143	3
	3	GCC Riviera (4)	6,223	4
Boston	1	Sony Cheri (4)	31,337	1
263,332	2	FEI Somerville (1)	3,821	6
	3	Sony Nickelodeon (5)	17,699	5
Philadelphia	1	UA Sameric (4)	16,171	2
261,321	2	Cinemagic 3 at Penn (3)	10,494	6
	3	UA Cheltenham (8)	22,063	3
Chicago	1	Village North (1)	2,393	2
205,547	2	Sony Webster Place (8)	12,333	6
	3	Sony Pipers Alley (4)	5,695	7
Phoenix	1	Century Glendale 9 D-I (9)	17,723	2
196,975	2	Hark Cine Capri (1)	1,710	1
	3	UA Christown Mall (6)	8,028	3
Toronto	1	Famous Uptown (3)	7,043	7
159,837	2	Famous Eglinton (1)	1,984	4
	3	Famous Plaza (2)	3,768	5
Houston	1	CO River Oaks Plaza (12)	12,267	1
149,361	2	Landmk River Oaks (3)	3,052	2
	3	CO Spectrum (9)	9,014	3
San Diego	1	Pacific Grossmont Trolley (8)	5,393	12
117,215	2	Pacific Cinerama (6)	3,916	14
	3	UA Horton Plaza (14)	7,821	11

Total Requests	Rank	Theatre (# screens)	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
Denver	1	AMC Tiffany Plaza (6)	2,630	5
94,903	2	UA Continental (6)	3,852	11
	3	CinAm Olde Town (14)	7,826	4
Kansas City	1	Dksn Cinema (6)	6,251	4
93,845	2	Dksn Glenwood (4)	4,059	1
	3	AMC Oak Park Plaza (6)	5,609	2
Atlanta	1	UA Tara (4)	2,414	1
92,950	2	Carmike Exchange (3)	1,313	9
	3	AMC Galleria (8)	3,214	3
Seattle	1	CO Southcenter (1)	777	18
80,442	2	Landmk Metro (10)	7,598	10
	3	CO Northgate (1)	716	4
Minneapolis	1	UA St. Anthony Main (5)	2,774	2
75,555	2	Landmk Uptown (1)	511	1
	3	Mann MN Highland (2)	996	15
Cleveland	1	Sony Cedar (2)	1,387	1
64,667	2	GCC Ridge Park Sq. (8)	5,494	2
	3	GCC Parmatown (5)	3,092	8
San Antonio	1	Act III Westlakes (9)	5,053	4
51,589	2	Act III Bandera (6)	3,253	1
	3	Act III Rolling Oaks (6)	3,089	7
Las Vegas	1	Century Las Vegas D-I (6)	4,832	12
51,043	2	UA Showcase (8)	4,474	7
	3	Century Cinedome (12)	6,158	6
Washington, D.C.	1	CO Uptown (1)	1,256	2
46,529	2	CO Embassy (1)	734	3
	3	CO Avalon (2)	1,155	16
Sacramento	1	Century Century 21 (2)	1,282	1
41,104	2	Century Complex (12)	7,330	7
	3	Century Sacramento D-I (6)	2,999	2
Detroit	1	MJR Main Art (3)	931	9
40,803	2	Star Lincoln Park (8)	2,415	2
	3	AMC Southland (4)	1,194	1
Tampa	1	Carmike Univ. Collect. (6)	1,954	20
31,252	2	Muvico Palm Harbor (10)	3,091	2
	3	AMC Horizon Park (4)	1,199	4

Top 3 Actively* Requested Theatres:

1. CO Worldwide New York, NY
2. Sony Lincoln Sq. New York, NY
3. UA Sheepshead Bay Brooklyn, NY

*Caller specifically requested theatre

Key to Exhibitors

AMC	AMC Theatres, Inc	Cobb	Cobb Theatres	Landmk	Landmark Theatre Corp	Pacific	Pacific Theatres
Act III	Act III Theatres	Dksn	Dickinson Theatres	Laemmle	Laemmle Theatres	Regal	Regal Cinemas
Blm	Blumenfeld Theatres	Famous	Famous Players	Mann MN	Mann Minneapolis	Sony	Sony Theatres
Carmike	Carmike Cinemas, Inc	FEI	FEI Theatres	Met	Metropolitan Theatres Corp	Star	Loews Star Theatres
Century	Century Theatres	GCC	General Cinema Theatres	MJR	MJR Theatre Service	SupSav	Super Saver Cinemas
CinAm	CinAmerica Theatres, LP	General	General Theatres	Muvico	Muvico Theatres	UA	United Artists Theatre Circuit
CityCin	City Cinemas	Hark	Harkins Theatres	NA	National Amusements		
CO	Cineplex Odeon Corp	Hollywood	Hollywood Theatres				

777-FILM

NATIONAL NEWS

MO' MONEY FOR THE MOVIES

The first quarter profits for 1997 are in and the results, with the exception of Viacom, look good across the board, making it official that this was one banner first quarter for the movies. Sony Corp. increased revenues more than 1,000 percent over last year's disappointing first quarter returns, posting $99.5 million in profit, thanks to strong boxoffice from "Jerry Maguire," "Anaconda" and "The Fifth Element." Sony Pictures Releasing continues to look strong with the upcoming "Men In Black," "My Best Friend's Wedding" and "Air Force One." News Corp.'s profits were up 38 percent for the quarter ending March 31 with $291 million profit, which is credited to the boxoffice success of subsidiary 20th Century Fox's reissue of the "Star Wars" trilogy.

It was the weakest quarter for the Walt Disney Company, who still exceeded many analysts' estimates and rose 63 percent over last year's first quarter results to earn $333 million in profit, with the help of "Ransom," subsidiary Miramax's "The English Patient" and the home video release of "Toy Story." Time Warner Inc. posted $35 million in profit despite its heavy debt. Viacom Inc. showed a net loss of $18.7 million, brought down by the Blockbuster Entertainment unit and a less than blockbuster performance from Paramount, which showed a cash flow decline of 25 percent. Seagram Co.'s corporate earnings for the quarter more than doubled, posting $27 million in profits despite the fact that Universal's hit "Liar, Liar" was released too late in the quarter to help, though it will certainly boost next quarter's profits.

Among exhibitors, first quarter profits were well up from last year which is due, insiders say, to the industry becoming a 12-month business instead of a seasonal one. Regal Cinemas Inc. posted a $8.5 million profit, up 85 percent from last year. AMC Entertainment Inc.'s earnings were up 17 percent to $8.2 million. Cineplex Odeon Corp. showed $2.1 million profits against last year's $7.2 million in losses. Cinemark USA Inc.'s first quarter profits more than doubled from last year's $2.5 million up to $5.1 million, thanks in part to the addition of just over 220 screens added last year.

GIANT-SCREEN GIANTS SETTLE OUT OF COURT

Large-format companies, Imax and Showscan ceased rattling sabers at each other in May when they agreed to settled all litigation between them, one month before the first lawsuit was scheduled to begin. The settlement, which remains undisclosed, is not expected to have a financial effect on either company. The string of lawsuits first began in February 1996 when Imax filed suit against Showscan, charging copyright infringement over similarities between Showscan's Showmax and Imax's own large-format camera and projection systems.

Showscan, in turn, filed their own complaint against Imax for violation of Federal anti-trust laws. Then again this February, Showscan filed suit in U.S. District Court, seeking to have the trademark of Imax Corp. canceled because "Imax" had become a generic term. Showscan's newly appointed CEO, Dennis Pope, was said to be instrumental in negotiating the settlement between the two large-format companies.

POLYGRAM'S GAME FOR A NEW DISTRIBUTION COMPANY

They've been working on the move for years, but finally, Polygram Filmed Entertainment unveiled a new film distribution company, Polygram Filmed Entertainment Distribution, that would work alongside PFE's Gramercy Pictures to release motion pictures. Andy Fogelson was named president of the new unit by PFE president Michael Kuhn. William Soady has been named president of distribution and Peter Graves comes in as president of marketing. Kuhn looks for Polygram's distribution entity to emulate the success of such distribution companies as Miramax or October.

Polygram already distributes its own films in foreign markets, including France, Australia and Canada. Company sources say the $900 million in annual revenues from its 400-title film library should maintain more than enough financial strength to carry a domestic distribution division, but industry insiders say it would take several years of releasing 10-12 wide release pictures before the new distributor would have a shot at the majors. Gramercy Pictures, which released last year's "Fargo," will continue under president Russell Schwartz as an autonomous entity. The first release for Polygram Distribution will be "The Game," a David Fincher ("Seven") helmed thriller starring Michael Douglas and Sean Penn.

LEED ON AT TRISTAR AS COLUMBIA LOSES JOSEPHSON

Exec VP Chris Lee's move up to president of production at TriStar Pictures makes him the first Asian American to ever hold that high a rank at a major studio. As the top executive at TriStar, Lee is effectively replacing the former president of TriStar Pictures, Robert Cooper, who resigned in May after less than a year on the job.

Lee oversaw "Jerry Maguire" said he will continue to oversee TriStar's "Godzilla" and "Starship Troopers" even as he takes on his new responsibilities. Lee started as a script reader and worked his way through the ranks. He was also the executive on "The Fisher King," "Philadelphia" and "Legends of the Fall." The installment of Lee ends speculation that Sony Pictures Entertainment was planning to merge Columbia and TriStar into one entity, since SPE president and COO John Calley had already integrated the story and business affairs units into one entity.

Insiders say Calley never got along with Cooper, who was brought in by former SPE head Mark Canton to TriStar last summer from HBO Pictures. When Canton left last year and Calley was appointed in November, Cooper became frustrated with Calley's very hands-on approach that didn't allow Cooper to operate autonomously. Rumors say Cooper may land at PolyGram or DreamWorks.

Meanwhile, Columbia Pictures president of production Barry Josephson, who was rumored to be a likely candidate to replace Cooper, will leave before his contract is up October 1. He may end up with a producing deal at Sony. His position will not be filled, as Columbia Pictures president Amy Pascal will take over Josephson's responsibilities. Josephson was considered one of the last executives with strong ties to the former Canton regime, as he was the first hire by Canton. Josephson was responsible for overseeing such big-budget action films as "Bad Boys," Money Train," "Anaconda," The Devil's Own" as well as this month's "Men In Black" and "Air Force One."

UNIVERSAL'S BACK TO THE BANK

Universal Studios Inc. recently sealed a $1.1 billion, biggest-deal-of-its-kind, three-year film financing agreement with Citibank (Citicorp Securities), the very financial institution that structured a similar $1 billion deal last year with 20th Century Fox. The money will go to financing 12-20 films per year (up to 60 films overall). Since the financing facility will be an "off-balance sheet" for Universal, the debt won't show up on parent company Seagram Co. Ltd.'s balance sheet.

Universal is just one of many major studios looking for ways to pay for the high cost of filmmaking without having to delve into the pockets of its parent company. The off-balance-sheet financing uses the anticipated value of the future films, packaged together, as a kind of bond or stock offering. The bank(s) or investors buy into units of the entire group of films rather than any one film. This way the studio doesn't have to go to the parent company but still gets to make movies, and the investors share in the film's profits but don't need to put all their eggs in one film basket. The off-balance-sheet financing is becoming a popular strategy that many studios are looking into for possible financing. Time Warner Inc. may line up a similar deal with Chase Securities to provide funds to its New Line Cinema.

IS POPCORN INCLUDED?—MOVIE THEATRE ADMISSIONS RISE TO $9

They say if it happens in New York, it's only a matter of time before it happens everywhere else in the country. If that's true, then moviegoers across the U.S. will be saddened to hear the price of an evening at the movies is on its way up. The Sony Lincoln Square multiplex in New York City recently upped their prices to an all-time high of nine dollars per ticket, a cost that is more than twice the national average for a trip to the silver screen.

Of course, New York is still better off than Japan, where a movie ticket goes for the equivalant of $15, but for American exhibitors three questions come to mind: Is it a sign of times to come? How much of that nine smackers do the exhibitors get to keep? And, most importantly, for that price, who can afford a night at the movies? But not all is lost—while New Yorkers may have to shell out the big bucks for their trip to "The Lost World," the price for a movie ticket in America still averages out to a mere $4.41.

EXHIBITION PIONEER PASSES AWAY

James Edwards Sr. dies at age 90

James Edwards Sr., founder and chairman of the nation's 13th-largest theatre chain, passed away at his Newport Beach, Calif. home on April 26, 1997, at the age of 90. Emblematic of the dynamic personality that characterized his career, he was launching a boat into the channel water behind his Newport Island home when he was felled by a heart attack.

It all began in 1930. With America in the Depression, Edwards reopened a bankrupt moviehouse, the Monterey in Monterey Park, a town in which he resided near Los Angeles. "I paid 20 percent of the gross for the lease, which was pretty stiff," he recalled to **BOXOFFICE** for our Edwards 65th anniversary story (Nov. 1995 issue). Always an innovator, Edwards set an audience conduct code ("We had a choice to make: keep the kids, or make the theatre a place that families would enjoy") and built a cry room for mothers and infants. The circuit grew; by year-end 1996, Edwards Theatres Circuit—now based in Newport Beach—had 427 screens at 90 sites, with a year-end 1998 forecast for 750 screens. "Maybe it was just plain stubbornness" is how Edwards explained his success. "When [my wife] Bernice and I didn't even have money to buy food, we kept hanging on. We both felt the movies were just the greatest source of entertainment."



FAMILY BUSINESS: *Son James III and James Edwards Sr. outside an Edwards cinema.*

Born November 23, 1906, in downtown L.A.'s Boyle Heights section, Edwards was raised in the San Gabriel Valley, attended Alhambra High and was running his first theatre at age 23. His family was always a key component in the Edwards equation. Today, four generations of Edwards are involved in the business. Bernice, his wife of 64 years, was his partner at home and at work, and his children now head the company. Son James Edwards III is president and chief operating officer; daughter Joan Edwards Randolph is senior executive vice president and chief financial officer; another daughter, Carole Ann Ruoff, is assistant treasurer; grandson Don Barton is vice president and general sales manager; and great-grandson Brian Barton checks theatre operations.

"This is a family business," says Marcella Sheldon, James Edwards Sr.'s secretary almost from day one. (Sheldon joined the company in 1932; she describes that time this way: "I was the only employee he had." The company now has 2,400 staffers.) "He has established a strong foundation that will live on."

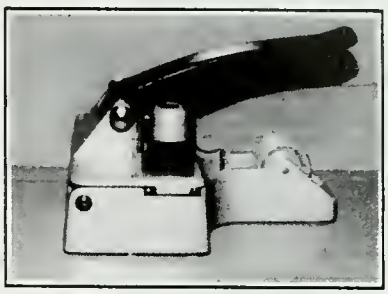
Edwards created his chain based on a philosophy of making people happy and having fun doing it. "He stood at the door and greeted people when they came in, and he asked them on the way out how they'd liked the picture," Sheldon says. But he was also a savvy businessman. In a move predating the modern multiplex era, Edwards put two screens into a single theatre in Alhambra in 1939. "He had a little storeroom there," Sheldon recalls, and after its transformation the Alhambra became a "Dual Theatre." At the Edwards Theatre in Costa Mesa, Calif. in the early 1960s, he was the first operator to show first-run films in Orange County, L.A. County's southerly neighbor.

His belief that state-of-the-art technology of the day enhances the moviegoing experience began with his first moviehouse, which touted the "latest Western Electric sound equipment" in its opening notice. That approach has continued into the 1990s, with Edwards opening the West Coast's first IMAX 3-D/PSE theatre. Having entered an expansion mode, the circuit also now installs digital sound, loveseat and high-back chairs, and stadium seating in its new sites. But attention to Hollywood glamor hasn't been forgotten: Edwards favored the use of Golden Age stylings for entrances and lobbies, giant neon marquees, and a substantial use of marble and brass throughout interiors. In that tradition, son James told **BOXOFFICE** in a March 1996 Exhibition Profile: "The excitement, I believe, really begins out on the sidewalk with the beautiful signage."

Although Edwards Sr. retired after suffering a heart attack in the 1950s, he rejoined the business within two years and remained active in day-to-day operations until his death. This year, he opened the Edwards Ontario 22, a much-discussed development within the industry given the presence across the street of an AMC 30-plex. The company has also announced plans for another 18 megaplexes, each featuring from 12 to 26 screens. Although most of its current sites are in Orange County, the chain has locations spanning from San Luis Obispo in Central California to San Diego on the Mexican border. The company this year will debut its first non-California site, a 21-screener in Boise, Idaho, where Edwards often vacationed.

Insight into the man Edwards was comes in a postscript he wrote for the souvenir program for the gala opening of the Garvey Theatre in Garvey, Calif. on March 27, 1937 (with a double bill of Gary Cooper's "The Plainsman" and Clark Gable's "Love on the Run"). Signed by Edwards, it reads in full: "When I finished dictating the foregoing contents of this Booklet to my Secretary preparatory for the printer, she said, 'Why don't you add a personal word, Mr. Edwards?' Here it is: 'The first job I had after getting through school was for Barker Brothers. The personnel manager promised me that if I worked hard, applied myself and was loyal I would get a promotion. I worked hard, applied myself to my job and was loyal to the store for five days; as I hadn't received my promised promotion, I quit. When I was getting my five-day check form the cashier, I recall the personnel manager referring to me as "that Jerk." I've never forgotten that; if he had called me a "Jirp," I wouldn't have minded; in fact, I would have been pleased. A Jirp is one who has: Judgment, Initiative, Responsibility, Personality. I hope all my Managers are Jirps.'"

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EXHIBITION BRIEFINGS

CINEMARK'S FIRST BRAZIL SITE

Cinemark International, a subsidiary of Cinemark USA Inc., opened its first Brazilian multiplex. The Cinemark 12 Shopping Colinas in Sao Jose dos Campos opened its doors in May. Cinemark plans to build a total of 170 screens in 15 theatres in Brazil by the end of 1998. Newly announced are the Cinemark 11 Tambore in Sao Paulo; the Maxi Shopping 10 in Jundiai; the Novo Shopping 15 in Ribeirao Preto; the Shopping Uberlandia 10 in Uberlandia; and the Central Plaza 15 in Sao Paulo. In the Sao Paulo Metropolitan area, Cinemark is also building the SP Market 11; the Santo Andre ABC Plaza 10; the Interlagos 10; the Tatuape 8; the Aricanduva Shopping Leste 14; the Eldorado Jardins 5; and the Panamby 16; and in Rio de Janeiro, the Barra da Tijuca 12. Several of these theatres will have stadium seating, which will be a first for Brazil.

EDWARDS TO BUILD 18 NEW MEGAPLEXES

Edwards Theatres Circuit Inc., which opened three new megaplexes in April, has unveiled plans for construction to begin on 18 new megaplexes in Southern California within the next 12 months. Each will offer DTS, Dolby and SDDS sound systems; high-back chairs; stadium-style seating; and loveseats. Edwards currently operates 560 screens in 89 SoCal locations. The chain is projected to have 750 screens by the end of 1998.

MARCUS EXPANDS GROWTH PLAN

Milwaukee-based Marcus Theatres plans to accelerate its growth plan in Wisconsin, Illinois and Michigan. "Two years ago we announced plans to double the size of our circuit from 200 to 400 screens by the year 2000," says Bruce J. Olson, president of Marcus Theatres. "After a 32 percent expansion in our screen count last year, which was far and away the largest in company history and the second highest growth rate among the top 40 theatre circuits in the country, we're confidently raising our goal for the year 2000 to 500 screens." The initial goal of 400 is anticipated to be met by the end of 1998. Marcus currently operates 297 screens in Wisconsin and Illinois, and has begun retrofitting existing theatres with stadium seating.

AMC COLONIZES IN TEXAS

AMC will build a 24-screen, 5,000-seat megaplex, due to open in December, at the First Colony Mall in Sugar Land, Texas. Its "enhanced moviegoing environment" will offer stadium-style seating with 46-inch spacing between rows; loveseats with extra-wide retractable cushion cupholders; and AMC's exclusive High Impact Theater Systems (HITS), including Torus compound curved wall-to-wall screens and SDDS sound systems.

SHOWMANDISER PROMOTION OF THE MONTH



Extraterrestrial personages were out in 'force' to promote the re-release of "Star Wars" at Cortland, N.Y.'s Plaza Theatres. Plaza owner Sam Mitchell of SJM Entertainment and manager Dave Wayman convinced local businessmen Bill Cleary and Joe Balas to dress up as Darth Vader and the large-craniumed creature pictured above, respectively, to celebrate the intergalactic festivities. The Force was truly with the Plaza on opening night, when the theatre sold out every single showing of the sci-fi classic.

REGAL'S NET INCOME INCREASES 78 PERCENT

Regal Cinemas president and chief executive officer Michael Campbell announced that the company's net income increased 78 percent for the quarter ending April 3, 1997, with total revenues increasing 40.6 percent. "Regal had an outstanding start to 1997, producing financial results for the first quarter than exceed expectations," says Campbell. "In addition to the continued substantial expansion of screens in operation and increased operating efficiencies, our results benefitted from a strong slate of films, which generated record first quarter results for the industry." Campbell adds that Regal's screen count grew 26.6 percent to 1,325 screens at 159 locations from 1,047 in 135 locations at the same time last year.

Regal recently announced several new upcoming builds, including a 22-plex in Warrington, Pa.; a 16-plex in Willoughby, Ohio; a 12-plex in Hampton, Va.; an 18-plex in Henrietta, N.Y.; and an 8-plex in Morganville, N.J.

LOEWS OPENS 18-PLEX IN STAFFORD, TEXAS

Loews Theatres (formerly Sony) has opened an all-stadium seating 18-plex, the Loews Fountains Theatre, in Stafford, Texas. Referred to by Loews as a "modern-day movie palace," the Loews Fountain combines the grandeur of "golden era" moviehouses with the latest in technologies and amenities. The theatre showcases the Loews "Star" design, featuring a huge art deco-styled lobby with a dramatic arched glass atrium ceiling. Each auditorium will range from 200 to 700 seats, with total seating for 4,800. The Fountain will anchor Stafford's Fountains On The Lake retail center, located on Fountain Lake Drive.

CINEPLEX BREAKS GROUND ON CHICAGO PLEXES

Toronto-based Cineplex Odeon and its Chicago-based development Inner City Entertainment broke ground on the first of three new multiplexes to be located in Chicago's inner-city communities. The theatres mark the continuation of Cineplex's plans to build state-of-the-art complexes in urban areas across the United States. "[We're making] a pledge to not only bring entertainment to the community, but also to provide employment for its residents," says Allen Karp, president and CEO of Cineplex. Over 400 permanent and part-time jobs will be available through the three developments. All three sites will open in late November.

CENTURY BITES INTO ORANGE MARKET

Century Theatres, headquartered in San Francisco, has broken ground in on its Stadium Promenade 25 in Orange, Calif. The multiplex will anchor a 179,000-square-foot retail entertainment center developed by Syufy Enterprises (Century's parent company). The theatre will be all-stadium seating, with the latest in sound and presentation technologies. Its architectural character is described as being reminiscent of the art deco style of the '30s and '40s, with dramatic lighting and tall vertical palm trees gracing the facade. The Stadium Promenade is slated for a Thanksgiving opening.

GOODRICH: BAY CITY ROLLERS

Goodrich Quality Theaters Inc., which operates 136 screens in Michigan, Indiana and Illinois, will add two screens to the Bay City 6 Theatre located in Grand Rapids, Mich.'s Bay City Mall. According to Carrie Suntken, Goodrich's marketing manager, the theatre is being expanded due to an increasing demand for more first-run films. "With the expansion, we will bring an even greater opportunity for the Bay City area to see hit films at a convenient location," says Suntken. The Bay City 8 is scheduled to re-open this fall. Other Goodrich theatres currently being built include the Kalamazoo 10 in Oshtemo, Mich.; the Portage 9 in Portage, Ind.; and the Kendall 10 in Oswego, Ill.

MUVICO GOES TO TOWN WITH RENOVATIONS

Muvico Town Center, located in Boca Raton, Fla., has re-opened after undergoing major renovations. The changes include a brand new facade, lobby, concessions stand, state-of-the-art boxoffice, and new restrooms. The re-opening weekend celebrations included live music in the lobby and face painting and balloon art for kids. Also recently renovated was Muvico's Hialeah 14, which received a new art deco facade, as well as upgrades throughout the lobby area. Ft. Lauderdale-based Muvico has 61 screens throughout Florida, with 117 screens being built in the Southeastern United States, the Caribbean and South America.

ONE BILLION PEOPLE DISCOVER "HIDDEN CITY"

An estimated one billion people will see "Hidden City," a two-minute trailer that its producers hope will promote awareness and inspire action to protect the world's coral reefs. The trailer premiered at the AMC Century 14 in Los Angeles, and will be shown on more than 5,000 screens in the U.S. and Canada. The trailer was produced by Earth Communications Office (ECO), a non-profit coalition of organizations and individuals within the entertainment industry working together to promote environmental awareness and responsible action. Kodak was one of ECO's initial sponsors in 1991 when they created their first environmental awareness trailer, "Wonderful World," and since then Kodak has donated all of the film each year to produce thousands of prints.

SHOWMINDER

Remember to save the following dates: **Cinema Expo,** June 29-July 2, RAI, Amsterdam. Call 212-246-6460...**Mid-Atlantic NATO Seminar-Reunion,** July 10-11, Harbor Court Hotel, Baltimore, Md. Call (757) 722-5275...**Australian Movie Convention,** Aug. 13-16, Royal Pines Resort, Gold Coast, Australia. Call 011-617-33-56-5671... **ShowSouth,** Aug. 19-20, Callaway Gardens and Resort, Pine Mountain, Ga. Call (770) 455-8988... **ShowEast,** Oct. 20-23, Trump Taj Mahal, Atlantic City, N.J. Call 212-246-6460... **CineAsia,** Dec. 3-5, Singapore International Convention and Exhibition Centre. Call 212-246-6460.

Q&A: DREAMWORKS DATABASE ANALYZES PLAY PATTERNS

With entertainment industry moguls Steven Spielberg, Jeffrey Katzenberg and David Geffen at the helm, it's no wonder that DreamWorks is already known for being a studio that pushes the envelope, even before it's released its first film (which will be "The Peacemaker" this September). Mark Christiansen, who heads up DreamWorks' distribution operations, tells* Boxoffice *about the company's latest innovation: a computer program that can instantly analyze how a genre of film performs in a given region, state, city or theatre.



Boxoffice: Describe the electronic delivery system that you're involved with pertaining to boxoffice figures.

MARK CHRISTIANSEN: We do receive electronic boxoffice feeds—everyone does, of their own numbers, from EDI. It's much easier to sort through the data when it's on a computer as opposed to when it's on a couple hundred pages of paper. The electronic delivery of the figures is not a new technology. We have put in some new systems which use that electronic feed much more than anyone's used before.

Boxoffice: Can you tell me about the system?

CHRISTIANSEN: It's a system [that DreamWorks designed] which allows the salespeople to use historical data to see how theatres play certain types of films. So you can look up and see how a particular theatre plays action films, or how they play animated films, so that you can make a decision as to which theatre you might want to play on a particular kind of film you have for sale.

Boxoffice: Regarding the small mom-and-pop theatres that may not have great clout or draw, do you make any provisions for them?

CHRISTIANSEN: This [program] does show what the theatre can do dollar-wise, but we don't look at it that way on a particular genre. It shows how a theatre performs percentage-wise. So whether we're looking at a very high-grossing theatre or a very low-grossing theatre, it will still show whether that theatre tends to over-perform [or under-perform] for its own level on a particular genre. So if it's a guy who generally grosses $1,000 a week, but when he plays animated films, he grosses $2,000 a week, it'll show that this guy's over-performing on animated film by 100 percent.

Boxoffice: Is this an example of how DreamWorks plans to re-invent industry standards?

CHRISTIANSEN: [Laughs] I don't think we're trying to re-invent industry standards. Historically, the distribution companies all had local branches, and in each local branch, the local branch manager knew about the theatres. He'd been to the theatres, he knew the people who owned the theatres, he—he or she—knew how that particular theatre might perform on a given product. Now, we only have two offices. We have New York and Los Angeles. And we may not have anyone in this office who's ever been to Billings, Montana. So what we're trying to do is to find a way to get an insight into markets that we don't [otherwise] have, because we don't have someone who's physically in that area to go see that theatre. We're trying to give ourselves more information about a market, so that we can target our movies to the theatres that it makes the most sense for them to play. And this is something that's good for both the distributor and the exhibitor. It certainly doesn't make sense for an exhibitor to play films that don't tend to perform well in their theatre. And conversely, it doesn't help us to place our film into a theatre that will under-perform on a product if there's another theatre available that tends to over-perform on the product.

Boxoffice: What are some of the other innovations that you're involved with?

CHRISTIANSEN: DreamWorks was envisioned from the very beginning as a company that would make maximum use of all new technologies, and that goes from production to distribution to accounting—anything you want to look at within DreamWorks. We're definitely trying to use the latest technology to push forward what's currently being done.

Boxoffice: What are some other things DreamWorks does differently as a studio?

CHRISTIANSEN: There's a genuine teamwork philosophy at DreamWorks, and I would say that the boundaries between departments are less defined at DreamWorks than they are at some other companies.

Boxoffice: There aren't official job titles at DreamWorks. What is that meant to convey?

CHRISTIANSEN: What it's meant to convey is that anyone within this company can have something to say, and it shouldn't matter what their rank is within the company. That shouldn't dictate how much weight we give to a particular idea. Where I've seen that really come into play is when you're in a meeting, anyone at that meeting can put an idea out on the table, and since they are not a senior vice president or a director or a manager—they don't have a title—no one says, "Well, I think we should really pay attention to that, because that person has a high rank," or "That person is an assistant—we don't care what they have to say."

Boxoffice: And it's not confusing?

CHRISTIANSEN: No, I don't think it's confusing at all. The way that we say what jobs we have is that we define what we do. So I don't have a title, but when anyone asks me what I do, I say I'm the head of operations for distribution.

Boxoffice: What would you say is your main focus at present?

CHRISTIANSEN: We're trying to put together a good system to support the sales department in their efforts to get the DreamWorks films out into the market.—***Christine James***

INTERNATIONAL NEWS BRIEFS

EUROVIEWS

European News Notes *by Melissa Morrison*

LEAD STORY: ITALY'S QUALITY QUOTAS

ROME—Two major Italian movie funders, Mediaset and RAI, have announced plans to up their respective budgets for film production. Mediaset, the media group of business kingpin (and former Italian Prime Minister) Silvio Berlusconi, said that it will dedicate 10 percent of its advertising revenues to boosting its own film and TV production. The announcement by one of Italy's most powerful private media enterprises is welcome news in a country where film production is suffering from the withdrawal of traditional state subsidies. In 1995, production fell to a postwar low of 75 films, totaling investments worth $153.5 million. Mediaset's contribution is expected to total $150 million annually, about two-fifths of which would go to cinema productions. The announcement could pave the way for similar commitments from the private sector, which is regarded as the Italian industry's savior, and was welcomed by the country's deputy prime minister, Walter Veltroni. Veltroni is regarded as a cinema supporter who wants to boost private investment with tax breaks as a replacement for government subsidies. Mediaset's announcement comes as the Italian Parliament considers a law that would require national TV networks to allot 30 percent of their production and acquisition budgets for European movies and programs. Mediaset's Managing Director Carlo Bernasconi criticized government-imposed quotas, saying they would drive down the quality of productions. State broadcaster RAI announced a few weeks later that it would increase its budget for the production of films and TV programs, tipping the balance of its resources away from the acquisition of outside productions. A spokesman said the broadcaster would do so with the intention of replacing American fare with Italian and European programs. Like Mediaset's proclamation, RAI's announcement was also seen as an attempt by a media company to avoid government controls by setting its own guidelines.

POLYGRAM GRABS LOAN, CARLTON REORGANIZES

CANNES—There were deals aplenty at the recent Cannes Film Festival as it's considered *the* place for companies to announce their latest goings-on. In an agreement that marks a first for the European Investment Bank (EIB), PolyGram has been granted an $80 million loan to partially finance films produced under the PolyGram Filmed Entertainment label. According to EIB's statement, the financed films will be "targeted to the general-interest and family entertainment market" and will be lensed primarily in the European Union. It is the first loan of its kind to the film industry. Brian Unwin, EIB president, said the aid was to promote Europe's entertainment industry and "enhance its international competitiveness." PolyGram recently scored big with the Oscar-winning "Fargo." Upcoming titles include "Welcome to Sarajevo" and the next Coen brothers' film, "The Big Lebowski."

Meanwhile, Carlton Film Distributors (CFD), which was formerly Rank Film Distributors (RFD) before Carlton Communications paid out $107 million for the distribution arm, cut back a third of its staff—some 20 jobs off the roster. George Helyer, CFD's new managing director, who used to be the number two man at RFD, said he was happy with the changes. Insiders say Carlton Communications is now looking to acquire Rank's Pinewood Studios.

GROWTH SPURTS

BUDAPEST—Cinema-expansion news from opposite sides of the continent: Hungary's lead as the former East Bloc country with the most multiplexes widens with the announcement that major distributor/exhibitor Budapest Film plans two more like its pioneering Corvin cinema. A new, private offshoot of the formerly state-owned company has been set up to attract foreign investment to finance the new complexes. Budapest Film invested $3.6 million into the Corvin last September, converting an existing theatre from 1,100 seats to 1,500 and outfitting it with six screens and Dolby sound. As a result, admissions in the Hungarian capital have risen 25 percent since 1995 to 125,000. The Corvin was the first of a string of multiplexes, including one by Intercom (the country's largest distributor), Australia's Village Roadshow and Canada's Cineplex Odeon. The latter two companies have announced plans to build additional cinemas in the country. (Budapest Film itself will undergo a transformation: In January, its distribution wing, which is municipally owned, will become a wholly private company.)

Over in London, Virgin Cinemas has announced it will accelerate its expansion plans in 1997, devoting $54.9 million to fixing up and building new theatres, rather than the $31 million it had originally intended to spend. The change was inspired by an especially good 1996, in which the company reported a 90 percent increase in operating profits, for a total of $21.5 million. Virgin plans to build 20 new multiplexes by 2000.

CLEAN CARS AND DIRTY DEALINGS

ST. PETERSBURG—Victor Sergeyev, the new head of renowned Russian studio Lenfilm, is trying to scrub up business by launching (of all things) a chain of car washes, while stunning the country with his film about government corruption. The car-wash business is meant to restore income to the studio, which hit its financial and creative nadir last year, producing a single film. State funding has been slashed, and Lenfilm's production services for foreign productions (the bread-and-butter of post-communist studios) have been usurped by such foreign competitors as the Czech Republic's Barrandov Studios. Lenfilm will build 20 car-wash machines on St. Petersburg's outskirts, and should attract a lot of business since the city's governor announced that driving a dirty car within the city would now be against the law. The State Auto

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Inspectorate, GAI, will receive a portion of the profits in return for its officers directing dirty cars to the machines. The studio hopes to earn $2 million annually—same as its current budget—from the side business, for which it took out a $3 million loan. Some would argue that Russia's government should devote itself to cleaning up its politicians rather than its cars. Sergeyev's just-released film "Schizophrenia" draws a startlingly bleak picture of the new Russia with its story of a former KGB officer who carries out hits on prominent figures. The film's veracity has been ensured by its main consultant, Alexander Korzhakov, himself a former KGB officer as well as President Boris Yeltsin's former bodyguard. The plot is reportedly based on a true account by a Russian mafia godfather.

SAVED BY THE BELL

MADRID—Spain is another European country grappling with the threat of reduced government funding for film productions. Most recently, the Culture Ministry narrowed the subsidies available to movies by requiring that a film generate at least $350,000 in boxoffice receipts before it can qualify for a subsidy, up 67 percent from the former requirement. The plan also lowers the ceiling for subsidies, which can compose no more than one-third of a film's budget, from $1.4 million to a little over $1 million.

Some good news, however: The country's telecom behemoth, Telefonica, is considering investing in local productions as a way of smoothing the film sectors' opposition to the perceived competition of digital TV, which should be launched in Spain by the summer. Telefonica, which is a semi-public company, has had discussions with producer Andres Vincente Gomez's Lola Films, as well as other companies. Telefonica's representative in the talks is producer Pedro Perez, a former head of the Spanish producers federation, FAPAE. According to Telefonica, the telecom would create a financing and sales operation similar to that operated by the media group Prisa. And on the wholly private end of the spectrum, at least one production and financing company, Sogetel, has pumped up its commitment to films. So far this year, Sogetel has co-production plans with six different entities, as well as a commitment from broadcaster Tele 5 to fund three of its films in the next two years.

SHORT TAKE

HAMBURG—Ten European countries will band together to promote their films around Europe, an example of lightweights and middleweights teaming up to battle a champion heavyweight—America. Film export federations from the United Kingdom, Austria, Germany, France, Switzerland, the Flanders half of Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, and Italy have established the European Film Promotion. The organization will be based in Hamburg and its board will consist of president Claudia Landsberger of Holland Film, Bruno Barthemy of Unifrance, and Christian Dorsch of the German Export Union. The union seeks to promote members' films collectively at international festivals.

Q&A: ANICA'S ALBERTO FIORETTI ON ITALIAN CINEMA

Italy's ANICA (National Association for the Cinematography and Audiovisual Industry) has a challenge tougher than a two-day-old biscotti ahead of it. The trade association for movie producers and distributors, as well as others in the audiovisual industry, is facing one of the bleakest periods for Italian cinema. Production in 1995 reached a postwar low of 75 films. Although that number improved by 24 films in 1996, domestic films got only 20 percent of Italy's market. Abroad, the figures are even worse. Italian exports are below 2 percent elsewhere in Europe and even lower in the United States, according to a 1996 study. The slashing of government funds for promotion abroad is one reason. Others say that, except for the occasional "Il Postino," the Italian industry hasn't returned to the days when lira rained down upon the glory of Federico Fellini and Michelangelo Antonioni. Alberto Fioretti, ANICA's foreign-department representative, discusses what his organization intends to do about it.

BOXOFFICE: How is ANICA dealing with Italian cinema's low period?

ALBERTO FIORETTI: ANICA works with the government department for movies and discusses from the point of view of the producer how to improve the new low. As you know, we have some problems selling Italian films abroad, because, as everywhere, the Americans are powerful in distribution. So we try to improve distribution abroad. Our minister now is not the minister for money, he's the minister for the culture, Mr. (Walter) Veltroni, and he's starting a new formula for promoting Italian film abroad. That's why we are now discussing a joint promotion between Italy and France. That could be a good idea, because in some countries if you go alone, you are lost.

That's why we are now discussing a joint promotion between Italy and France. That could be a good idea, because in some countries if you go alone, you are lost.

BOXOFFICE: You say the American distribution machine is the reason Italian films have trouble with distribution abroad?

FIORETTI: They make a lot of good pictures, and the people are used to the American style. So every country—like France, like us, like Germany—finds some difficulties in promoting and distributing film in foreign countries. Even in markets where we're usually successful, like South America [because of similarities in language], we have some problems now, because even these countries are used to American films.

BOXOFFICE: How else do you plan to improve distribution abroad?

FIORETTI: We still continue to attend all the festivals—Berlin, Cannes, Moscow—and make a couple of Italian promotions. Maybe we have to use more media promotion, to do something in television, to improve the forum for promotion.

BOXOFFICE: Italian film has a good reputation in the United States. What caused the decline of popularity of Italian films in the United States and elsewhere?

FIORETTI: I read something in the States where they say there is no more Fellini. But that's not true. The problem is to educate the audience to go to see an Italian film. Maybe there is a chance, because the people are growing tired of the usual American film with the violence. I don't say that all the American pictures are like that, because many are very good, but the people now maybe would like to go see more European film. That's important also for the country identity, the cultural identity.

BOXOFFICE: How would you characterize Italian cinema right now?

FIORETTI: From the cultural point of view, it is good. It starts again in a new direction. The number of films is down from before. Before we made 100, 150 features. Now we are making 65 or 70 features. So the quantity is down, but the quality is good. The last success is "Il Ciclone" [directed by Leonardo Pieraccioni], which made probably 50 billion lira in our state.

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INTERNATIONAL NEWS BRIEFS

PACIFIC OVERTURES

NOTES FROM THE PACIFIC RIM *by Susan Lambert*

LEAD STORY: FUNDING AND OTHER (NARROWLY AVOIDED) CATASTROPHES

SYDNEY—The Australian film industry breathed a collective sigh of relief when the new federal budget was unveiled in May and, despite rumors of impending cuts, the funding for film held strong. The budget for the 1997-1998 fiscal year allocates AU$115 million ($89.7 million) for the film and television production industry which is under current subsidy levels of AU$140 million (US$109 million), but the majority of the cuts affect television and not film subsidies. Concern over potential budget cuts was so high that the Australian film industry was fighting back well before the budget was due. A group of Australia's key industry leaders and top talent wrote a letter to Prime Minister John Howard in April to lobby in support of funding for the film industry. Signatories to the letter included notable actors, actresses, producers and directors as well as representatives from the directors, writers, editors, composers and cinematography guilds. Then a delegation, which included director Gillian Armstrong, actress Judy Davis and producer Jan Chapman, among others, met with Sen. Richard Alston, federal arts minister, to lobby for support of the industry.

The lobbying seemed to do its job. Australia's main funding agency, Film Finance Corp., will maintain a budget of AU$48 million (US$37.4 million) until 2001. Outgoing FFC chief executive John Morris was pleased with the stability four years of committed funding would bring. The Australian Film Commission will receive AU$11.5 million and Film Australia, a documentary producer, will receive a guaranteed AU$5 million per year until 1999, when the government hopes to privatize the organization.

Meanwhile, exhibition in the land down under is also holding strong. Village Roadshow upgraded its popular Frankston, Victoria fourplex to an eight-screen theatre for a cost of AU$6 million (US$4.7 million). Competitor Hoyts Cinemas opened an eight-screen complex in Booragoon, near Perth, on June 17, and announced a 12-screen (to be expanded to 16 screens) build in Wetherill Park (the western district of Sydney), which Hoyts expects to open in July of 1998.

Boxoffice revenues seem to be on the rise, at least in China's two largest markets: Shanghai reported $31 million in boxoffice revenues last year, and Beijing reported receipts totalling $14 million. And the domestic film industry has received a great shot in the arm with the success of "Days Without the Hero," a drama about a martyred soldier, which earned record boxoffice (4.4 million yuan/US$530,000) for a domestic film.

Meanwhile, Shanghai-based consortium Smile—a partnership with local Chinese investors, Kuala Lumpur-based South Malaysian Industries and UCI—opened its first mulitplex in Chuongquing. The five-screen, 1,218-seat, state-of-the-art complex premiered with "Dante's Peak" and features a Showscan Dynamic Motion Simulator. And this month, the venture expects to open a six-screen, 1,500 seat cinema in Wuhan. Next up will be the refurbishing of a Huxi entertainment center in Shanghai.

MOVIES R US

TOKYO—Businessman Den Fujita (chairman of toy retailer Toys R Us Japan) has teamed up with United Cinemas International (UCI—the Paramount/Universal international joint venture) in a partnership to develop and operate multiplex theatres in Japan. The first project is scheduled to open next February in Sapporo, Japan's northernmost major city. The 12-screen, 2,987-seat Sapporo Factory Cinema will be built around an existing screen that was part of an IMAX theatre. UCI and Fujita (who also holds a 50 percent stake in Blockbuster Japan's video store chain and 2,000 Japanese McDonald's franchises) are reportedly each investing $2 billion yen ($16.7 million). The Fujita/UCI venture hopes to develop 20 multiplexes with 200 screens in Japan over the next five years.

Separate from the Fujita deal, UCI (one of four foreign multiplex companies operating in Japan) has plans to open a 2,456-seat nine-plex in Kanazawa in September. They have had record attendance at Otsu in western Japan where they opened a multiplex last November. The boom of multiplex building in Japan is expected to boost the number of screens from approximately 1,800 to well over 2,000 by the year 2000.

CHINA MOVING INTO MODERN AGE

SHANGHAI—Jiangsu-based Yangtze Film Co. recently acquired rights for computer ticketing software from film importer China Film for 300,000 yuan (US$37,500). The move ushers theatres in China's Jiangsu province into the modern-day. The system will be installed in 50 theatres by the end of this month, with plans for 100 theatres to be outfitted by the end of 1997. The ticketing software will enable moviegoers to purchase tickets for shows at any of the networked theatres and allow accurate and timely boxoffice revenue figures—which is often difficult to come by in China where underreporting to avoid taxation is rampant.

HARLEY'S HIGH HOPES FOR NEW ZEALAND FILM

WELLINGTON—Ruth Harley, the new CEO of the New Zealand Film Commission, says New Zealand, which produced such filmmakers as Jane Campion ("The Piano"), Peter Jackson ("Heavenly Creatures") and Lee Tamahori ("Once Were Warriors"), should try to increase its film output to six titles per year with help from foreign investments of both money and market endorsements. The local film industry currently gets about US$6 million annually in public funding, which is divided up between usually three to four features. Since the breakaway successes of the early '90s, few New Zealand films have followed the critical and commercial results of "The Piano," Heavenly Creatures" and "Once Were Warriors." Harley, who was appointed to head New Zealand's chief funding agency in April, hopes that their two new films at Cannes can help turn that around: "The Ugly," a thriller about a serial killer by Scott Reynolds who just completed a second New Zealand feature, "Heaven" (Miramax is distributing in the United States), and a twisted twentysomthing comedy, "Topless Women Talk About Their Lives," by Harry Sinclair. What can also help the local filmmakers is the good news that New Zealand boxoffice is on the rise. For the first quarter of '97 (ending April 30), boxoffice results are reported at NZ$38.7 million (US$26.7 million) which is a 31 percent increase over the same period from last year. 1996 first quarter results were NZ$29.5 million (US$20 million).

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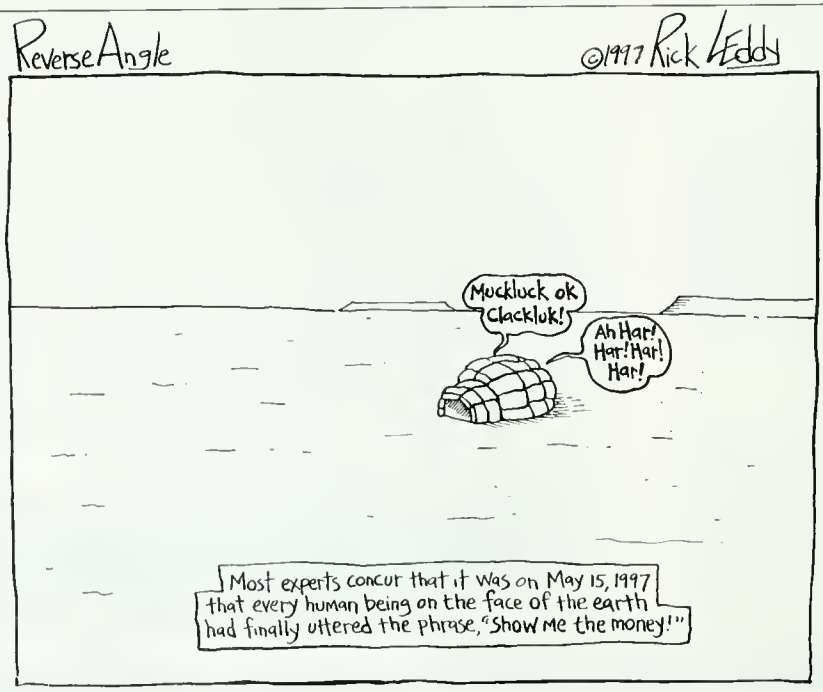
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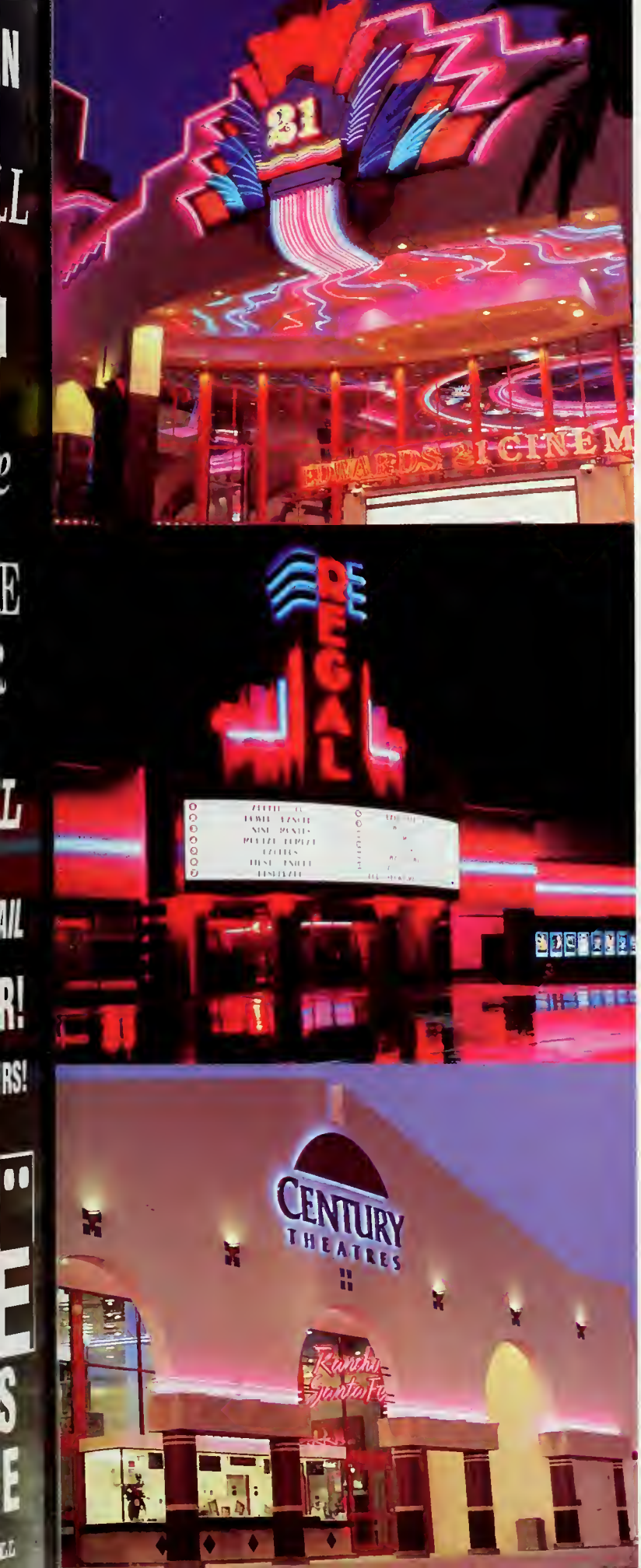
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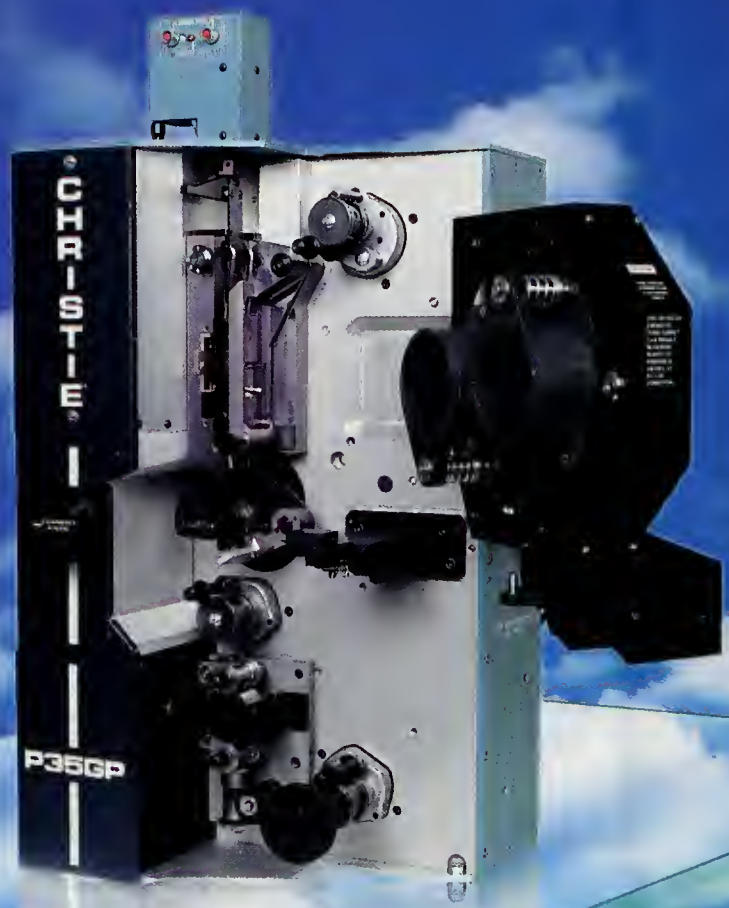


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A Special Word of GREETINGS



Last August, **BOXOFFICE** *announced the expansion of our regular international coverage via an issue dedicated to the Australian exhibition marketplace, arranged to coincide with the Australian Movie Convention. Reader interest in the Australian Movie Convention was significant enough to warrant elevating this event to annual status, and the folks we met at the Motion Picture Exhibitors Association of Queensland, which sponsors the AMC, have rapidly become good friends of all at this magazine.*

To help spread the word, we again have asked Richard Parton, president of the Motion Picture Exhibitors Association of Queensland, to say a few words to our readers. Mr. Parton graciously assented with the following message of greetings.

The Motion Picture Exhibitors Association of Queensland hosts the official Movie Convention in Australia again this year at the Royal Pines Resort on the Gold Coast. The Convention is attended by film executives from every state in Australia, who now consider this convention a "must attend" event, and it is pleasing to see delegates in ever-increasing numbers from New Zealand and the United States.

We look forward to our Convention providing a forum for new ideas and innovations, along with opportunities to view the product from all distribution companies, to hear leading film executives address our delegates in open forum discussions and, most importantly, to renew friendships and business relationships. The Australian Movie Convention remains the place where our business gets done, by the people who do it: the exhibitors, directors, producers, film distributors and stars.

The Convention is also a welcome venue for the companies who help make the movie experience special: The distributors and manufacturers of the cold beverages, fresh popcorn, comfortable seats, and sound equipment on display at our Trade Exhibition. As the Australian industry continues one of its most exciting eras, with cinema attendance growing, theatre construction booming and new technology making movies more of an "event" than ever, our Trade Show is a must for all delegates, no matter where their home market, who want a glimpse of the future of cinema presentation.

Our small association, formed some 52 years ago as an informal forum for exhibition and distribution, has matured. Today this association, with the enormous and mostly voluntary commitment of its membership, is responsible for a gathering of the motion picture industry once a year in Australia which is now truly going "global."

The Australian Movie Convention has grown from its first convention of 50 delegates to today where we anticipate many hundreds of delegates from within Australia and overseas. Recognition has been created by forming partnerships with industry publications in spreading the word. I sincerely thank **BOXOFFICE MAGAZINE** for its great contributions in assisting us in this regard.

The challenge for the hosts of the Australian Movie Convention is to bring every facet of our industry together in a meaningful way. Our agenda is to preview major film companies' product, discuss industry changes with leading film executives, visit the Trade Exhibition, salute Boxoffice Achievements in Australia, recognize Australian film and stars with our Annual Australian Star of the Year Award and, most importantly, to provide our delegates with a reason to return to the Convention annually.

We will make changes, some small, some big, but each is designed with to provide our delegates with an informative and fun convention.

As President, along with my Committee, I welcome everyone to this year's Convention and look forward to meeting not only our Australian delegates but hopefully new delegates from overseas. Our goal is a simple one: that once you attend our Convention on the Gold Coast of Australia, you will want to come back, again and again.

Sincerely,

R. J. Parton

Richard J. Parton
President,
Motion Picture Exhibitors
Association of Queensland

BOXOFFICE
AUGUST 1997, VOL. 133 NO. 8

UNQUOTE: *I don't know if Mel and I had the specific conversation, but it was probably thought: that one day we'd like to give something back to Australia.*—**BRUCE DAVEY**

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A BOXOFFICE *Twofer! Inside Australian exhibition and Australian Movie Convention coverage. PLUS: Our annual look at Independent distribution!*

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HOLLYWOOD UPDATES

Merger of the Month:



Susie Golin, head of exhibitor relations for Digital Theater Systems, and Tom Daugherty, director of engineering and maintenance for Mann Theatres, married April 19 in Lake Tahoe. The two met in November '95 at Mann's Janss Marketplace Theatre opening in Thousand Oaks, Calif. They ran into each other several more times at business functions, and began dating in July of '96. It was soon obvious that it was the sort of love match only found in the movies—or at least the movie business.

Miramax must be **"Scream"**-ingly happy to have reached an agreement with **Sony** over a title tug-of-war. Sony had claimed it controls rights to the title "Scream," based on the studio's little-seen 1995 sci-fi thriller "Screamers" (which grossed a mere $6 million domestically). And the MPAA agreed, ruling against Miramax for using the title on the Wes Craven-directed horror-thriller blockbuster, which has grossed more than $100 million to date. Miramax was going to have to pay a fine of $1,500 per day, per screen—an exorbitant $1.8 million a day. With "Scream 2" already in the works, titled "Scream Again," the franchise had even more at stake. Fortunately for Miramax, a settlement was struck between the two studios, though the terms were not revealed. Reportedly, it involved Miramax dropping a separate dispute with Sony.

The final cut of the Joe Eszterhas-scripted satire **"An Alan Smithee Film"** so dismayed director **Arthur Hiller** that he took his name off it, thereby making it, ironically enough, an Alan Smithee film. The movie, based on the Directors Guild's default credited pseudonym for filmmakers who withdraw from a project, is about a fictional director whose real name is Alan Smithee, and when he tries to take his name off an abominable film, he finds he can't due to the moniker mandate.

Producer **Jerry Bruckheimer** ("Con Air") has extended his production deal with **The Walt Disney Motion Picture Group** for an additional five years. Bruckheimer is currently in pre-production on the Bruce Willis starrer "Armageddon" for Disney's Touchstone. The film will be directed by Michael Bay, who has helmed two other Bruckheimer-produced actioners, "The Rock" and "Bad Boys."

"Con Air" helmer **Simon West** has formed **Wychwood Prods.**, and already has a first-look deal with **Propaganda Films. Jih Polhemus**, former director of development for the Dino De Laurentiis Co., has been named vice president of Wychwood, and is overseeing the development of the company's first project, the gothic thriller "Shelley's Garden," about a woman who is haunted by the spirit of her brother.

Michael Douglas' and **Steve Reuther's Douglas/Reuther,** the production company behind Paramount's "Face/Off" and "The Ghost and the Darkness," is negotiating a joint agreement with **Paramount** and **Universal.** This would allow both studios to share the financial risks, and presumably split Douglas/Reuther distribution rights domestically and internationally.

Chris O'Donnell, most recently seen as the Boy Wonder in **Warner Bros.'** "Batman and Robin," has announced two upcoming projects his Warner-based production company, **George Street Pictures,** is working on. The first is the romantic holiday comedy "The Flight Before Christmas," in which O'Donnell will star as a pilot who gets an ultimatum from his girlfriend on Christmas Eve. In a play on "A Christmas Carol," he's visited by three ghosts who give him glimpses into his relationships with women, past, present and future. The second film is a thriller involving the New York marathon called "A Day in November," in which O'Donnell will also star.

DreamWorks has emerged the victor in a mad dash among studios to sign **Cameron Crowe** to a multi-picture pact after the writer/director/producer's most recent effort, "Jerry Maguire," garnered blockbuster status and critical kudos aplenty. Crowe has signed a three-year, first-look deal with DreamWorks, and is currently writing a project that he will direct for the studio, but at press time, details were under wraps.

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HOLLYWOOD REPORT



DARTH VADER

A "Star" Is Reborn



SUPERMAN

"Super" Duper



GODZILLA

Oh, "God!" Book II

STAR WARS PREQUELS Casting has begun on the three prequels to George Lucas' sci-fi epic "Star Wars." Rumored to be titled "The Balance of the Force," "Rise of the Empire" and "Fall of the Jedi," the prequels will star Liam Neeson ("Michael Collins") as a new character, the Master Jedi Knight; Ewan McGregor ("Trainspotting") as young Obi-Wan Kenobi; eight-year old Jake Lloyd ("Jingle All the Way") as young Anakin Skywalker (destined to become Darth Vader), and Natalie Portman ("Mars Attacks!") as the future Mrs. Anakin Skywalker (and Luke and Leia's mother). Sir Alec Guinness (the original Obi-Wan) is expected to return, possibly as a narrator; Samuel L. Jackson, Harry Connick Jr. and Terence Stamp are also in talks to join up. Lucas wrote the script for the first of the films and will direct it when it begins shooting at Leavesden Studios in London this fall. The first film is scheduled for release in May 1999, with parts two and three slated to come out in 2001 and 2003. (Distribution is to be set)

"SUPERMAN" The legendary Man of Steel of comic book, TV and feature film fame will be incarnated once again on the bigscreen, this time with Nicolas Cage ("Con Air") donning the blue and red tights and cape ensemble. Jim Carrey—who battled another mythic superhero when he co-starred as Riddler in "Batman Forever"—is in talks to play villain Brainiac. (Chief nemesis Lex Luthor and love interest Lois Lane have yet to be cast.) Tim Burton, also familiar with the genre, having directed "Batman" and "Batman Returns," will helm. A 'Batty' cameo by Michael Keaton is rumored. (Warner)

"MIGHTY JOE YOUNG" Charlize Theron ("Devil's Advocate") will star in this remake of the 1949 classic about a girl from Africa who is persuaded to perform with her "pet" 15-foot-tall gorilla in Las Vegas in order to save him from the danger of poachers. The substantial simian subsequently goes on a rampage through Los Angeles. Bill Paxton ("Twister") will play a zoologist who helps the girl try to save the massive monkey. David Paymer ("Quiz Show"), Regina King ("Jerry Maguire") and Naveen Andrews ("The English Patient") will also star, and Ron Underwood ("Speechless") will helm. The film is planned for a Memorial Day 1998 release. (Buena Vista)

"GODZILLA" The duo behind the special-effects laden megablockbuster "Independence Day," writer/director Roland Emmerich and writer/producer Dean Devlin, will re-team in this remake of the famed monster movie about a colossal rampaging reptile. Matthew Broderick ("Addicted to Love") stars as a scientist, and Maria Pitillo ("Dear God") plays his girlfriend, who's an aspiring TV reporter. Jean Reno ("For Roseanna"), Hank Azaria ("The Birdcage") and Harry Shearer ("This Is Spinal Tap") also star. (TriStar)

"JACKIE BROWN" Returning to the helm for the first time since "Pulp Fiction" (not counting his "Four Rooms" segment), Quentin Tarantino once again forays into the crime comedy genre with his adaptation of the Elmore Leonard novel "Rum Punch." '70s blaxploitation star Pam Grier ("Scream, Blacula, Scream!") will play a flight attendant who teams up with a burned-out bail bondsman (Robert Forster of the '70s TV show "Banyon") to double-cross a band of arms dealers, headed by Samuel L. Jackson ("A Time To Kill"). Robert De Niro ("Sleepers") will play Jackson's dim-witted sidekick. Michael Keaton is also in talks to join the cast. (Miramax)

"RUSH HOUR" In this action-comedy, when the Chinese ambassador's daughter is kidnapped, an FBI agent (Chris Tucker, "The Fifth Element") is ordered to keep the ambassador's security chief (Jackie Chan, "First Strike") from trying to assist in the investigation. Brett Ratner ("Money Talks") directs. (New Line)

"MIDNIGHT IN THE GARDEN OF GOOD AND EVIL" Clint Eastwood, who last helmed and starred in "Absolute Power," will go behind the camera again for this adaptation of the John Berendt novel about a murder in Savannah, Georgia. John Cusack ("Con Air") will play a journalist whose investigations lead him to a charismatic antique dealer ("L.A. Confidential's" Kevin Spacey), a local hustler (Jude Law, "Gattaca"), and a beautiful, free-spirited girl (Clint's daughter, Alison Eastwood, who appeared in "Absolute Power"). (Warner)

"MEET...THE DEEDLES" In this comedy, two surf-bum brothers (Paul Walker, "Pleasantville," and Steve Van Wormer, "Jingle All the Way") are sent to a boot camp in Yellowstone National Park by their millionaire father in order to teach them a lesson about survival. Dennis Hopper plays the camp's tough-as-nails leader. Hijinks ensue when the slackerly siblings are mistaken for park rangers. (Buena Vista)

"SPICE—THE MOVIE" Pop music's latest confection, the sassy, all-female, flavor-of-the-minute group The Spice Girls, will star in a musical comedy mockumentary in the vein of the Beatles' "A Hard Day's Night." Richard E. Grant ("Jack & Sarah") will co-star, and Bob Spiers (TV's "Absolutely Fabulous") will helm. (Columbia)

"FIDDLEFEST" Madonna ("Evita") will portray Roberta Tzavaris, a music teacher who developed a remarkable program to teach inner-city children to play the violin at Carnegie Hall concert level, in this fictionalized adaptation of last year's Academy Award-nominated documentary "Small Wonders." Wes Craven ("Scream") takes a break from the horror genre to direct this uplifting drama. (Miramax)

"OBJECT OF MY AFFECTION" This romantic comedy/drama will star Jennifer Aniston ("Picture Perfect") as a woman who rents a room in her apartment to a gay man (Paul Rudd, "Clueless") and subsequently falls in love with him. Stephen Baldwin ("Fled"), Tim Daly (TV's "Wings"), Alan Alda ("Everyone Says I Love You"), Nigel Hawthorne ("The Madness of King George") and Steve Zahn ("That Thing You Do!") will also star. Nicholas Hytner ("The Crucible") will direct. (Fox)

ET CETERA: Samuel L. Jackson has taken the lead in Gary Gray's **"The Negotiator"** as a hostage negotiator framed for murder (a role to which Sylvester Stallone was once attached). Kevin Spacey will co-star...Sean Connery will play the nemesis in Warner's **"The Avengers,"** to star Ralph Fiennes as Jonathan Steed and Uma Thurman as Emma Peel...Eleven-year-old Miko Hughes ("Zeus and Roxanne") will play an autistic savant who breaks a top secret military code in Universal's **"Simon,"** which stars Bruce Willis and Alec Baldwin...Director Alex Cox has left Rhino Films' Hunter S. Thompson biopic **"Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas,"** and has been replaced by Terry Gilliam. Johnny Depp and Benicio Del Toro star.

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Australian Native Sons MEL GIBSON and BRUCE DAVEY of ICON Bring It All Back Home

by Kim Williamson

photos: *Carlos Serrao*



Fourteen years ago, actor Mel Gibson was worried about the future of the Australian film industry. "Canada seems to have blown it. Australia could well do the same," he said. Gibson, who'd come to prominence with such Oz productions as "Mad Max," "Tim" and "Gallipoli," had just finished another Down Under effort, "The Year of Living Dangerously." On the bigscreen, the continent had also recently produced such hits as "My Brilliant Career," "'Breaker' Morant" and "The Man From Snowy River." But Gibson feared that, fueled by success, the country's production would expand too quickly, causing a ramp-up in costs that would lead to the industry's downfall.

Cut to a gray day in summer 1997. Whatever worries Gibson had about moviemaking Down Under seem to have dissipated like this morning's marine layer over the Warner Bros. lot, where Gibson's Icon Productions is housed in a two-level bungalow of offices. In a casually appointed suite, Gibson, as chairman and creative force of Icon, and Bruce Davey—who, drawing on his chartered accountant background, oversees the nine-year-old company's financial affairs as president and CEO—are talking about the company's future in an exclusive interview with **BOXOFFICE.** And the future at Icon seems busy and bright. In February 1996, Icon announced it had signed two major-studio

production deals: a continuation of its original Warner pact, in place since January 1991, plus a new agreement with Paramount, domestic home of Icon's Oscar-winning "Braveheart." This past August, Icon entered into a three-year joint venture with Fox Filmed Entertainment to develop, produce and distribute films in Australia, using Fox's still-under-construction Fox Studios Australia in Sydney as home base.

"I think it's the same as it's always been," Gibson says of Australian filmmaking today. "Pretty much just really talented people operating on a shoestring, turning out quality stuff from time to time. Per capita, there's a lot of activity down there, even compared to the film community here. It's like a drop in the ocean, and yet they manage to more than fulfill a kind of populist quota."

In their yet-to-be-named Aussie venture—at the moment, just call it Mel & Murdoch, Inc.—headed by leading Down Under producer Timothy White ("Angel Baby," "Oscar and Lucinda"), the companies will work together on a yet-to-be-determined number of pictures. The films will be owned by Fox/Icon, with Fox distributing outside Australia. (Other Icon productions are copyright World Icon, an investment group originally formed to finance "Hamlet" when no studio would.)

"Our association with Fox came through 'Braveheart,'" Davey explains. "Fox took the foreign side of 'Braveheart.'"

"When Fox started to build their studio down there," Gibson adds, "it seemed like an opportune time to get into bed with these guys that we'd had such a good experience with."

But a sense of national pride was also involved. "I don't know whether Mel and I ever had the specific conversation," Davey says, "and if we didn't have it, it was most probably thought: that one day we'd like to give something back to Australia.

"I think it will be fabulous," Davey adds, speaking of the entire $120 million Fox effort. "There will be state-of-the-art soundstages and TV studios and theatrical studios. The first production there is underway—they're doing the sequel to 'Babe.' It's going to be great."

Gibson poses a question for his partner. "It's going to take a while for it to really wind up, isn't it?"

"Yeah," Davey replies.

"It always takes time," Gibson adds, nodding. "When we started Icon, we were at it for about three years before we got a shot off. It just takes a long time to generate things. But this is going to be very valuable, and I think a lot of good work's going to come out of there."

When it comes to discussing the specifics of Icon's involvement with Fox, the partners prove more reserved. "We have an office facility at the moment—not on the lot, but they will move," Davey says. "We have only three employees down there. They're identifying projects for us to jointly develop with Fox." As to what percentage of Icon projects will be shot in Australia, Davey says, "We can't say. After 'Braveheart' we did nothing for a couple of years. We aren't going to make a movie for the sake of making a movie, and you've no idea whether something's going to come along."



JUST FOR STARTERS: *A 24-year-old Gibson in the Australian-produced "Gallipo*

Presented with a hypothetical scenario, in which Icon would make a dozen movies between now and the year 2000, might a significant number be made in Australia? "We can only hope that that would be the case," Davey says carefully. But Gibson's response is equally interesting; almost to himself, he adds, "A dozen projects in three more years? It's possible!" He laughs, as if implying it's not probable. "The company would have to grow."

Fulfilling its Warner and Paramount pacts might demand exactly that: that Icon grow. Industry reports state Icon—which has made 12 films since its 1988 launch—will make four pictures for each studio over the next three years, with Gibson starring in one, directing another, and producing two more. "You know more than I do," Davey says, prompting more laughter from Gibson.

Both partners take a certain pride in not having a formal business plan. The uncertain availability of worthwhile projects is the cited reason. "The business dictates that in a lot of cases," Gibson says. "It's so fickle. You get things coming from left field and right field."

"I can give you an example," Davey adds. "We did 'Braveheart' and then we did nothing for almost two years. And then we found ourselves shooting three films on three separate continents at once." (Those are "Leo Tolstoy's Anna Karenina," released stateside by Warner this past April; "187," an urban drama opening via Warner in late July; and the charming "Fairy-Tale—A True Story," a family film Paramount has slated for October.) "Since those three films, it's been 12 months since we were physically shooting. With that sort of scenario, how can you possibly build a business plan?"

Without such a plan, will Icon meet its Warner and Paramount commitments—and develop fare for its Fox/Icon venture, and allow time for Gibson's extramural adventures, such as his new non-Icon thriller "Conspiracy Theory?" "You can only do your damn best, I think is the answer," Gibson says. "You might not get to four. But it won't be through lack of trying. You might get three—you might get five! You just have to keep looking all the time and developing ideas you think will work and see how they take hold."

Of the two studio deals, Gibson says, "Basically, it's our call, so it's up to us to get stuff to a stage where we're happy with it." Still, as Davey says, "They all want Mel Gibson projects," exemplified by Paramount's demand for at least one action picture to star him.

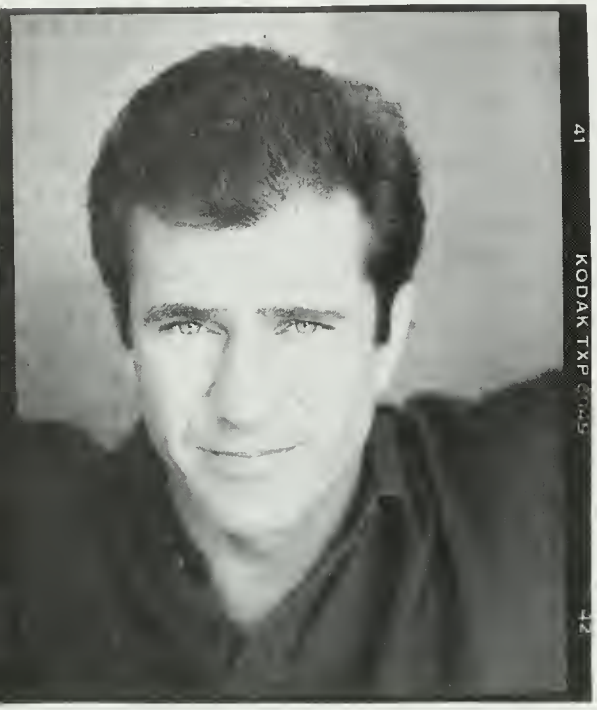
"You don't know what's going to work with what studio," Davey says. "It's no secret we took '187' to Paramount first, and they passed. And Warners picked it up. And what might not work for Warners might work for Paramount."

"You're a bit like the Fuller Brush man," Gibson adds. "You come to the house and you say, 'Hey, we got some of these, some of these, some of these, and these—what do you like, you like anything?' And he says, 'Yeah, the onion peeler. That's a good one.' They have to like it too. [After all,] we're not alone in this."

"It's a two-way street," Davey says. "It's not going to work if they're not sending us stuff,

and it's not going to work if we're not sending them stuff. And we want it to work." Or, as Gibson puts it, "You just have to keep in mind your obligations, and try not to stiff anybody."

Along with its Australian and American ventures, Icon has entered a third continent: Europe. In September 1995, Icon Entertainment International was formed to handle overseas sales for Icon productions and third-party films in which the company takes an interest. The following month, it bought international rights to 20 films from the Kings Road library, including "All of Me," "The Big Easy" and "Jacknife." Located in London's Soho Square and run by former Lumiere managing director Ralph Kamp, Icon International this past fall also acquired Majestic Films, another London-based sales company, in a $10 million deal.



Previously, Majestic had handled foreign rights for certain Icon titles, counting among its 220-film library Icon's "The Man Without a Face" and "Immortal Beloved." Despite apparent duplication between Icon International and Majestic, Davey says the two will remain separate. "We're running them side by side. I think that it's appropriate to keep Icon for Icon films. Icon, I think, has earned a certain reputation." Majestic will handle "films that we're going to finance and other people are going to go and produce." The first such production is "Saint Ives," a Robert Louis Stevenson adaptation being made by Ireland's Little Bird.

The overseas effort was launched out of bottom-line pragmatism. "We [opened Icon International] because I figured out that what we were paying Majestic to handle our films would cover our overhead to do it ourselves," Davey says. "It then seemed prudent to try to cover the overhead of [the international] operation by library acquisitions, so that we weren't put in the position, like a lot of these sales companies are, of having to go out and find product. Once again, we don't want to make movies that we don't want to make, so you don't want to be selling movies for the sake of having to cover your overhead. Having a library is a foundation—it generates cash flow, which leaves you free to concentrate on fewer movies, and hopefully distribute them better, on the basis that less is more."

Two prominent film companies that, like Icon, made studio films for which they retained the copyright are/were Castle Rock and Cinergi. Both companies, while trying to grow their libraries from the inside, eventually had to sell out to conglomerates (respectively, Time Warner and Walt Disney Co.). On the other hand, on the morning of **BOXOFFICE**'s visit to Icon, Wall Street sources were insisting that MGM—which like Icon has been making library deals, in its case to make itself more investor-attractive—is readying to go public via a late-1997 stock offering.

Neither selling stock to shareholders nor selling out to an entertainment giant interests Gibson and Davey. "I've talked to other guys who went public," Gibson says, "and it's been like a nightmare for them."

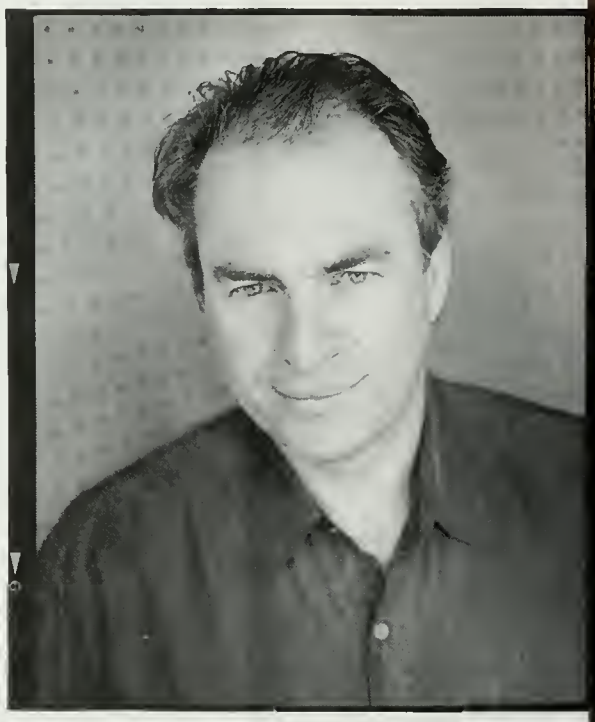
Davey agrees. "Those things are often put together by lawyers and accountants for their own reasons, and not for the benefit of the company." But wouldn't Icon love the access to virtually unlimited capital that a large corporate parent might provide? "Yes, but the interesting thing about the way we do our movies is that there is a discipline in the way that we work," Davey says. Which is this: Their sales experts define how much the market will invest in any particular production. "They come back and say, for example, 'We can raise $15 million.' So I say to my physical production guys, 'What's this going to cost me to make?' And they say, 'It's going to cost $20 million.' Well, you know it's not going to work. So you either come up with a way to make it for $15 million, or we can't do it. If someone said, 'Here's a pot of $100 million [to draw on],' people are going to lose sight of the discipline to make it work at $15 million. It's too easy to say, 'We'll just take $2 million from that hundred million.'"

Icon is no stranger to making rigorous budgetary decisions, even on works that are especially dear to Gibson and Davey's hearts. A story Gibson tells about shooting 'Braveheart' illustrates the point. The production was running low on time and money. "Literally, there was a place and a day near the end of the shoot where we did rip 12 pages out of the script. And it forced us on the creative side to be *creative*. Because we had to find a short cut there somehow. And we came up with something better than what was there in the first place."

Gibson and Davey hail from different continents—Gibson was born in Peekskill, N.Y., while Davey is a Down Under native—but their partnership of 17 years feels like a good one. Part of that is due to their shared Aussie sensibility; Gibson's family emigrated to Australia when he was 12, and he still maintains a ranch in the Australian Outback. As the 41-year-old has put it, "I formed my opinions in Australia."

The two men's different career abilities complement each other. "I'm a fiscal imbecile," Gibson says. "But Bruce is really good at that stuff. He's got a better overview for, like, business plans and situations than I do."

"The business plan that we don't have," Davey reminds him, laughing. "I think as time has gone on, Mel has exhibited this 'fiscal imbecility' of his, but he's not such an imbecile these days as he used to be." At that, it's Gibson's turn to laugh. "Vice versa: In terms of learning about creating things, I've learned a lot from Mel."



"But we both get snagged," Gibson says. "Every now and then, you just stand there and you think, 'Oh, man, we've just been done over,' or 'We came out the worst end of this deal,' or 'Gee, we won't do *that* again.' And it usually costs in some way, either financially or emotionally. We call it 'school fees,' which is a kind of good way to look at it." He chuckles. "I guess."

"We're still paying them," Davey laughs.

"Yeah," Gibson admits. "But we got a gold star along the way, here and there."

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SEPTEMBER TRAILERS

It's a whole new ballgame as two new teams enter the fray

In the past year, Buena Vista, Paramount and Warner Bros. have said they'd be ramping down production and lessening their release slates. Although expected rampups from Columbia/TriStar and MGM/UA could help refill the lineup, that's a bit down the path, as new managements are still finding their footings. But two new major distributors—DreamWorks SKG and Polygram Filmed Entertainment Distribution—are heading to the plate right now.

And not only are they cleating in, in their first month of active operation they find themselves going head to head. Although Polygram gets in one free



swing with Sept. 12's "The Game," two weeks later the Sept. 26 weekend finds Polygram's "The Gingerbread Man" batting against DreamWorks' "The Peacemaker" (see photo above). One might expect the naysayer studios to say something like "I told you so." And the new-against-new, and new-against-established, competition will only rise as time passes; DreamWorks is planning perhaps 10 releases annually, and Polygram is aiming toward a dozen.

Of course, aside from the one-on-one battle, film quality and audience turnout will be much watched for these rookie efforts from the two entities. The last major-league distributor to launch was TriStar back in 1984, when its first important title was the Robert Redford-starrer "The Natural," which hit a homer for the new studio. With these new players donning their mitts, one can expect this September to be an especially hot Indian Summer.

SEPTEMBER 5

Intimate Relations

This black comedy focuses on a 1950s picture-perfect family, whose lives are disrupted when mom (Julie Walters) seduces a vulnerable young lodger ("Different for Girls'" Rupert Graves). Philip Goodhew directs and scripts; Angela Hart, Lisa Hope and Handmade head Jon Slan produce. (Fox Searchlight, 9/5)

Exploitips: *Our Seattle fest reviewer gave this "relentlessly bleak film" two stars but cited Walters' and Graves' work as commendable. The subject ("blackmail, twisted sexual mores, and unrequited love") has a salable salaciousness, and a date move from 5/9 means no studio competition.*

Mouth to Mouth

In this Spanish screwball comedy, Victor ("Jamon, Jamon's" Javier Bardem) takes a job at a phone sex service only to become involved with a client ("A Walk in the Clouds'" Aitana Sanchez-Gijon) and her husband. Manuel Gomez Pereira directs, and he scripts with Joaquin Oristrell, Juan Luis Iborra and Naomi Wise; Benitez, Oristrell and Pereira produce. (Miramax, 9/5 NY/LA)

Exploitips: *"Mouth to Mouth" was slated for 6/21/96, then 9/6/96, then 6/6/97 and now 9/5/97. Hmm. Yet emphasizing the Bardem and Sanchez-Gijon credits should draw the experienced art-house crowd, and as with "Intimate Relations" the salaciousness factor could kick in.*

Gravesend

In this dark comedy, when someone is accidentally killed, four troubled friends in trying to rid themselves of the body experience wild encounters, petty theft and dissension. Salvatore Stabile directs, writes and produces. (Manga, 9/5 NY)

Exploitips: *The odd title and under-20 storyline could capture the interest of young males looking for escape from the new school year (the film having moved from August). This is a step outside the manga genre for Manga, which has specialized in SF-bent Japanese animation.*

SEPTEMBER 12

A Thousand Acres

Based on Jane Smiley's Pulitzer winner, this drama follows a family's unraveling when a father (Jason Robards) distributes his farmland among his three daughters. Jessica Lange, Michelle Pfeiffer, Jennifer Jason Leigh and Keith Carradine also star. Jocelyn Moorhouse directs; Laura Jones scripts. (Buena Vista, 9/12)

Exploitips: *This "King Lear" variant boasts an exploitable bookstore tie, especially given that, just as "The Game" (see P. 16) should draw males, "A Thousand Acres" should pull book-friendly females.*

Fire Down Below

Steven Seagal saves the environment again in this actioner about an EPA agent who goes undercover. Marg Helgenberger, Kris Kristofferson and Harry Dean Stanton co-star. Felix Alcala directs; Jeb Stuart scripts; Seagal and Julius R. Nasso produce. (Warner, 9/12)

Exploitips: *Experience might count. Polygram's "The Game" has a higher star profile, with the boxoffice wane of Seagal, but Warner has long-standing relationships with the circuits. It's a duel to the death, with both films going after the same male demo.*

The Locusts

This dark drama set in 1960 rural Kansas stars Vince Vaughn, Jeremy Davies (also in "Going All the Way") and Ashley Judd. John Patrick Kelly directs and scripts; MPCA's Brad Krevoy and Steve Stabler produce with Bradley Thomas. (Orion Classics, 9/12 ltd)

Exploitips: *In the large markets in which "The Locusts" opens, this could be the date-night option for couples who can't agree on the weekend's three studio films. To draw them, hype the ensemble.*

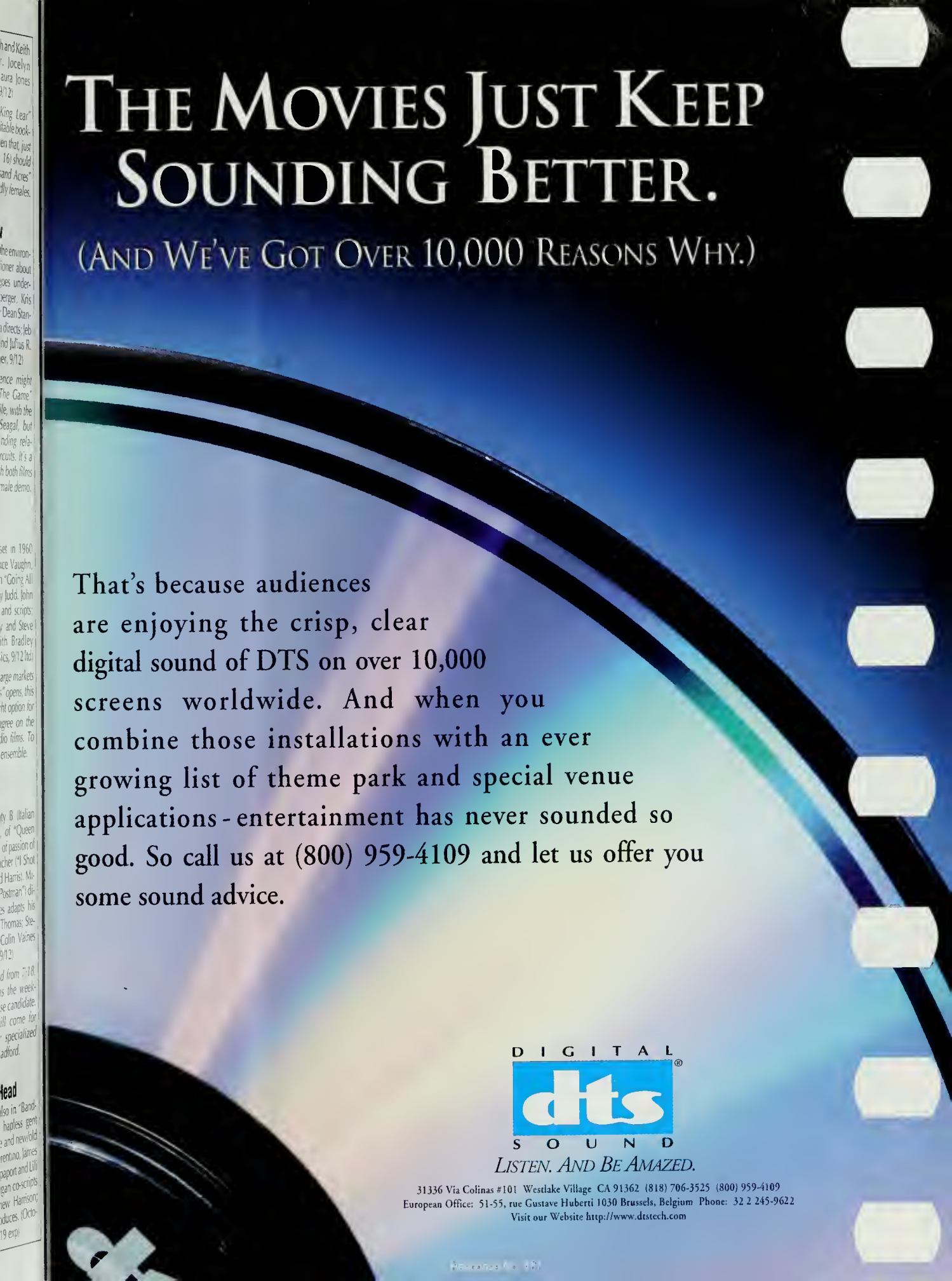
B. Monkey

Wild young beauty B (Italian starlet Asia Argento, of "Queen Margot") is the object of passion of a romantic schoolteacher ("I Shot Andy Warhol's" Jared Harris). Michael Radford ("The Postman") directs; Andrew Davies adapts his novel with Michael Thomas; Stephen Woolley and Colin Vaines produce. (Miramax, 9/12)

Exploitips: *Moved from 7/18, "B. Monkey" seems the weekend's prime art-house candidate. The hip young will come for Argento; the older specialized crowd will bet on Radford.*

Kicked in the Head

Kevin Corrigan (also in "Bandwagon") stars as a hapless gent caught among crime and new/old girlfriends. Linda Fiorentino, James Woods, Michael Rapaport and Lili Taylor co-star. Corrigan co-scripts with director Matthew Harrison; Barbara De Fina produces. (October, 9/12 NY/LA, 9/19 exp)


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THE GAME

"Seven" director David Fincher brings his dark sensibilities to this urban thriller about a shrewd businessman (Michael Douglas) accustomed to being in control. Then comes an unexpected birthday present from his charming but irresponsible brother (Sean Penn). That present changes everything, involving the businessman in a deadly game. Deborah Unger and Armin Mueller-Stahl co-star. John Brancato & Michael Ferris ("The Net" duo) and Andrew Kevin Walker (also "Seven") script; Steve Golin and Cean Chaffin produce for Propaganda. (Polygram, 9/12)

Exploitips: *This is the first release from new stateside distributor Polygram Filmed Entertainment, which plans to handle a dozen or so titles annually. The Penn and Douglas names, plus the Fincher credit, promise substantial male-demo turnout. Expect distributor hype to focus on "Seven," with dark visual support from trailers. Douglas says, "Some days I would look at the video monitor and ask, "'Is there a light missing?' But no, there was no light missing."*

Exploitips: *This bears a Martin Scorsese exec prod seal, but it demands one buy Fiorentino falling for Corrigan, an event that would require his scripting. This is more bi-gender than the male-leaning "Suicide Kings."*

Suicide Kings

In this black comedy, four collegians nab a retired mobster (Christopher Walken) to help them. Denis Leary (also in "Wide Awake"), Henry Thomas, Sean Patrick Flanery and Jay Mohr also star. Peter O'Fallon directs; Wayne Rice and Gina Goldman script; Rice produces with Morrie Eisenman. (Live, 9/12)

Exploitips: *Orion's "8 Heads in a Duffel Bag" didn't ignite the boxoffice this spring, but the players here have more experience. If they strike sparks, this could build word of mouth.*

Bandwagon

Four kids form a rock band and hit the road in this slacker rock n' roll comedy/road movie. Kevin Corrigan stars. John Schultz ("The Making of Jurassic Park") directs and scripts, and produces with Alyson Poole. (CFP, 9/12)

Exploitips: *Once 8/15, this like "Gravesend" could draw school-disaffected youths.*

SEPTEMBER 19

In and Out

Kevin Kline stars as a popular HS teacher whose life is upset when his sexuality is called into question on national TV the night before his wedding. Joan Cusack and Matt Dillon co-star. Frank Oz ("The Indian in the Cupboard") directs; Paul Rudnick ("Addams Family Values") scripts; Scott Rudin ("The First Wives Club") produces. (Paramount, 9/19)

Exploitips: *Moved from 6/13, this comedy/drama has a salable cast and good behind-the-camera credits. It's the weekend's single studio release, so this seems to have a clear path to mainstream audiences.*

Wide Awake

A 10-year-old boy confronts the death of his grandfather by searching for God in this spiritual comedy/drama. Denis Leary, Dana Delany, Rosie O'Donnell and Joseph Cross star. M. Night Shyamalan ("Praying With Anger") directs and scripts; Cary Woods and Cathy Conrad produce. (Miramax, 9/19)

Exploitips: *Thanks to her smash TV talk show, O'Donnell probably has the widest cast profile with mainstream audiences, which Miramax hopes will come here. Before their recent split, Woods and Conrad produced a number of critically acclaimed films.*

Going All the Way

In this romantic comedy/drama, two Korean War vets return looking for meaning and love. Jeremy Davies, Ben Affleck, "Scream's" Rose McGowan, Amy Locane and Rachel Weisz star. Mark Pellington directs; Dan Wakefield adapts his novel; Tom Gorai and Sigurjon Sighvatsson produce. (Gramercy, 9/19 ltd)

Exploitips: *Against an expanding "Kicked in the Head" for good-times youth auds, this period piece could be at a minor disadvantage, and the teenybopper title won't help. Still, it has a solid cast and the Sighvatsson name, so expect moderately good numbers.*

The Myth of Fingerprints

This dramatic comedy has a New England family struggling with changes over one difficult Thanksgiving weekend. Blythe Danner, Hope Davis, Julianne Moore, Roy Scheider and Noah Wyle star. Bart Freundlich directs and scripts, and produces with Mary Jane Skalski and Tim Pereli. *See our Sneak Preview in this issue.* (Sony Classics, 9/19 NY)

Exploitips: *"Home for the Holidays" didn't work with mainstream audiences, and this month's "The Ice Storm" covers similar terrain. Still, this sounds like promising art-house fare.*

SEPTEMBER 26

The Peacemaker

George Clooney ("Batman & Robin") stars as an intelligence officer and Nicole Kidman as head of a White House nuclear smuggling group. The two must put aside conflicting styles of operation when a terrorist gets a warhead to use on the U.N. Mimi Leder (TV's "E.R.") directs; Michael Schiffer ("Crimson Tide") scripts. *(See P. 14 photo.)* (Dreamworks, 9/26)

Exploitips: *Given his Batman and "One Fine Day" turns, Clooney is salable as a rising star, and Kidman is a known quantity, making this a choice for more mature demos.*

The Edge

This psychological thriller from Lee Tamahori ("Once Were Warriors") stars Anthony Hopkins as a wealthy intellectual and Alec Baldwin as a fashion photographer who covets Hopkins' wife ("Sirens'" Elle Macpherson). Yet the two must work together when their plane crashes in the remote Alaskan wilderness. David Mamet scripts. (Fox, 9/26)

Exploitips: *The elements are there: Taut performer Baldwin and edgy scripter Mamet could bring the sometimes hammy Hopkins into sharp focus—and return Tamahori from the descent of "Mulholland Falls." Expect the genre and leads (& Macpherson) to draw male.*

The Gingerbread Man

Kenneth Branagh ("Hamlet") stars as a lawyer enlisted by a female client to win control over her father's estate. The story is based on a John Grisham novel, with Grisham adapting and Robert Altman directing. Jeremy Tanenbaum produces. (Polygram, 9/26)

Exploitips: *The cool response to Grisham adaptation "The Chamber" gives pause. Plus, Polygram's second release is going against DreamWorks #1, though not as much as "The Edge" does in demo. The cast is good, and the Altman name is gold with his fans.*

Breaking Up

Russell Crowe ("Rough Magic") and Salma Hayek ("Fools Rush In") star in this romance about a fotog and a teacher certain they've found perfect love—until they face the ups and downs of real life. Robert Greenwald ("Hear No Evil") directs, and produces with George Moffly; Michael Cristofer scripts. (Warner, 9/26)

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Exploitips: *A Seattle fest fave, "Breaking Up" has a couples-pleasing narrative and attractive leads, if not A-listers. Expect date-nighters skewing younger than "The Peacemaker."*

The Ice Storm

Based on Rick Moody's novel, this drama finds two New England families at sexual crossroads during Thanksgiving 1973. Kevin Kline, Sigourney Weaver, Christina Ricci, Joan Allen and Elijah Wood star. Ang Lee ("Sense and Sensibility") directs; James Schamus scripts and produces. (Fox Searchlight, 9/26)

Exploitips: *With four successful films under his belt, Lee has moved from the art-house to the mainstream, and here the known cast will provide marquee support. "The Ice Storm" drew fine notices at Cannes, useful in garnering the attention of the likely mature demo.*

Little City

Six friends make their relationshps complex when they add sex to the scenario. Jon Bon Jovi, Penelope Ann Miller, Annabella Sciorra, Josh Charles and Joanna Going star. Roberto Benabib directs and scripts; Beau Flynn, Stefan Simchowitz, Ron Wechsler and Jeffrey L. Davidson produce. (Miramax, 9/26)

Exploitips: *Miramax acquired this for a reported $2.8 million, a good price for this level of cast, which boasts salable names to go along with its Gen X-friendly storyline.*

Gummo

"Kids" scripter Harmony Korine directs and scripts another tale of bored youth. Chloe Sevigny ("Kids") and Max Perlich star. Cary Woods ("Kids") produces. (Fine Line, 9/26)

Exploitips: *Once slated for 5/16, "Gummo" still faces a tough weekend. Play up the "Kids" connections to draw media attention.*

Stag

When a stripper is accidentally killed at a bachelor party, the men argue over what to do. Andrew McCarthy and Mario Van Peebles star. Gavin Wilding directs; Evan Tylor and Pat Burmell script; John Dunning and Michael Pasearnek produce. (CFP, 9/26 ltd)

Exploitips: *Women aren't likely ticketeers, and the narrative isn't male-friendly. A come-hither tagline like "'Stag'—what the men keep secret" could partly solve both problems.*

Omaha: the movie

A Husker returns from Nepal to a comic hometown situation. Hughston Walkinshaw stars. Dan Mirvish directs and scripts, and produces with Dana Altman. (Movieworld, 9/26)

Exploitips: *This made a decently received regional tour last year via Bugeater Releasing.*

SEPT. UNDATED

The End of Violence

Wim Wenders ("Wings of Desire") helms this L.A. drama in which characters connect via violence. Andie MacDowell, Gabriel Byrne, Bill Pullman and Peter Horton star.

(CONTINUED ON P. 20)

LATE MOVIE MOVES...

G.I. Jane

Demi Moore faces male anger as the first female Navy Seals candidate. Ridley Scott directs; David Twohy and Danielle Alexandra script; Scott and Moore produce with Roger Birnbaum and Suzanne Todd. (Buena Vista, 8/15)

Exploitips: *"G.I. Jane" should grab media attention, given recent gender scandals.*

Dark City

In this SF thriller, a man learns his memories are implants. Rufus Sewell, William Hurt, Kiefer Sutherland and Jennifer Connelly star. Alex Proyas ("The Crow") directs and co-scripts. *See our June '97 Sneak Preview.* (New Line, 8/29)

Exploitips: *Moved from 9/19 to grab Labor Day, "Dark City" should attract the more serious SF set (others opting for Universal's same-date "Kull"). Highlight Proyas' "Crow" credit.*

Trojan Eddie

Stephen Rea plays a crook who crosses his boss (Richard Harris). Gillies Mackinnon ("The Playboys") directs; Billy Roche scripts; Emma Burge produces. (Castle Hill, 8/29 NY, Sept. LA)

Exploitips: *The known cast is likely to attract art-housers, as is the Mackinnon name.*

Dogs

Four broke Lower East Side roommates open a sports betting den. Toby Huss and Pam Columbus star. Eve Annenberg directs, scripts and co-produces. (Phaedra, Aug)

Exploitips: *Hype as "'Clerks' for Chicks."*

Fire

This romantic drama is the first film from India about lesbianism. Sahbana Azmi and Nandita Das star. Deepa Mehta ("Camilla") directs and scripts. (Zeitgeist, 8/22 NY)

Exploitips: *See our 7/97 3 1/2-star review.*

Kiss and Tell

This improvised comedy is about a crazie who kills with carrots. Rose McGowan ("Scream") co-stars. Jordan Alan ("Terminal Bliss") directs and scripts. (Phaedra, Aug)

Exploitips: *Highlight "Scream"er McGowan.*

The Keeper

A law officer/law student is caught between two worlds. Giancarlo Esposito and African great Isaach de Bankole star. (Kino, Aug)

Exploitips: *Hype the two leads.*

Sleepy Heads

Young Japanese move to New York. Yoshifumi Hosoya helms & co-scripts. (Phaedra, Aug)

Exploitips: *This Asian-language fare could play with young immigrant populations.*

The Delta

A rich white kid falls for an immigrant black Vietnamese. (Strand, 8/1 NY, 8/15 LA)

Exploitips: *Expect some gay-aud turnout.*

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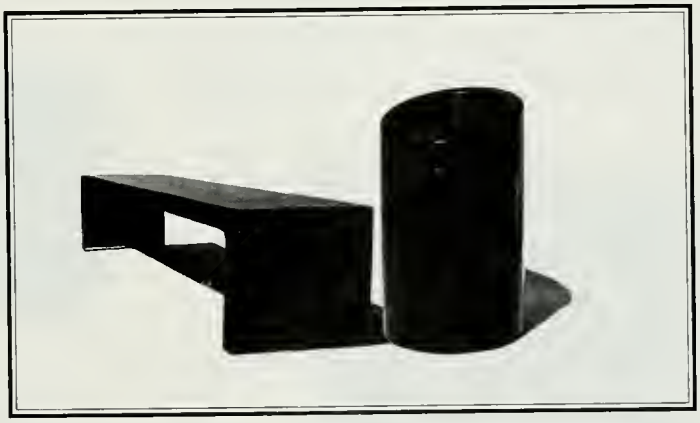
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Nicholas Klein scripts; Wenders, Klein and Deepak Nayar produce. (UA, Sept)

Exploitips: *This pulled middling reviews at Cannes (see our review, this issue), but the Wenders name and the eclectic cast will likely draw specialized audiences.*

Cousin Bette

Tony winner Des McAnuff helms this Honore de Balzac adaptation. Jessica Lange and Elisabeth Shue star. Lynn Siefert and Susan Tarr script; Sarah Radclyffe and Philip Carcassone produce. (Fox Searchlight, Sept)

Exploitips: *Expect "Love! Valour! Compassion!" numbers, but via the distaff demo.*

The Assignment

In this espionage thriller, a U.S. naval officer (Aidan Quinn) must pretend to be an infamous terrorist. Donald Sutherland and Ben Kingsley co-star. Christian Duguay directs; Dan Gordon and Sabi H. Shabtai script; Tom Berry and Franco Battista produce. (Triumph, Sept)

Exploitips: *Once 4/25, before Triumph's announced demise, this should draw a Seagal crowd, if in fewer numbers due to "Face/Off" similarities and lesser star power.*

Self Made Hero

Fame and lies figure In this French comedy/drama version of a Jean-Francois Denlau novel. Mathieu Kassovitz ("La Haine") stars. Jacques Audlard directs. (Strand, Sept)

Exploitips: *Emphasize the setting and eras to attract art-house Francophiles.*

Love Always

A young woman heads cross-country to meet a former amour who has proposed. Marisa Ryan stars. Jude Pauline Eberhard directs and co-scripts. (Legacy, Sept)

Exploitips: *A distaff road movie: That scenario and the romance could catch the eye of teenaged and twentysomething gals.*

Latin Boys Go to Hell

This gay love story is set in Brooklyn. Irwin Ossa, John Bryant Davila and Guinevere Turner ("Go Fish") co-star. Ela Troyano directs and co-scripts; Jurgen Bruning ("Hustler White") produces. (Strand, mid-Sept NY/LA)

Exploitips: *Once 7/25, this has played fests, so look for exploitable critical quotes.*

Eye of God

Martha Plimpton and Kevin Anderson star in a tale of love, murder and fundamentalism. Tim Blake Nelson helms and adapts his play; Wendy Ettinger & Michael Nelson produce. (Castle Hill)

Exploitips: *Look for positive New York notices to support later openings.*

Nenette et Boni

In this French-language drama, a brother and sister reunite when she becomes pregnant. Gregoire Colin and Alice Houri star. Claire Denis scripts and co-directs; Georges Benayoun produces. (Strand, mid-Sept)

Exploitips: *Like "Self Made Hero," "Nenette et Boni" is for the Francophilic art-house set.*

Timeless

A crook and a gangster girlfriend seek a better life. Chris Hart directs and scripts, and produces with Patricia Bice. (Phaedra, Sept)

Exploitips: *This experimental film played at Sundance to gleanable art-house quotes.*

Nights of Cabiria

This is a reissue of Federico Fellini's 1957 Italian romance/drama. (Strand, Sept)

Exploitips: *Once planned for summer, this like "Self Made Hero" is for the established art-house set. The sell is Fellini.*

Twisted

This is a gay take on "Oliver Twist." Writer/director Seth Michael Donsky produces with Adrian Agramonte. (Leisure Time, Sept)

Exploitips: *Moved from June, "Twisted" will play best in gay-demo urban areas.*

Capitaine Conan

This French rerelease is from director Bertrand Tavernier. (Kino, Sept)

Exploitips: *This was featured at Seattle's Tavernier retrospective, so look for new quotes.*

In a Strange City

A Taiwanese teacher has an affair with a politician. Kuei-men Yang and Winston Chao star. Chi Yin directs (Filmopolis, Sept)

Exploitips: *See our 7/96 3 1/2-star review, which calls Yang's turn sublime.*

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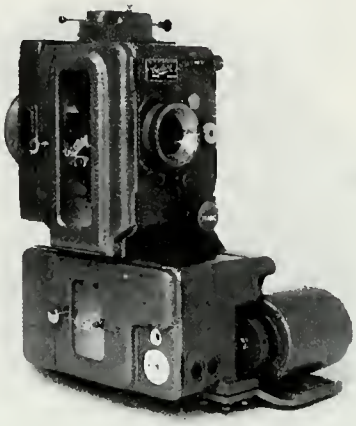
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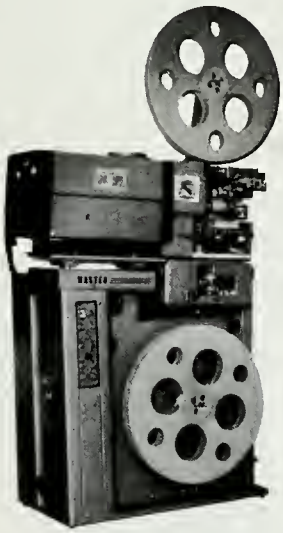
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"MYTH" ADVENTURE

Actress Julianne Moore theorizes about "The Myth of Fingerprints"

by Michael Payne

In an era in which actresses often say good roles are few and far between, Julianne Moore seems to nimbly leap from one interesting character to another. In recent years, she's played a guilt-ridden artist in Robert Altman's "Short Cuts," a beguiling Yelena in Louis Malle's "Vanya on 42nd Street," a woman with a biological clock ticking in Chris Columbus' "Nine Months" and a neurotically allergic housewife in Todd Haynes' "Safe." Earlier this summer, she was seen on 6,000 screens at once portraying an ambitious paleontologist in "The Lost World: Jurassic Park." Also slated for this summer is New Line's "Boogie Nights," a dark comedy about the 1970s porn industry, in which she plays an adult film star named Amber Waves.

Her next film returns her to the world of the independents and to Sony Clasics, which handled "Vanya on 42nd Street" and "Safe." "The Myth of Fingerprints" is a drama about a family forced to confront hidden truths. Her character, Mia—whom Moore describes as "a very angry, disenfranchised person who doesn't fit into her family"—is the key to unlocking those truths. "'The Myth of Fingerprints' is about four adults who come home for Thanksgiving," Moore says. "It's about a dysfunctional family. It's a family where, for all appearances' sake, everything is normal, everyone seems pretty happy—but as you spend time with them you learn that there's something extremely wrong between them and their father."

The film co-stars Roy Scheider as her troubled dad, Blythe Danner as her mother, Noah Wyle as a younger brother, Brian Kerwin as her therapist lover, and James LeGros (who co-starred in "Safe") as a childhood friend she hasn't seen since kindergarten. Moore says the film is an ensemble piece that veers from uproarious comedy to poignant drama. "It really runs the spectrum," she says. "It's wonderful that way. It's very funny—but it's also pretty painful."

Asked if the transition from bright comedy to dark drama is a difficult one to make, Moore responds, "Not really—not if the script is well-written, which this one is. As long as the text is there, as long as the material is strong, it's not difficult to do. It's only hard to do when the script's bad. But 'The Myth of Fingerprints' is a very beautiful, interesting, original script written and directed by Bart Freundlich."

Moore's appraisal of the project might seem biased—not only does she star in it, she and Freundlich are romantically linked—but the folks at Sony Classics do agree with her opinion. The film is Freundlich's feature directing debut,



Julianne Moore stars in her third film for Sony Classics.

and the script was strong enough to persuade Sony Classics, a company that traditionally finances only pictures helmed by experienced filmmakers, to let the first-timer have his shot.

The film's mysterious title is taken from a song by Paul Simon. In it, the "myth" is that, while everyone believes they are unique individuals—as unique as fingerprints—in truth all human beings have more in common with each other than their differences might reflect. "I think [the film] is going to be identifiable for anyone who has a family," Moore says. "That's where the humor is." And it's that ability of audiences to identify with characters onscreen that makes cinema so powerful, Moore asserts. "I think that the reason film is so accessible as a medium is that people are able to recognize themselves in very human problems within a film. Films are 'relatable' in that sense."

Even a work like "Boogie Nights," which takes place in the porn industry, has a universality, Moore says. "Those characters work in a world that may be alien to a lot of people, but they're dealing with very familiar problems. My character is a mother who lost her son. She's somebody that I would describe as well-intentioned but extremely self-deluded. That's something people see in life and something you can sympathize with."

But such good roles can indeed be hard to come by. Moore believes the absence of well-written characters isn't just a problem for women, though. "There is a lack of good roles, period," she says. "There aren't that many great roles for men, either. It's not that you see a role for a man and say, 'Gee, I wish this was a woman—why couldn't I play that?' There is a dearth of great parts, and that springs from what's happening in mainstream films. We have these concept-driven pictures that are more about the event than about the characters."

Yet Moore doesn't demean such movies; after all, she did star in an event film that made nearly $100 million during its first weekend. "I was thrilled to work with Steven Spielberg on a movie like that, of that genre," she says of "The Lost World." "You have to be aware of what kind of film you're working in. I like all the characters that were created in ["The Lost World"]. I think they are all kind of fun and added a human element." With a laugh, Moore adds, "But also, conversely, it *is* a story about dinosaurs."

Moore has been taking the summer off, having managed to complete yet another film set for a 1997 release. Coming in December from Gramercy, "The Big Lebowski" is written and directed by the Coen Brothers and co-stars Jeff Bridges, John Goodman and Steve Buscemi. Moore describes it as "a mistaken identity caper—sort of the Coen Brothers' version of 'The Big Sleep.'" Adding to her myriad collection of roles, Moore plays "a very eccentric painter" in the verbal comedy. When reminded that the last Coen film, "Fargo," netted an Academy Award for its lead actress, Frances McDormand, Moore simply rolls her eyes and says, "You don't think about those things." ■

"The Myth of Fingerprints." Starring Julianne Moore, Roy Scheider and Blythe Danner. Directed and written by Bart Freundlich. Produced by Tim Perell and Mary Jane Skalski. A Sony Classics release. Drama. Rated R for sexuality and language. Opens Sept. 19 NY.

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CINEMA AUSTRALIA

A Look at the Australian Market's Present and Future

by Robert Manson
Managing Director, The Greater Union Organisation

For years Australian film exhibitors have faced increasing competition from a great variety of new technologies and leisure facilities. These challenges have proved cathartic for our industry, resulting in radical improvements to the clarity and precision of projection and sound equipment, as well as to the comfort and ergonomics of cinema design and fitout. Part of this change was the provision of the multi-choice environment of multiplexes. All major exhibitors here, including Greater Union, Village Roadshow and Hoyts, now have multiplexes at the hub of their operations in city, suburban and regional locations, as well as in off-shore developments.

Talk of megaplexes currently occupies the Australian marketplace and is being realized either through add-ons of several screens to existing multiplexes or through the construction of new megaplexes in traditional suburban and regional activity hubs. Exhibitors here are also looking at the Entertainment Destination concept emerging from success stories overseas where cinemas form the anchor of a unique environment of amusements, rides, lifestyle retailing stores, themed restaurants and bars.

A recent survey of cinemagoers in Australia revealed their five top priorities as: (1.) extensive choice of movies; (2.) comfortable seats; (3.) top quality picture and sound; (4.) quality food and drink; (5.) provision of parking. Based on these results it is clear that cinemagoers of the '90s expect and demand new-millennium technology in sophisticated surrounds with a wide choice of movies and a full range of facilities at their fingertips.

With these factors in mind, local exhibitors are upgrading multiplexes to accommodate as many as another eight, 10 or 12 auditoriums. Current analysis indicates that megaplexes attract around 100,000 persons per screen per annum, resulting in an average annual attendance to a medium-sized megaplex of around two million customers. The popularity, functionality and cost effectiveness of the megaplex are factors likely to confirm its status as the preferred format for future cinema screen development around Australia.

On the local scene, last year the joint venture partnership among Greater Union, Village Roadshow and Warner Bros. International announced the doubling of its Australian circuit, to be spearheaded by the development of megaplexes with seating capacities of approximately 5,000 each. These are in addition to add-ons to existing multiplexes in all major cities.

Village Roadshow sees exhibition as its biggest business and key to the future, to the point of striving to be "the best Exhibition group in the known universe," to quote Managing Director Graham Burke. Either independently or as part of their international joint venture with Warner Bros., Village Roadshow now has well over 300 multiplex screens around the world in addition to its Australian screens.



Village Roadshow's part owner, part partner and biggest domestic competitor Greater Union has built synergistic businesses around its exhibition core that have brought both strength and stability. Greater Union ranks as the largest of Australia's three major exhibitors, and has maintained and increased its domestic lead since 1991 despite challenges from the expansion of Hoyts and Village Roadshow.

Greater Union has 148 multiplex screens to date in CBD and suburban locations with more underway. The Group has a further 139 screens in traditional cinema houses varying from singles to six-plexes. These give Greater Union 287 screens around Australia, in addition to 80 owned, leased and/or operated in conjunction with Village Roadshow and Warner Bros. and others. Over the next 18 months the Greater Union Group has scheduled the addition of 300 screens nationally in conjunction with Village and Warner Bros. The scope of the combined domestic cinema expansion programs suggest the probability of market saturation in the next few years.

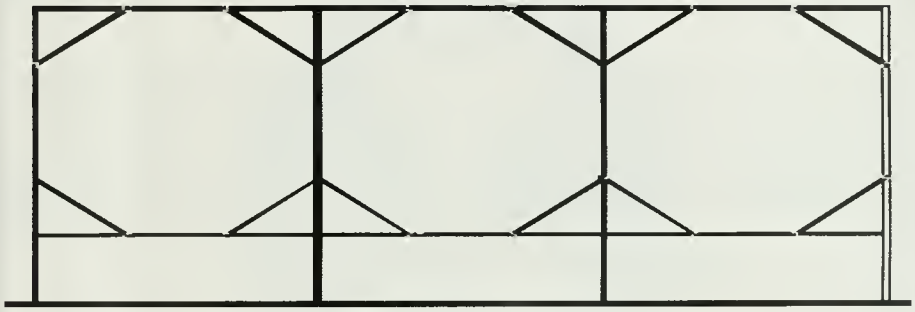
Competition for suitable sites is becoming quite fierce. All major Australian exhibitors are already engaged in overseas expansion programs in Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Latin America to offset the effects of eventual home market saturation and to reap the benefits of lucrative foreign exhibition opportunities. Greater Union's international arm foresees operating some 350 international screens in the run up to the year 2000, while Village Roadshow, partially in joint venture with Warner Bros., aims to have 3,000 screens worldwide by 2001. Hoyts, already a major player in the U.S., is also looking at other overseas markets.

Overseas expansion is not a cure-all for domestic over-servicing and saturation. This problem must be faced at home. Although targeted ad campaigns to improve market profile and to foster brand loyalty play a part in increasing market share, the key to success in Australian exhibition is fourfold: (1.) being in the smartest location; (2.) building multiplexes with room to grow into megaplexes and beyond; (3.) recognizing that cinema is only a part of the entertainment equation; (4.) providing as much of the remaining equation as possible through one's own resources.

The most noteworthy new venture for Australia is the development of the largest cinema center in the world. This 30-screen megaplex is a joint venture between Greater Union and Village/Warner Bros. and is currently being constructed in the South Australian capital, Adelaide, as part of the largest Westfield retail development in the country. When it opens in September 1997, the megaplex will feature 30 auditoriums of differing sizes ranging from 102-seat cinemas to 544 seats with screens in proportion to cinema size. All eyes will be focused on this development as a gauge of 21st century movie-going trends.

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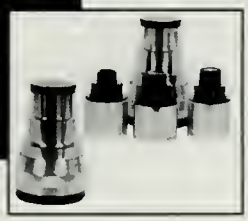
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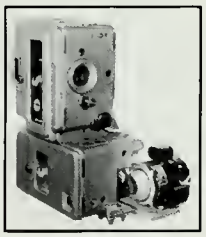
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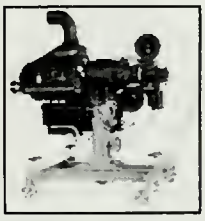
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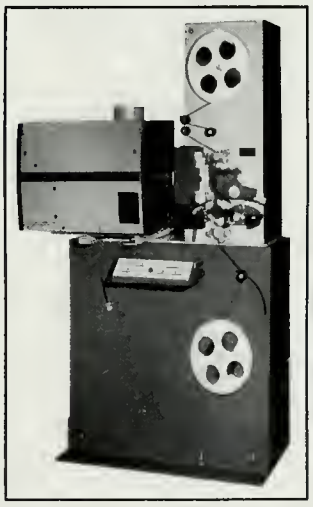


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Response No. 15

AUSTRALIA: DISTRIBUTOR'S DREAM OR NIGHTMARE?

A Personal View of Australia from the Distribution Side—Part Dream, Part Nightmare and Always Interesting

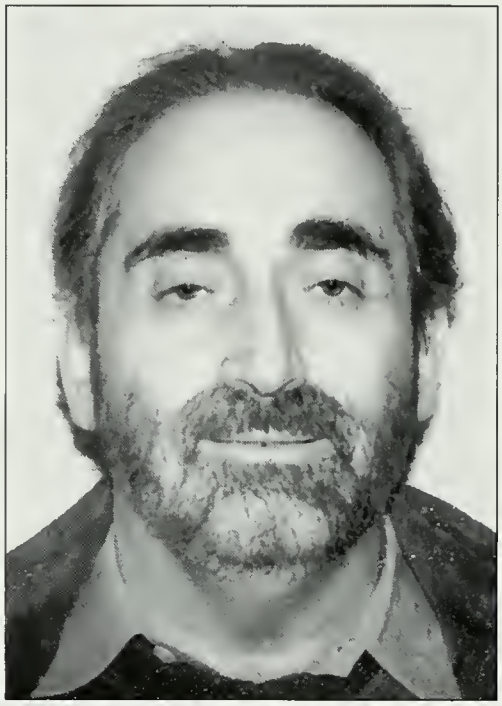
by Michael Selwyn
Managing Director, UIP Australia

There is a country where, in 1985, audiences went to the cinema 30 million times, an average per head of 1.9 visits per year. There was 1 screen for every 31,000 people and the boxoffice was US$121.6 million. In this country in 1996, audiences went to the cinema 74 million times, an average per head of 4.1 visits per year. There is now 1 screen for every 14,000 people with more being built and the boxoffice for the year was US$408 million.

Surely this is a distributor's dream and we have all gone to heaven.

Well, let's think about another country. Release costs are high and getting higher which makes the economics of a medium scale release a pretty uncertain endeavor. All the multiplexes are too small, which means that most films are fighting for sessions even on opening day and the rental terms are amongst the lowest in the known world.

Spare us from this nightmare.



Australia finds itself with a very large number of multiplexes. Many are very close to their neighbors, most have six to 10 screens and we have a fairly serious problem in coping with the large number of films looking for release.

Of course, both descriptions refer to Australia and the truth, as ever, is a combination of the differing points of view that you want to put forward.

When the multiplex revolution came to Australia, the first multiplexes were not very well designed—flat floors, aisles down the middle—and above all, they were built with six to eight screens. Also, most of the houses were of the same size. The design of the multiplexes slowly improved but even as late as 1994 or '95 there was very little stadium seating and the screen numbers still hovered around eight or 10 in a couple of locations. Distributors crying out for more screens per site were accorded about the same respect as some of the more grumpy Old Testament prophets. The result of all this is that Australia finds itself with a very large number of multiplexes. Many are very close to their neighbors, most have six to 10 screens and we have a fairly serious problem in coping with the large number of films looking for release.

However, all is not gloom. All exhibitors have seen huge success with their recent openings. Large multiplexes—12 screens in the first phase with more planned—with stadium seating, large screens and digital sound continue to show how keen the audience is for the "total cinema experience" style of the late 1990s. Buoyed by this, many sites have plans for additional mega-screens, and it seems now an accepted fate that 14 to 16 screens is a minimum to do business properly, with a couple of sites suggested for 24 or even more. The logic has been accepted, as has been seen in other locations such as Brussels in Belgium, that 24 screens is simply three times bigger than 8, PROVIDED you have the dedicated population.

So, assuming that the best locations are going to expand to 14 or 16 screens, what happens to the others? There is, to me, a clear solution that is vital to the growth of the theatrical business in Australia. We have to move forwards with the creation of a discount-house circuit and use these locations for that purpose. This will enable the exhibitors to expand their best locations to cope with the oversupply of film. They will be able to hold solid film longer to take advantage of subsequent weeks' terms and they will create a new window in the exhibition market to the advantage of everybody, including the consumer.

So, that's the Australian market: part dream, part nightmare and, in all ways, headed toward an interesting future.

BOXOFFICE *would like to thank the officers of the Motion Picture Exhibitors Association of Queensland for their assistance with the solicitation of this and other articles related to the Australian Movie Convention in this issue.*



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THE UPSIDE FROM DOWN UNDER

A Look at Australia's Booming Exhibition Industry

by Susan Lambert



CONVENTION CONNECTIONS: *MPEAQ president Richard Parton and wife, Lyn, with Paul Johnson, managing director of Hoyts, Sydney enjoy the 1996 Australian Movie Convention.* **(NOEL BENTLEY)**

Australia is a continent of contrasts. From the harsh stretches of desolate country outback to the surfers' and sunworshipers' paradise of the golden coasts; from the high rises and high culture of Sydney to the isolated islands of the great barrier reef, there is no one defining image of the land down under. And yet there is, to the world at large, a unique Australian sensibility. Something born of strength and beauty, something intrinsically connected to land and place, something adventurous, witty and undefinably bold. There is something so perfectly cinematic about the place and the people that movies have always been an important flashpoint for defining, and sometimes creating, the culture (think "'Crocodile' Dundee," "Mad Max," "The Man From Snowy River," "Strictly Ballroom," "Priscilla, Queen of the Desert," "Muriel's Wedding," "Babe" and this year's "Shine," just to name a few).

For going on 90 years, Australia has been considered by most to be a dominant force in Pacific Rim distribution and exhibition. As this year's annual Australian Movie Convention commences, the industry faces down the coming millennium with aggressive expansion, savvy marketing and high hopes.

The country of 18.3 million people currently supports 1,265 screens and counting. At the present rate of expansion, some screen count estimates put the number as high as 2,000 by the year 2000. Everyone agrees it won't take long for demographics to reach the point of one screen for every 10,000 people—a benchmark that would make Australian exhibition the per capita equal of the United States.

Concurrently, Australian boxoffice numbers have risen almost 100 percent since 1990, from AUS$284.5 million (US$224.7 million) to AUS$536.8 million (US$424.0 million) in 1996. Exhibitors are optimistic about the future, but it remains to be seen if '97 will be the eleventh consecutive year of rising boxoffice revenues for Australia and if the rising attendance levels (which last year reached 74 million admissions) can fill the increasing number of screens.

The three major exhibitors—The Greater Union Organisation, Hoyts Cinemas Ltd. and Village Roadshow Ltd.—currently make up an estimated 60-65 percent of the market. The fourth largest exhibitor, Queensland's Birch Carroll & Coyle, is owned by Greater Union, which also carries a 20 percent interest in Village Roadshow. Richard Parton, general manager of Greater Union's film division, says the advent of the multiplex—and now the megaplex—has definitely changed the face of exhibition, but he notes that exhibition has always been evolving. "It started in the early '60s with the drive-in," says Parton. "Then we went more or less to twins, triples and hardtops. The drive-ins went out of fashion and then we moved into multiplexes. Now we're looking at the megaplexes."

Greater Union, founded in 1912, plans to open Australia's first 30-screen complex in Marion by the end of the year. The megaplex will feature the latest in technology and theatre design—another trend that has greatly affected Australian theatres in the last decade—including stadium seating, digital sound and computerized ticketing systems. "From the presentation point of view, it's pretty hard to imagine where we go after this. All I see we can improve from here is what we can offer the patrons as they arrive—by creating more of a sense of excitement, offering better concessions, more gaming areas or coffee shops."

Ian Sands, managing director of Roadshow Film Distributors, a subsidiary of Village Roadshow Ltd., notes that the need to fill screens has brought along significant changes in distribution practices. Costs have spiraled; there is a glut of product, which means the medium-sized film tends to get squeezed out and the independent, specialty titles find themselves swimming alongside the mainstream films. According to Sands, "There is a blurring of the lines between what is straight commercial and what is specialized now." "I don't suppose we call them 'art-house' [films] anymore," agrees Parton. "That seems to be a word that's gone out of the dictionary. But the specialized type of film does get out here and can do reasonably good business."

GOOD AS GOLD

Australian Movie Convention offers the opportunity to explore the Gold Coast

When the more than 800-1,000 delegates descend on the Gold Coast's Royal Pines Resort this August 13 to 16 for the 1997 Australian Movie Convention, entertainment will be the focus of the week and it won't just be limited to the convention. Set on 200 hectares of manicured gardens at Ashmore, 5 km from Surfers Paradise, the Royal Pines Resort, which will host the convention for the second time, offers its guests a plethora of conference facilities and recreational activities. The surrounding Gold Coast offers a wonderland of entertainment opportunities for those who plan to extend their stay or find a free moment during the convention.



HOTEL AUSTRALIA: *Guests relax at the Royal Pines Resort Hotel.* **(GOLD COAST TOURISM BUREAU)**

In addition to their conference activities, delegates should take the opportunity to enjoy the recreational facilities at the Resort, including two 18-hole championship golf courses; a 25-meter indoor lap pool; lessons from tennis, swimming and golf professionals; a beauty salon and, should the need arise, a wedding chapel. Food lovers can enjoy a choice of six fine restaurants.

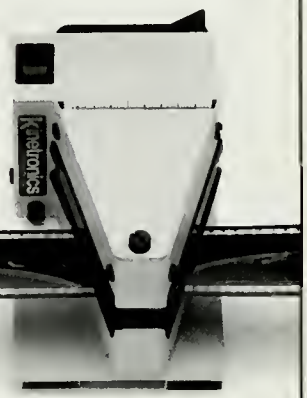
The Royal Pines Resort is also home to one of Australia's only resort wildlife sanctuaries, which accommodates koalas and wallabies and is run by local Currumbin Sanctuary. With more than 11,000 trees and 17 freshwater lakes, the resort boasts some of the most beautiful grounds in Australia. It has a strong commitment to the environment and has endeavored to ensure that some of the original features of what used to be a former dairy farm have been maintained.

Delegates are provided with a regular daily shuttle service to strategic points around the Gold Coast, a 35 km stretch of beach extending from Coolangatta to Southport with the high-rise splendor of Surfers Paradise at its center. Almost four million people annually head to the shores of the Gold Coast to enjoy everything from sunbathing to gambling. The Gold Coast is home to Australia's most exciting theme parks—Movie World, Sea World, Dreamworld, Wet 'n' Wild Waterpark and Cable Sportsworld—as well as the Fleays Fauna Center and Currumbin Sanctuary, which both have excellent collections of Australia's plant and wildlife. Water sports, including deep-sea fishing, are also a highlight of recreational activities available off the Gold Coast. South Stradbroke Island, in the deeper waters of the Pacific Ocean, is an angler's paradise.

Only a 30-minute drive from the heart of Surfers Paradise lies the magnificent Gold Coast Hinterland. Visitors to the area can enjoy rainforests with waterfalls, picturesque nature walks, guest accommodation, arts and crafts, restaurants and a bird's-eye view of the Surfers Paradise skyline. The diverse attractions, from the beautiful beaches to the Casino and local shopping centers, make the Gold Coast one of Australia's favorite holiday playgrounds. According to Richard Parton, president of the Motion Picture Exhibitors Association of Queensland, "There's plenty to do if you like surfing or if you like bushwalking or if you like going to the theme parks and shopping. So you've got a bit of everything there. If you can find time outside of the convention, well you certainly won't be bored."

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Lyn McCarthy, owner of Dendy Films, a nine-screen, five-site independent exhibitor and distributor, thinks the glut of screens and product is potentially very dangerous for the industry—particularly the trend to exploit specialty product to fill screens. "We're finding that small films are going out far too wide and what's happening is that the individual cinemas are making so much smaller a slice of the cake." McCarthy adds another consequence is that potential patrons are overwhelmed and turned off. "We're so busy churning out these films week after week, nothing stands out as being special. When you can get something to stand out, then you make some real money, but that doesn't happen as often as it used to." And what is true for the independent arthouse can also be applied to the local multiplex. According to McCarthy, if it's not "Lost World" or "Liar, Liar," a film can get lost in the shuffle.

As the market for new theatres approaches saturation, exhibitors are quickly re-thinking their strategies. Some talk about slowing down by the year 2000. But what happens then? Insiders say consolidation is the key. Peter Ivany, chief executive officer of Hoyts Cinemas, says that just like the patterns set by American companies, Australia will see the refurbishment of existing sites to bring them up to date. "Development never stops, but it changes," explains Ivany. Many agree that it's the ideal time to look at the older sites—the early multiplexes of six to eight screens—to see if they can be improved or developed.

Some believe there is too much worry about what isn't really a problem. John Rochester, chief executive officer of Reading Australia Pty Ltd., a new but growing player in the market, is not a great believer in saturation. "I can see why the industry says that will happen, but what actually happens is that a lot of older and more tired sites that really ought to have been rejuvenated and renovated years ago will be the casualty here."

"You pick up an idea from one market and try to get that across your circuit globally."
-Peter Ivany

It's clear that a pruning stage will come. Older theatres might have a second chance as a subrun or dollar house so "the industry will continue to thrive," Rochester maintains, though he agrees that the momentum will gradually stabilize. "People will start looking at deals a bit closer. Not every deal that comes along is a good deal. You don't have to take it just because somebody else might take it."

Of course, one of the answers to market saturation is international expansion. Hoyts, the country's oldest circuit, was the first to venture overseas by moving into the United States and New Zealand. The 186 theatres Hoyts now operates in Australia make up less than seven percent of its overall holdings. Currently, Hoyts operates 1,160 screens in the United States, Australia and New Zealand, with plans to move into Europe and Mexico. The circuit boasts a stated goal of 2,000 screens worldwide by 2000. Ivany says, "I think we'll be beyond that because we're running ahead of ourselves now. Now our five-year plan is 2002, and by that stage we'll be closer to 2,700 or 2,800 screens, the way we're going."

Being a player on an international market can give a company many advantages, according to Ivany. "I think from the American market we've learned what it's like to be in a market that's the most competitive in the world—how you can make different sizes of screens work in different areas and how you've got to be very specific in your building and your planning."

What is learned in one country can be applied to the other sites very quickly. Hoyts recently launched coffee in its United States theatres, which it's now implementing worldwide. Ivany continues, "We've learned to change the operating structures of our theatres so we can survive at different levels of income, in terms of manpower flexibility and automation. You pick up an idea from one [market] and try to get that across your circuit globally as soon as you can. You learn a lot about competitive strategy because it varies from market to market. You learn not to get bluffed."

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Village Roadshow is a prime example of a company that has not only expanded, but diversified its holdings to grow stronger. Founded in 1954 with a single drive-in, Village Roadshow now has 763 screens worldwide and separate divisions in film distribution, home entertainment, theme parks and film production. Exhibition still remains its core activity and accounted for more than a fourth of its cash flow last year. The company has aggressive plans for 3,000 screens in more than 20 countries by 2001, which includes expanding its Australian circuit to 660 screens. Greater Union is also now looking for offshore markets to develop on its own. The company has plans to build theatres in the Middle East, the first of which is a 10-plex in Dubai due to open in September, 1998.

Reading's Rochester sees Australia as one of the most aggressive markets in the world. "I think everyone has honed their skills in that regard due to the competitive nature of the industry." Reading, which has cinemas in the United States and Puerto Rico, stands directly in the face of that competition since the company announced its plans to have 100-150 screens and up to 10 percent of the market share by 2000. Its first plans were for a 25-screen, stand-alone complex in Burwood, Victoria, halted when the minister of planning ruled that cinemas could not be built outside of shopping or district centers. The decision put a crimp in Reading's plans for stand alone cinemas, but it still opened its first build, a six-plex at Townsville in northern Queensland, last December, and next up is another six-plex in Mandurah, Western Australia. Rochester, who previously worked for both Hoyts and Village Roadshow, says Reading is in for the long haul.

Rochester has great hope that, eventually, green-fielding [stand-alone theatres] will gain a foothold in Australia and alleviate some competition by moving the attention away from crowded city centers. "You've seen the trend emerging in the States. It's only going to be a matter of time before the whole industry wants to do it in Australia." Rochester is quick to add, "I know that we're not particularly welcomed by the existing players, but not to worry,—I think as the market matures that will change. We'd just like to take a meaningful place in what I regard as a very exciting industry and a terrific marketplace."

"It's definitely more competitive now. The stakes are much higher." -Lyn McCarthy

As the industry expands, the small, independent theatre owners find themselves being squeezed out of the market, particularly since multiplexes will now screen product that was traditionally seen as independent art-house fare. "'More challenging' is the nice way to put it," says McCarthy. "It's definitely more competitive now. The stakes are much higher."

This year's Movie Convention will highlight Australian film with a half-day seminar and special screenings. Homegrown product is very important to exhibitors and distributors.

Of the 278 films released last year in Australia, 24 were local productions which accounted for eight percent of the boxoffice totals. According to Parton, 1996 was an exceptional year for local films, and all because of a cute little pig. Exhibitors can normally expect about 10 to 12 percent of United States boxoffice results, but an Australian hit film, like last year's "Babe," can make all the difference. "While United States product really drives the business, when you do get a top Australian film like that, then you really are riding high," says Parton. Ivany says international acclaim for films like "Babe" and "Shine" not only boosts local boxoffice numbers, but also increases national pride —"It's important for the country."

Australia will be one of the first countries in the world to ring in the new millennium, literally and figuratively. Its strategic position, unique qualities and synergistic relationship with the United States' market makes it an important player in the film world. With the coming 21st century, the Australian film industry prepares to "Shine" on bright and bold toward a new age in theatrical exhibition.

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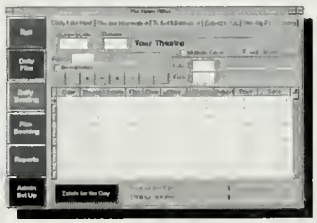
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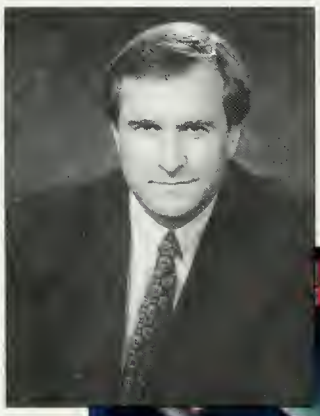
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Response No. 472

HOYTS SO GOOD

Roger Eaton Explains Hoyts' Campaign to Expand the Northeast Market *by Jon Alon Walz*

One of the most aggressive campaigns in recent memory will hit the U.S. east coast later in the year, and it will not, surprisingly, involve dirty politicians, tobacco companies, or a referendum on Manhattan rent control.



Rather, international exhibition powerhouse Hoyts Cinemas has stepped up its United States expansion on the eastern seaboard—from Maryland to Maine—with plans for almost 200 new screens within a year, for a total of 1,000 screens by the summer of 1998.

"We targeted the northeastern corner of the U.S. as a piece of territory that we believed was significantly underdeveloped, and we've now started to aggressively turn up the campaign," says Hoyts Cinemas President & Chief Operating Officer Roger Eaton. "The northeast is the most underperforming region in the United States currently, and that's where our focus has been."

Growth in movie attendance in the northeast has lagged behind the rest of the U.S. for most of 1996 as well as the first quarter of 1997. "The key reason is the facilities," Eaton surmises. "If you go into California or into Dallas you can see what's driving the increase in visitation rates. There are many pockets of the northeast that have traditionally done less the four admissions per annum, which is miles off the United States average."

Avoiding the major metropolitan areas almost completely in favor of developing moderately-sized multiplexes in suburban communities, has allowed Hoyts a certain level of comfort during this time of growth. While several large-scale exhibitors continue to define the urban landscape with 24 to 30 screen theatres in the big cities, Eaton feels Hoyts can get away with being more intimate.

"Because ours is a regional focus instead of a city focus, we typically build complexes with 12 to 16 screens," he notes. "We can get down to working with populations as low as 40,000 and 50,000 people, and obviously you're going to detail your investment to that group."



TOP LEFT: *Hoyts' President and COO Roger Eaton.*
ABOVE: *The showcase Solomon Pond Cinema 15 in Berlin, Mass.*

Recent openings of a new 10-plex in Fishkill, N.Y., a renovated and expanded (from 6 to 12 screens) complex in the nearby Hudson Valley Mall, and 15-screen flagship in the Solomon Pond Mall in Berlin, Mass. (a suburb of Boston) all typify Hoyts' current expansion philosophy.

The Solomon Pond Mall theatre is the first theatre in New England to offer stadium style seating and digital sound in all auditoriums, as well ATM-style ticket-purchasing machines.

"Solomon Pond opened about a month ago, and it's performing extremely well," Eaton explains. "We took a combination of the learning we've had from the rest of the United States and the world, and then zeroed in on our customers' requirements. We made the front page of the *Boston Globe*, which is not an easy thing to do, and we had four or five TV stations come out. We got massive coverage on that opening."

Hoyts has been a player in worldwide exhibition since its modest beginnings in Melbourne, Australia in the early 1900s. Founded by dentist Dr. Arthur Russell, the chain had expanded into the far reaches of Australia by 1926. In 1935, Russell sold the company to 20th Century Fox.

Investor Leon Fink bought the circuit from Fox in 1982, and added current CEO Peter Ivany, and other key executives including Roger Eaton. In 1986 the new, well-funded management decided that it was time to gain a stronghold in America.

"We started in '86 with two acquisitions, and a further one in 1988," Eaton says. The initial purchases were the Boston-based 96-screen Cinema Centres and the 72-screen Sonderling Broadcast Corp.

The company, however, has no current plans to expand outside of its northeastern base says Eaton. "When Peter Ivany initiated the expansion, he always had the view that if we kept in a concentrated area and got to know it very well, we'd be very successful. Basically the game plan has been to maintain the theatres we have, work with a very strong regional strategy and stay out of the key cities. It's worked very well for us.

"At the end of the day, the incomes people pick up in the northeast are pretty good," Eaton adds. "Real estate is obviously expensive and most development is a trickier proposition than it is in the rest of the U. S., but as we started to open the new theatres we've seen a very good response—that's why we've kept the rapid expansion going. We are very excited about our investment in the U.S. and feel that we'll continue to grow extremely fast."

A WHOLE "NEW" WORLD

New Zealand's Exhibitors Once Again Are Warriors

by Pat Kramer

As one of the latest countries to embrace multiplex development, New Zealand's exhibition industry has completely rebuilt itself over the past seven years, nearly doubling in size from 120 screens in 1990 to the current 234, and from six or seven million admissions to 14 million. And while not too long ago two major cinema chains dominated the industry, now the independents are claiming nearly 25 percent of the market share, up from under nine percent in 1990.

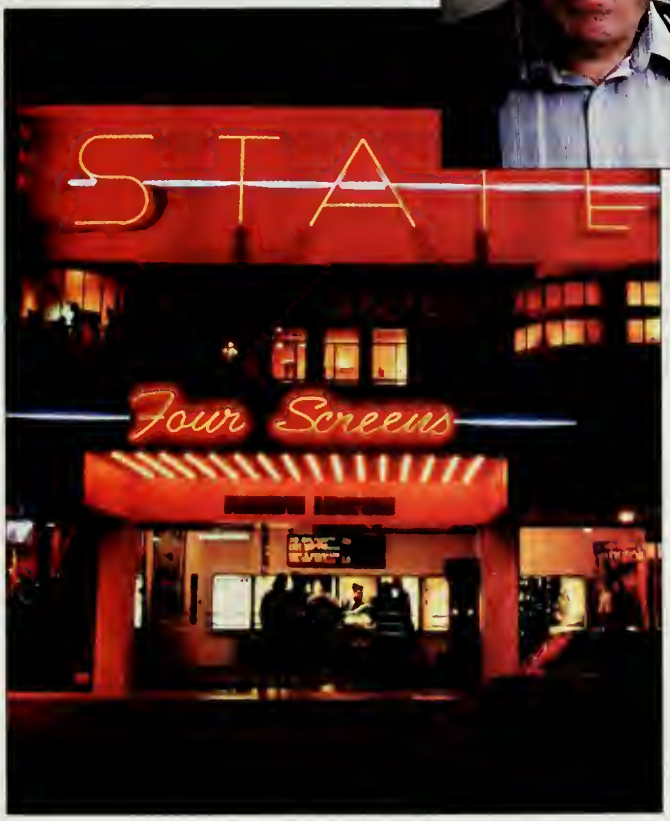
Part of the credit for this drastic turnaround goes to the New Zealand Motion Picture Exhibitors' Association (NZMPEA), whose president, Mark Christensen, is part-owner of the State Cinema Complex in Nelson, one of the more progressive multiplexes in the country.

Originally set up as a lobbying group for cinema exhibitors in the early '30s, the NZMPEA for many years served more to provide a point of contact for cinema operators than as a political organization. The main issue used to be the National Industry Awards System, which determined the rate of pay and working conditions for the entire industry. When the National Industry Awards System was thrown out in favor of the Employment Contracts Act in the early '90s, many independent exhibitors were relieved. "This move had a massive effect on improving the flexibility of working arrangements for independent theatre owners," says Christensen.

Free enterprise, however, was still years away due to a duopoly arrangement between the country's two major chains: Pacer Kerridge (formerly Kerridge Odeon) and Hoyts (formerly Amalgamated Theatres), which held onto 90 percent of the market share, making it very difficult for new exhibitors. Says Christensen, "The lack of real competition meant that there was no significant reinvestment by either chain in facilities or equipment."

In 1990, when Pacer Kerridge attempted to merge with Hoyts, a move which would have created a huge monopoly, the NZMPEA fiercely opposed it, along with the New Zealand Motion Picture Distributors' Association. The merger did not go through. In the wake of that decision, Multiplex Theatres Ltd., a group of independent investors, opened the country's first multiplex (a six-plex) in Palmerston North. Soon after, Christensen formed Multishowcase Cinemas of New Zealand Ltd., comprised of local investors interested in building a state-of-the-art multiplex. In 1992, the group acquired Nelson's historic State Cinema, an old art deco theatre built in 1936. They rebuilt it into a cutting-edge four-screen complex and renamed it the State Cinema Centre. While they were advised to build three theatres at the State, Multishowcase built four, adding "The Metro," a plush, 76-seat "boutique" theatre for showing art-house films. To service patrons—as well as the public—they built a fully-licensed gourmet restaurant, Cafe Metro. Other innovations included an automated boxoffice and concession system and advanced reservation seating by telephone. Christensen notes that the advance ticketing system has significantly contributed to rising admissions. "We set out really to do more than people were advising us to do," states Christensen.





TOP RIGHT: *NZMPEA president Mark Christensen.*
ABOVE: *The state-of-the-art State Cinema Centre in Nelson, NZ.*

Since opening in '92, they've added two DTS digital processors and two Dolby Digital processors, making the State the first complex in the country to become all-digital. And next year, two more screens will be added, bringing the State up to six.

In its five years of operation, the State Cinema Centre's admissions have far exceeded initial projections and have continued to build steadily, sometimes against national trends. According to Christensen, the State's occupancy rate is very high by local standards.

Now in his second term as president, Christensen says NZMPEA still faces several challenges, including finding ways for independents to jointly market their theatres to keep the independents' position strong. With New Zealand admissions nearly double what they were just seven years ago, Christensen proudly states, "It's a completely different industry from what it was. The independents' market share has increased substantially. We're now dealing with a lot of new companies, new people with new ideas, and the exhibitors' association has gone from a negative to a positive in peoples' minds.

"Most of the people in the industry now are energetic, forward-thinking, and forward moving, [which] is quite a change from when I first came into the organization in 1983," he continues. "As a result, even the provincial locations in New Zealand, far from the metropolitan centers, can now provide quality viewing experiences for their audiences."

TO THE MAX

Inside Miramax, the Most Successful Specialty Marketing Force in Movie History *by Wade Major*





ART AND COMMERCE: *A love of foreign films that started with Truffaut's "The 400 Blows" is embodied by Miramax's 1994 release "Red" (left). Bob Weinstein's brainchild Miramax/Dimension goes in for earthier, more exploitation-oriented fare, exemplified by Salma Hayek in "From Dusk Till Dawn."*

It's easy to imagine Max and Miriam Weinstein seated in the lap of 1950s post-war prosperity, staring into the beaming faces of their strapping baby boys and wondering just what sensational successes the American dream might offer them. As a diamond-cutter, Max had done well for the family. Surely little Robert and Harvey had as much to look forward to.

Little did they know.

Today, as co-chairmen of the company they named for their parents, Miramax Films, it's probably fair to say that Bob and Harvey Weinstein have done their parents proud. With a style alternately characterized as visionary and ruthless, rash and meticulous, the siblings from Queens have made an indelible mark on Hollywood, obliterating conventional wisdom while transforming art-house oddities like "My Left Foot," "The Thin Blue Line," "The Crying Game," "sex, lies and videotape," "Sling Blade" and "Clerks" into profitable movie classics.

Now in their early forties, the self-described "blue-collar guys with white-collar taste" have said they began their peculiar path to successfully merging art and commerce when, as teenagers, they hurried to see Francois Truffaut's "The 400 Blows" at the local art-house, mistakenly believing they were in for a sex romp. While the movie failed to deliver the hoped-for titillation, it nonetheless had a profound effect on the young Weinsteins, instilling in them a love for the medium and, more importantly, an awareness that cinematic magic did exist outside the bounds of Hollywood.

Some years later, after a brief flirtation with college, the boys made their first foray into the business world, renovating a dilapidated 3,000-seat theatre in Buffalo to serve as a base for concert promotion. Here the fledgling entrepreneurs honed their now-legendary marketing skills, hosting such then-hot acts as Billy Joel, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Genesis and The Grateful Dead.

> *"We were always like Israeli generals, because we were first into battle."*
> *-Harvey Weinstein*

In 1979, they shifted gears and formed Miramax Films, stepping into an overcrowded, underfinanced independent distribution marketplace where they would labor in obscurity for three years before finally securing the picture that would put Miramax on the map: an Amnesty International concert film featuring rock performances and comedy bits by Monty Python troupe members called "The Secret Policeman's Other Ball." As its first major acquisition rolled on to a then-staggering $6 million gross, Miramax suddenly found itself a player.

The fifteen years since that time have been the stuff of legend, highlighted by the 1993 sale of Miramax to Disney for a reported $60 to $80 million, and culminating with the indie powerhouse's recent near-sweep of the major

1996 Oscars, led by Best Picture winner "The English Patient." Having survived the tumultuous "mini-major mania" of the 1980s that saw promising companies like Cannon and Orion eventually reduced to bankruptcy, Miramax today leads the charge of a new breed proud to be called "independent." No longer driven to compete with the majors, many of today's independents are content with their status as prestige divisions. It is a measure of Miramax's influence that Universal Pictures' recent acquisition of October Films leaves only Paramount Pictures without such a specialty production and/or distribution arm.



As it has earned admirers, so also has Miramax's success inspired detractors, some of whom insist the company bends the rules of good business ethics. Defenders maintain that the Weinsteins are singled out for criticism out of jealousy, or because of their rough-and-tumble personae, pointing out that the practices for which they are most often attacked—everything from doctoring distribution charges and inflating boxoffice figures to deceptive marketing—are either unproven or have been standard operating procedure within the industry for decades.

Both friends and professional foes are drawn to the seeming contradictions behind a team that has redefined the creative and fiscal possibilities of specialized films. One longtime company observer defines them as simultaneously "the best and the worst thing that has ever happened to independent film."

With that status comes perceived power. Even Miramax's most fervent detractors are wary of offending the Brothers Weinstein; while many were willing to speak to **BOXOFFICE** on background for this piece, none would comment on the record. Surprisingly, those who view them warily are almost uniformly grudging admirers as well, confessing that the Weinsteins fill a vital niche in the marketplace. They play the hardball game of movie marketing the hardball way, and they do so with undeniably solid instincts: The company's '90s renaissance began when the Weinsteins used exhibitor eagerness over "The Grifters" as a wedge to line up mainstream bookings for the now-classic Italian film "Cinema Paradiso," which went on to become the most popular foreign-language release in the history of U.S. exhibition.

Acquiring and exhibiting quality films, as many distributors will confess, still paints only a partial picture. Finding an audience for a film, particularly specialty and foreign films, requires shrewd, even brutal, marketing. And the artists most able to thrive in their relationships with Miramax not only appreciate the Weinsteins' tough-minded business sense, many of them love them for it.

"We just like to make the movie," says "Clerks" writer/director Kevin Smith, whose recently released "Chasing Amy" is a textbook Miramax success story. "After that, it's their

"WE HAVEN'T SENSATIONALIZED IT, WE'VE REVOLUTIONIZED IT..."

As this issue was going to print, **BOXOFFICE** *was fortunate enough to catch up with Miramax co-chairman Harvey Weinstein, who rang us up via a London car phone for comments and reflections on his company's past, present and future.*

BOXOFFICE: For years, as Miramax grew, there was a negative media image of the company in general, and of you and Bob in particular. Why?

HARVEY WEINSTEIN: We at Miramax are so busy producing our movies, caring about our films, marketing our movies—what we don't do is get on the phone and spin bad stuff about our competitors. Finally, this year, for Rolling Stone, Bob and I took the gloves off. We couldn't just sit and be a punching bag any more. Since that time, we've heard some of the criticism subsiding, like this stuff about how we "gobble up the marketplace." I went to Cannes and saw a movie called "Dobermann" in the market. I sat and waited. I saw other executives from other companies walk out. I thought someone would step up and show their mettle or make a commitment on what was probably the best acquisition at the Festival. Nobody stepped up. Same thing with "Shall We Dance." We were in negotiations, we hadn't closed our deal. I watched Fine Line, October, all of them go into the movie and walk out. They passed. We spent a startling $300,000 on that acquisition.

BOXOFFICE: And yet, it's also important to you to have a passion for the film.

WEINSTEIN: I have a movie out right now which we produced with Film Four called "Brassed Off." I love this movie. It has not received the best reviews, but I am going to fight for this movie like I fought for "Sling Blade," and so is this company, because we believe in it. I don't care if the snotty critics in New York like it or don't like it. If nobody else is going to fight for movies like this, then we're going to fight for them.

BOXOFFICE: You and Bob have been compared with old-style studio bosses. How does that make you feel?

WEINSTEIN: When it's Irving Thalberg or David Selznick, I take that as a compliment. And, more often than not, those are the names we hear. I think both of those guys were intimately involved with their movies. They were hands-on. They made things happen. It's about having fun with the marketing and the advertising and talking to the audience. We won't say die on a movie that [deserves our best effort].

BOXOFFICE: Some people would say that rather than have fun with the marketing, you're actually sensationalizing it.

WEINSTEIN: We haven't sensationalized it, we've revolutionized it. We've taken these movies out of the ghetto, which was mission number one, through a combination of savvy marketing and, more importantly, producing. People work so hard to make a movie—the sweat that directors and writers and other people go through. And then for a distribution company to be blase'? I wouldn't want my movie to be handled by some blase' company when I killed myself to make it.

BOXOFFICE: Throughout the '80s, you resisted the trend to expand and compete with the studios, and now you've been vindicated for it. Was that far-sightedness on your part or, as you have often said, just "sticking to your knitting"?

WEINSTEIN: I think sticking to the knitting is what we've always been good at. I'm so thrilled that after all the success of "The English Patient," the very next hit we had was "Chasing Amy," made for $250,000. To me, that's Miramax. The biggest gamble of our lives turns out to be correct, and then the smallest risk we've ever taken turns out to be a hit. I've said this a thousand times: it's all about taste. When people have passion and taste, it's in the script, it's the writing. Last year, all the independents together released a hundred movies and we released about thirty. We out-grossed them all. There's plenty of room for other people and other companies, but they've got to stop throwing slings and arrows at Miramax and look to themselves and ask why they aren't doing a better job.

BOXOFFICE: You're a subsidiary of a company whose very name conjures up the taste of its founder. If you could look 100 years into the future, what kind of company would you like for Miramax to have become?

WEINSTEIN: I'd like to see Miramax grow in the Walt Disney tradition and become a brand name for quality films. And whether a film got a good review or a bad review, [I'd be happy] if people just said, "It's adventurous filmmaking and there's taste and intelligence behind it. Even if it's not a hundred percent what we want it to be, the experience of it is something that we'll talk about, and we'll celebrate cinema."

call. I don't know a thing about marketing, so I would never argue with them about a marketing campaign. When they first came up with the poster for 'Chasing Amy,' my take was that it looked like a Details cover. But Harvey said, 'Trust me, trust me. It's very eye-catching. It'll work.' And he was right."

Smith's faith in Miramax marketing is buoyed not only by his positive "Clerks" and "Chasing Amy" experiences, but by a less-than-encouraging detour with Polygram subsidiary Gramercy for his second film, "Mallrats"—a critical and commercial failure. "The people at Gramercy were really nice, but they don't know how to market a film like Miramax does. Miramax can take a movie that will probably never see an audience, and they'll find it an audience."

Smith claims that, without the Weinsteins, Miramax's remaining assets would amount to little, a judgment clearly shared by the Disney brass who eagerly re-upped the Weinsteins for another seven years only three years into the Disney/Miramax deal. As Disney's resources allow Miramax to grow, questions have risen among some observers as to how the Weinsteins will manage the company's transformation from its boutique roots.

A recent exodus of senior executives suggested to some that the Weinsteins have a hard time sharing power. Harvey Weinstein disputes this. "I think we have some new stars at the company," he told **BOXOFFICE**, "and it's time for Bob and me to play more of a chaperone role, like the guiding light. We were always like Israeli generals, because we were first into battle. Now we are starting to see real stars, not only in marketing and publicity, but with some of the younger production kids. It's amazing to watch your assistants become vice presidents, to see the guys who used to spill my coffee on me now making production decisions involving millions of dollars."

"I think they're used to doing everything,"

"Miramax takes a movie that will never see an audience and finds it an audience."
-Kevin Smith

says "Pulp Fiction" producer Lawrence Bender, who is making five films with Miramax this year alone. "And as the company gets bigger, they're realizing that they *can't* do everything, even working around the clock. There still aren't enough hours in the day. At the studios it's the opposite. There's so much delegation that no one really takes responsibility for anything."

Others say the Weinsteins' willingness to publicly accept blame as well as take credit is proof of their integrity. "The biggest disappointment of everything that I've done has been a movie that I love, called 'Into the West,'" Harvey Weinstein told GQ magazine in 1995. "I marketed it like a Disney movie because we had just signed the Disney deal, and I did all sorts of Disney testing. And at the end of the day, I completely blew the marketing. It haunts me. I want another chance."

Competitors, however, say that the Weinsteins are "ghettoizing" independent film with tabloid-style marketing better suited to the studio world. While Fine Line, Fox Searchlight, October, Gramercy and Sony Pictures Classics have all made strides in recent years, Miramax-scale success continues to elude them. "If the other majors all want to have specialty labels," says Marcy Granata, executive vice president of marketing and publicity at Miramax, "they're going to have to have a lot of patience with them. It doesn't come overnight. You have to want to nurture a movie. What this company has is that way to nurture a film."

As Smith sees it, Miramax's exceptional performance is just further proof that the other companies don't know what they're doing. "In order to pick great films," he says, "you have to be a great member of the audience. That's what these guys are, first and foremost. They like to watch movies. You talk to a lot of other studio heads and production execs and you find that these cats don't go to a theatre. They'll do test screenings, but if you ask them in their spare time, 'Did you see a movie over the weekend?' they'll usually say, 'No.' Bob and Harvey not only check out all of their own

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flicks, but they check out the competition as well, with a real audience."

Success hasn't come equally in all areas, however. Miramax's first forays into production were discouraging. The 1990 film "The Lemon Sisters," starring Diane Keaton, bombed, as did the Molly Ringwald starrer "Strike It Rich," released the same year through the company's now-defunct Millimeter division. But Bender—who with Quentin Tarantino delivered Miramax's most successful in-house production to date with "Pulp Fiction"—contends that those early, leaner production days are coming to a close.

"I definitely think there has been a learning curve at the company. I don't think that they were as strong with in-house production in terms of what they developed initially, but it has definitely changed. They learned that they needed to bring in development people. I think people are going to start changing their tune when the current crop of movies starts coming out."

Smith also discounts rumors of Harvey's alleged predilection for seizing control of the editing process, an alleged trait which has earned him the dubious nickname among Miramax detractors of "Harvey Scissorhands." "We were really nervous about 'Chasing Amy,'" he says, "because the first cut was about two hours and five minutes. We thought the dude would really blow a gasket and go, 'You're out of your minds! Cut it by a half hour!' The first time we showed it to him, he hugged us and kissed us and said, 'Come here. You guys made a beautiful f--king movie.' And Scott and I were thinking that's how they should market the flick: 'Chasing Amy,' the movie that made Harvey Weinstein kiss two guys!"

Having changed the entire nature of American independent film, Miramax continues to expand its reach. "I think we're re-inventing ourselves every day," says Meryl Poster, Miramax's executive vice president of production. "The scripts we're getting right now are all epic romances, like 'The English Patient.' Well, we did 'The English Patient,' and I don't think we're going to do it again. So when some of the other companies try to emulate our formula, we'll be on to something different."

"When others try to emulate our formula, we'll be on to something different." -Meryl Poster

A four-year-old book division is flourishing, aided by best-sellers like the screenplay for "Pulp Fiction" and a novelization of "The Piano." A three-year-old soundtrack division has had similar success with soundtracks for "Smoke" and the Oscar-winning score to "Il Postino." And, last but far from least, Miramax's upstart genre label, Dimension, which was created and is run primarily by Bob Weinstein, has finally hit its stride with the Wes Craven horror/comedy "Scream"—Dimension's first-ever $100 million grosser.

In the end, what seems to irk certain power brokers about the Weinsteins may have less to do with their power than their freedom. Even as they enjoy the privileges of major players and A-list insiders, the Weinsteins cultivate and maintain their hard-won status as the consummate outsiders. Few would say they've mellowed, but success has undoubtedly changed them in some ways. Harvey Weinstein in particular seems more and more willing to look upon the companies Miramax competes against as reflections of its influence, and therefore, in an odd way, as a part of the Miramax legacy. "It's not that there are fewer good studio films or that the studios have given up on serious fare," Harvey wrote in a March 24 Los Angeles Times editorial that appeared just hours before this year's Oscar ceremony. "It's that the independents (most of which have studio backing) are now competing on a more level playing field, both at the boxoffice and in the Oscar race... Everyone who works in the movie business, be it at a studio or an independent, or an independent affiliated with a studio, is part of the same film community. What unites us is our love and passion for all different kinds of movies."

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STRAIGHT SHOOTING

New York's THE SHOOTING GALLERY Cooks Up a Recipe For Indie Success *by Alex Albanese*

With "Sling Blade's" $10 million sale to Miramax and its subsequent Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay, the spotlight suddenly found New York City's The Shooting Gallery, the indie production company that gave Billy Bob Thornton the green light for his low budget debut. Already known in some circles for its formula of buying filmmakers large amounts of creative freedom with tight cost control on ultra-low budgets, TSG now has the industry attention and momentum needed to become a player. But its field of choice will remain character- and story-driven independent film, where unknowns have a chance and productions are fueled more by passion than dollars.



A HANDS-OFF PRODUCER: *Meistrich (left) makes an uncharacteristic set visit to TSG's "Drunks."*

Their offices perfectly embody the company's ideals of no nonsense success—on the edge of uber-trendy SoHo, TSG occupies an airy top floor space with a wrap-around deck, but there are none of the precious design frills that are epidemic in that neighborhood; just a comfortable, straightforward workspace, where even executive vice presidents share offices and answer their own phones. "Would I like to have somebody answering my phones?" Nancy Kriegel, the new head of production, asks rhetorically. "Sure. Can I live without it? Absolutely."

Kriegel, who joined The Shooting Gallery in March, is part of the current post-"Sling Blade" growth spurt that, with the recent addition of a foreign distribution arm, post production facilities and services, and a plan on the boards for a studio and back-lot complex along Manhattan's Hudson River, is turning the indie production company into a full service East Coast studio. "It's amazing," says Kriegel, "it's like being in Hollywood in 1925."

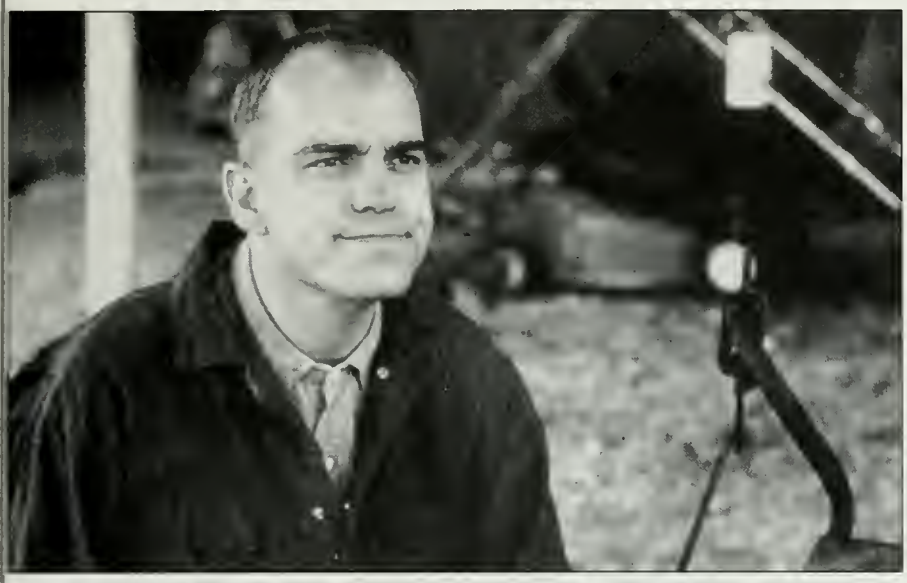
With two films currently in production, three in the cutting room and two more finishing prep, Kriegel may soon need an assistant, but the basic "lean and mean" philosophy of the company is one thing that won't be changing any time soon. "Most of our budgets range from $1.5 million or less to about $2.5 million," Kriegel states. "That is our mandate: to make low-budget, quality movies without the fat. We have an opportunity to create a company that makes movies as well as the studios do, and in as practical and professional a manner, but without all the bureaucracy—and all the money."

Though they started making low budget movies out of necessity, executive producer Larry Meistrich, the 30-year-old head of the company, doesn't ever want to make movies with Hollywood budgets. "My personality," he says "couldn't handle negotiating with the agent of an actor who we're paying $20 million, but who only wants to work four days every other week. I don't have the temperament to have a pleasant conversation about that, and philosophically I just think it's wrong to spend $220 million on a movie." He professes to be put off by perk package wars and the other "unreasonable, inappropriate behavior" that seems to accompany big money and the studio mindset. "I'd much rather just perform." He candidly admits things are "much bigger than I thought they would be when we started, and it's happened a lot faster. I'm a CEO. Five years ago I didn't know what that meant! But I think we've stepped up, and I'm surrounding myself with good people."

His unexpected success is in an industry Meistrich came upon pretty much by chance. "I wasn't some burning film guy since I was eight years old. I was actually more into sports." But he must have been as tenacious and resourceful an athlete as he is a producer—

despite his average size, he played football for Johns Hopkins University, where he was "the smallest guy in the conference."

While at Hopkins, a teammate's girlfriend got a bit part in a movie shooting in Baltimore. "She mentioned they were looking for criminals for this jail scene, and we should go and check it out," Meistrich says. It turned out the convicts needed to dance, and an injury prevented Meistrich from finishing the audition. But because "I had no idea how any of this worked," he managed to bluff his way through a singing audition and ended up heading to a final casting session with one other hopeful. The other gentleman, who had studied drama at Yale, became irritated when he discovered Meistrich "just came here on a goof. He was all offended. I thought, 'They're going to be mean to me and I'm going to be messed with.' I walk in with this huge chip on my shoulder, and they just look at us and tell the other guy 'All right, you can leave.'"



THROUGH THE ROOF: *"Sling Blade" catapulted both writer-director Billy Bob Thornton and producing-financing company The Shooting Gallery into the indie film vanguard.*

The film was John Waters' "Cry Baby," and Meistrich's role as a featured extra gave him a week's exposure to the workings of a movie set. Intrigued, he hooked up after graduation with a friend's brother who was working as an assistant location manager. "I started working for free, and had the dumb luck to literally work every day for the next two and a half years. I was able to pack a huge amount of experience into a short period of time."

During that period Meistrich worked every crew position "except hair and make up." What he did most was assistant direct, production manage, and meet other young filmmakers on the way up—on "Law and Order" he worked as the second AD under Good Machine's Ted Hope. "I was trained very well by Ted," he states. Getting an idea of how production companies ran, Meistrich decided he could run one too. He and Bob Gosse started The Shooting Gallery for about $7,000 as a "film commune" for struggling young independent filmmakers like themselves, sharing office space, materials and equipment. "We took turns locking up at night, and made money by helping people crew up, or drove around stealing parking cones so we could rent them for 50 cents a day.

"In New York," Meistrich explains "most crew people have other aspirations. If you're on a movie, you can crew up your own projects with the seconds and thirds you're working with, that's how we started. We met John Patrick Shanley in a bar and he gave us the rights to a short story he'd written."

That story, "The Lonely Impulse of Delight," was made into a short film starring Lili Taylor and Eric Stoltz in 1989. "We started very slowly in a lot of ways, and were able to go from there to there to there pretty quickly, but without skipping any steps."

The partners solidified their knowledge of "nuts and bolts" low budget production on six more self-financed shorts over the next three years. They also line produced two others on a work-for-hire basis—a method of bringing income to the company that is still used today through their Gun For Hire division. In 1992, they also raised $38,000 to produce their first feature, Nick Gomez's "Laws of Gravity." That film has grossed $4 million to date, and it turned a film co-op into a legitimate indy production company.

Over the next four years TSG produced another 16 feature films, 10 of them self-financed by a network of direct investors who still fund their projects today. Those films included Gomez's "New Jersey Drive," and "Illtown," Gosse's "Niagara, Niagara" and Thornton's "Sling Blade." Their largest budget to date has been $6 million, and Meistrich swears no film Shooting Gallery finances without additional backers will ever cost more than eight. "We're capped budgetarily on what we could put of our own money into a film. We made the decision a long time ago to protect ourselves from ourselves," Meistrich states. TSG currently has a two year first-look deal with New Line to co-finance films that are more expensive than $8 million.

"We are really set up in a very simple, common sense way," Meistrich says. "Money and art are two completely separate things. We know this can is worth 10 cents," he adds, indicating his ever-present can of Dr. Pepper, "so we have to make it for eight. If somebody buys it for 20, that's a bonus, but we have to get 10 to stay in business. When we budget a project, we come up with a number—what the genre, cast and filmmaker are worth—so we'll get 10 cents for our eight. The director has final cut, cast approval, script approval, music approval—it's his movie. We say, 'Here's the deal: You respect my money, you have all those things. As soon as you go over budget you've lost them.' I haven't watched dailies in four years. I'll see the movie when the director asks me to, and he doesn't have to listen to my opinion. It's his job to make it good, with our guidance and help if he wants it. Ultimately, it's his name and his career, because I've made my margin the day we started. I know what we're selling it for."

When asked if he knew "Sling Blade" would be the project that really put the company on the map, Meistrich responds frankly. "Not in the script stage. It was a great script, and I had a gut feeling about Billy, but when I was at the mix, I said this movie deserves an Oscar. I actually won a bet on that. To me, Billy's at another level than most people, and you could sense that on set. But I'm one of those people who tries to tell the truth, I have no idea what's going to be successful or not. We try to make films that are good stories, and that we like. I think we have decent taste, but sometimes they're average, and sometimes it rained two weeks and you had to change things around. There's just a million things that affect the quality of a film that you can't control.

"'Sling Blade' was as much luck as it was talent," he continues." It didn't rain, everybody got along, nobody got hurt or sick. Billy's from [the shooting location], and we got a tremendous amount of stuff for free—probably a million bucks of just free stuff and that all played into the success of the film. It gives you money for extra toys, tools and time."

TSG has and will continue to make films in a variety of genres. According to Meistrich the two factors most important in choosing a project are the story and "first and foremost a certain level of commitment from the person bringing it to us, starting with Nick Gomez who lived in the cutting room during 'Laws of Gravity' because he was so broke. 'Sling Blade' not only meant a tremendous amount to Billy personally, but the limb that he went out on professionally... If the character had come off like some cheesy Gump imitation he would have been a laughingstock. I respect that level of risk and commitment.

"We've really been able to build a company around our production skills," he concludes, "and we can deal with filmmakers in a way that isn't obnoxious, because I can give creative alternatives to a problem instead of just saying no. If we're trying to build a name brand for our company, it's really as simple as having people not feel ripped off when they leave the theatre. Not every film is going to reach the height of a 'Sling Blade,' but you shouldn't be pissed off that you spent 8 bucks to see it."

LIVE WIRE

Indie Producer/Distributor Live Has New Lease on Life

by Jon Matsumoto

When Roger Burlage joined Live Entertainment in 1994 as president and chief executive officer, the Van Nuys, Calif.-based company was an ailing video distributor in Chapter 11. Three CEOs had come and went in the five years since the 1989 death of founder Jose Menendez (a crime for which sons Lyle and Erik were convicted). Burlage eased the company's debt by selling a record chain and a European video operation.

Today, Live says it's the largest full-service film independent. It now has film, home video, TV and international in-house distribution divisions as well as being involved in production. And it has a new parent: This April, Burlage helped engineer the sale of Live to a private investor group led by Chicago-based Richland Gordon & Co., which reportedly paid at least $150 million in cash and assumed debt.



B.O. RX: *James Spader stars in Sidney Lumet's "Critical Care," which Live is releasing wide this November.*

The deal gives Live a financial boost to compete in the current indie marketplace—an aim that required the company to enter film production and distribution given the dearth of product available for its video distribution network. "We had to go into [film production]," says Elliot Slutzky, Live's executive vice president of theatrical distribution and marketing. "This company was a video company prior to that, and all Live did was secure video rights to various titles. That business is going away, because any studio that's going to invest in a motion picture and invest what it's going to take to bring it to the marketplace is going to have to have video rights. In order to survive, we had to produce our own product."



LIVE TRIO: *Pres./CEO Roger Burlage; Elliott Slutzky, executive vice president; and Steve Rothenberg, sr. VP/domestic distribution.*

Live also realized that procuring top-tier indie films for distribution was becoming a more difficult process. Slutzky points out that major studios are now eager to snap up quality independent features following the success of such small films as "Shine" and "Sling Blade." "It's harder and harder to get quality films when the majors are out there with their big bucks gobbling everything up," he says.

Still, Live management believes there is a place for feisty and smart independent film companies in the land of the giants, particularly since space has opened up with indies Miramax and New Line now operating under the aegis of conglomerates. Slutzky feels that $100 million blockbuster movies will continue to be the main priorities of the big studios, and in this atmosphere low-budget fare can sometimes get lost in the shuffle—leaving an opening for operations like Live.

According to Steve Rothenberg, senior vice president of domestic theatrical distribution, to succeed Live must avoid going head-to-head with mega-movies like "The Lost World"—i.e., it will sit out the summer and Christmas crushes. "What's helped is that exhibition has essentially increased in the past few years in terms of the number of screens and the number of megaplexes," Rothenberg says. "They obviously want good product. Domestically, our game plan is to give them good viable product, especially during the times when the majors won't be supplying them with their big mega-hits. We're going to try to supply films in months like September, October, November, January, February, March and April.

"Our strength is, we can give exhibitors the product when they need it, during the off-season when they have 24 screens" and no blockbusters to occupy multiple screens.

Live has been producing its own films for the past several years. Last year, its "The Substitute" and "The Arrival" were distributed through Orion. This fall, Live will release a diverse slate. "Suicide Kings," a black comedy starring Christopher Walken, debuts in mid-September; frightmeister Wes Craven's "Wishmaster" opens in October; and Sidney Lumet's "Critical Care," a satirical drama about the state of health care, will open in November. (Also, this August, Live hopes to make an impact with the 10th anniversary re-release of "Dirty Dancing," a Patrick Swayze title for which Live sells about 500,000 videocassette copies annually. The movie will be presented in 25 U.S. cities in exclusive or semi-exclusive engagements; new prints with digitally remastered soundtracks have been struck.)

Live plans to produce seven to 10 films each year, most with budgets of $5 million to $10 million but some that cost more. ("The Arrival," for example, cost about $20 million.) Niche audiences will remain a target. "We hope to make a film or two a year that will appeal to an African-American audience," Rothenberg says. "We certainly think that's a niche that's viable. We have a film [like that] called 'The Real' set for Martin Luther King weekend."

Live will also continue to acquire rights to three or four indie films produced elsewhere. This spring, the company landed North American rights to "Tarzan and Jane," a Village Roadshow production, and Live took domestic rights to "Standing Knockdown," a film that Mario Van Peebles will star in and direct.

"We're hoping with the influx of cash from the new owners that we'll be able to continue releasing films with the big P&A budgets that we've had in the past with 'The Arrival' and 'The Substitute' through Orion," Rothenberg says. "We'll continue to do that with 'Wishmaster' and 'Critical Care.' That's money that's desperately needed by any company if its film is to be heard through the noise of all the other films out there. So in that respect we feel we'll only benefit by the new ownership."

FIRST BORN

Art-House Distributor First Look Adopts Cautious Challenges

by Sean O'Neill

Spend time talking with Ellen Little, president, co-chair and co-CEO of First Look Pictures, and it quickly becomes apparent she favors two words in conversation—words that define her company.

The first is "challenge." A fast glance at the indie distributor's projects over its first four years of operation—e.g., the hypercomplex talkfest "The Designated Mourner," the male prostitute-themed "johns," and the Vietnamese-language "The Scent of Green Papaya" (a film that Little's husband, co-chair Robert, likened to "watching paint dry")—seem anything but safe choices in today's marketplace.

The second is "caution." Although First Look, first during the tenure of co-founder Ray Price and now during that of senior vice president of domestic distribution and marketing MJ Peckos, has gained a reputation for taking on difficult properties, the company never makes an acquisition without plenty of strategizing—simply, who will see this film?

A division of the Littles' Overseas Filmgroup, First Look launched in 1993. "My husband Rob and I," Little says, "being of the age group that was brought up on foreign-language films—Fellini, Antonioni, Truffaut—[means] this is something we have a great affinity for. Having lived in Italy for 15 years, we felt a great frustration when we moved back here in 1980 that there wasn't a bigger market for foreign-language films. That was one of the things that led us to opening our own domestic distribution operation.

"Also, we felt that it would attract talent to our company," Little continues. "Because our primary business is the sale of films overseas, and with the video market dying, we felt that it was really important to release films ourselves and to find films that we thought were marketable—like "The Secret of Roan Inish," which is a wonderful film but one that everyone had passed on because they weren't sure how to market it. But First Look figured it out and turned it into a success."

"As we got involved in distribution, we realized that this specialized marketplace was a very interesting and challenging one. When MJ came aboard, we became interested in finding films that were a challenge to market or that we thought had a special appeal to audiences that respond to our kinds of films."

So what exactly defines a First Look film? The company's release slate has been esoteric, as some other titles indicate: "Antonia's Line," which like "The Scent of Green Papaya" won



FIRST LADY: *Co-head Ellen Little.*

an Oscar for best foreign-language film; "Party Girl," a sweetly twisted tale of a hard-partying librarian; "Infinity," a romance that was Matthew Broderick's directing debut; and "Bitter Sugar," about life in contemporary Havana.

The one throughline for these films would seem to be Little's varied tastes, but she explains the company's choices this way: "We can't get into a bidding war with Miramax or New Line on a project. So either we have to come into a project early on, or we see something that everyone else is iffy about.



NEVER RESTS: *Always on the lookout for new product, First Look has acquired "The Other Side of Sunday."*

"We can't always have a boxoffice hit with every challenge that we face. But we have to give it a try, and certainly each of the films we've distributed has been a puzzle in and of itself. That's where we count to a great extent on the critics to help promote the films we pick, and we just have to hope that they'll see what we see in a film. Sometimes we'll get some of them but not all. On 'Roan Inish,' I think we got practically every critic. On 'The Scent of Green Papaya,' I think one critic liked it."

Of course, some challenges are more surmountable than others, Little says. "There are certain films where we see that there's a built-in market, like for the gay audience, and we like to support films we feel are meaningful in that respect and also, most of all, are well made."

Indeed, First Look pictures do have a common element: All are small in budget but not in spirit. Each is an idiosyncratic work, an expression of a filmmaker who has an original and undiluted vision. In a word, each are "independent" films. Of course, with such acquisitions as Goldwyn and Orion by MGM and of October by Universal, the original meaning of "independent film" has been changing.

Yet in that Little sees opportunity. "There aren't that many truly independent distribution companies left, and I think that puts us in a unique situation. With the Miramaxes and Octobers and Sony Classics all being hooked up with majors, that allows them to have much deeper pockets than we do. But it also means they're inevitably getting involved in bigger pictures. That leaves us an open road into new talent, finding and procuring new talent, and giving those filmmakers the kind of attention that only we can give." Adds Peckos, "We release six to eight movies a year, so we're really able to devote a great deal of time to each picture."

It might not have a Dow 30 titan for a corporate parent, but First Look is hardly penniless. Overseas last year merged with Entertainment/Media Acquisition Corp., a Wall Street investment group, so First Look has the financial wherewithal to enter more projects at the script stage. Yet the bankroll hasn't substantially affected how First Look does business. "Nothing has really changed in terms of the way we pick a picture, or our caution in selecting a picture and going ahead with it," Little says. "If anything, now having shareholders, the responsibility we feel has been heightened." That's not a surprise, coming from the woman who runs a cautious company that thrives on challenges.

GEORGIA ON MY MIND

ShowSouth Brings Southern Hospitality to Exhibitors

by the ShowSouth Administration

"Hush Your Mouth, It's ShowSouth! The Best Little Theatre Convention in Dixie!"

As chairman of ShowSouth, I wish to extend to all fellow exhibitors and showmen my personal Southern invitation to come see us, yah heah? Experience what Southern hospitality is all about with a little golf, Southern cooking, and fun with old and new friends, way down in Dixie.

Looking forward to seeing you in Georgia at the 1997 biggest and best ever ShowSouth. I wish to thank all our sponsors and program participants who have continued to generously support ShowSouth. All good wishes. Best regards,

—John Hardwick Stembler Jr.
Chairman, ShowSouth



SOUTHERN GENTLEMEN: *(Left to right): Lefont Theatres' George Lefont, president of Atlanta Variety Club and NATO of Georgia; Bob Sedlak of Regal Cinemas, a founder of ShowSouth; and John Stembler Jr. of Georgia Theatre Co., chairman of ShowSouth.*

Georgia theatre owners have served movie patrons for over 85 years. Many of the Georgia exhibitors in years past worked long and hard to form theatre associations that eventually became the local branch of NATO (National Association of Theatre Owners). John Stembler Sr., Carl Patrick Sr. and Nat Williams pushed to start NATO of Georgia, which is the primary organizer of today's ShowSouth.

NATO of Georgia's first president was Tommy Thompson of Hawkinsville, who at that time was president of the M&T (Martin and Thompson) theatre circuit. Tommy served as president for over 20 years and started Georgia's first local conventions, later joined by Alabama and Tennessee. This regional show became well-known for its workshops and seminars in the early 1970s, and hosted the NATO national convention in Atlanta.

With such new young showmen as Bill Stembler, John Thompson, George Lefont, Nat Williams, Barron Godbee, John Stembler Jr., and James Edwards, NATO of Georgia reached out. With the help of Alabama's Rufus Davis; Tennessee's H.P. Vinson and Leon DeLosier; North and South Carolina's Herman Stone and Ulmer Eaddy; and the late Jack Mitchell of Florida, the regional convention called Southeastern NATO was formed. Attendance eventually grew to 500 with locations rotating among the participating states. Jack Mitchell held a great show in Orlando, Bill Stembler in Savannah, Rufus Davis in Port Clear and Fred Massey in Nashville.

However, times were changing and independent exhibitors gave way to big mergers. Local shows gave way to ShoWest and ShowEast.

In 1993, Variety Club of Georgia moved their annual golf fundraiser to Callaway Gardens Resort in Pine Mountain, Georgia. Many old friends getting together in a successful event started a move to bring back NATO of Georgia. Meeting at

Callaway in 1994, 10 exhibitors got together and elected officers: Bill Stembler, chairman of the board; George Lefont, president; Bob Sedlak, vice president; Rick Adams, secretary; Dennis Merton, treasurer; and John Stembler Jr., delegate at large. This was the beginning of the current ShowSouth, with its slogan "Hush Your Mouth, It's ShowSouth! The Best Little Theatre Convention in Dixie!"

ShowSouth has grown to a projected attendance of 200 for 1997. Backed by film companies and equipment suppliers, ShowSouth has been helping educate theatre personnel to better serve the moviegoing public. Seminars and workshops will be offered on concessions and other important topics.

This year's show will be held on Tuesday, August 19 and Wednesday, August 20. The programs will include an address by National NATO president Bill Kartozian, who will brief us on industry concerns and achievements. There will be a panel of exhibitor relations representatives from 10 film companies showing their upcoming products and promotional ideas. Coca-Cola and ShowSouth will have a motivational speaker to help enlighten theatre personnel in areas of concession sales and employee courtesy.

Two years ago, ShowSouth started a fund to award $1,000 scholarships to deserving employees from theatres in the South. These will be awarded Wednesday during the luncheon. ShowSouth will also present its annual Statesman Award to James Edwards, former president of Storey Theatres. Past Statesman Award winners include Ulmer Eaddy, Barron Godbee and Kip Smiley Sr.

So, as you can see, ShowSouth is growing into a must-attend event. Enjoy great food and old friends at a world-famous resort. We welcome you to join us for the convention and then to stay on for Golf Fest '97, Variety Club's 28th Annual Event.

See you at Callaway for ShowSouth, A Southern Tradition...Alive and Growing!

For more information, call Saundra Conner, ShowSouth Administrator, at (770) 455-8988.

Q&A: STEMBLER SINGS SONG OF SHOWSOUTH

You know about ShoWest and ShowEast.* BOXOFFICE*'s coverage of ShowCanada introduced you to what could be called ShowNorth. Now, John Stembler Jr., vice president of Georgia Theatre Co. and chairman of ShowSouth, tells us why his upcoming convention in Pine Mountain, Ga. is "The Best Little Theatre Convention in Dixie."



BOXOFFICE: How long has ShowSouth been around?

JOHN STEMBLER JR.: It got going in the '70s, then it went to the mid-'80s, through about '85.

BOXOFFICE: Why did it stop?

STEMBLER: Because all the circuits were sold out. The Gulf States Theatres was sold to United Artists; Georgia Theatre Co. was sold to United Artists; Fairlane-Litchfield Theatres out of the Carolinas was sold to United Artists.

BOXOFFICE: So what happened after that? Did you start the circuit back up again then?

STEMBLER: My brother Bill and I opened Value Cinemas in Florida in '88 or '89. And then we bought back some South Georgia theatres around '91. So [Georgia Theatre Co.] had been out of business [in Georgia] five years at that point. And then we had a partner in the Carolinas, and we had some over there.

BOXOFFICE: Now there's a resurgence of indies, and that's why ShowSouth started back up again three years ago?

STEMBLER: We moved the Variety Club golf tournament we'd been having that we started 28 years ago to Callaway Gardens. And everybody seemed to like that. So we said, as long as we're having that, why don't we have a theatre meeting like we used to, in conjunction with the golf tournament? We have all our managers come in from around the state for this thing. And of course we pay for them. And they deserve it. We think they ought to be rewarded for working hard all year, and this is a good opportunity to do that. This makes them feel part of a larger thing, like the industry. The convention creates a little excitement and entertainment, and makes them feel a part of the whole. And I think that has real value.

And we like the social interaction. The big conventions have gotten so big that it's difficult to really spend any time visiting with folks like at receptions or barbecues or dinners or whatever, golfing events. This gives people an opportunity to sort of socialize a little bit, I mean, the idea of Southern hospitality. To slow down and take it easy. Everything now is systematized, computerized and dehumanized. So I think it's valuable for some people to see who they're talking to.

BOXOFFICE: How many people do you expect to attend?

STEMBLER: Around 200 or so. Which is fine. We're not trying to be the biggest. We're the Best Little Theatre Convention in Dixie.

BOXOFFICE: I've heard that rumor!

STEMBLER: But it is fun because Callaway Gardens is a pretty place. They've got a butterfly house and extensive gardens and two or three golf courses and swimming pools and lakes and all sorts of things, and a lot of trees. We've got pine trees for 80 miles between the airport and the place. And the name of the town is Pine Mountain, Georgia.

BOXOFFICE: Did you say a butterfly room?

STEMBLER: Yeah, there's like a greenhouse full of butterflies. There's something for the ladies to do and for non-golfers to do.

BOXOFFICE: Do you have some seminars?

STEMBLER: Oh yes, we've got 10 film company representatives coming in, the exhibitor relations people going over the product. They did that last year, and that was well-received. So it's really worth anybody's time to come just to get that, because it talks about new pictures, promotions, ad campaigns, all kind of tie-ins, specialized stuff. And the president of NATO, Bill Kartozian, will kick off the meeting, and he'll let us know what the latest is on the legislative front and issues in Washington, or anything that's pertinent to the movie theatre business.

BOXOFFICE: What are the differences between ShowSouth and the bigger conventions?

STEMBLER: To me, [the big shows are] sort of like a cattle drive, because it's so fast. You're sort of herded in these different events, and there's so many people that it's kind of hard to socialize or talk to people, because everybody's going to the next event. I think that some of these other things have gotten to be—I don't want to make any derogatory comments, because I go and I like them. [But] this deal is a lot more laid back. It's pastoral. It's down-home. We don't have a lot of neon and all the rest of that stuff. And I mean, I like that, that's showbiz too. But I think people will find this a nice contrast.—***Christine James***

BOXOFFICE REVIEWS

August 1997

★★★★★ OUTSTANDING
★★★★ VERY GOOD
★★★ GOOD
★★ FAIR
★ POOR
(no stars) BOMB

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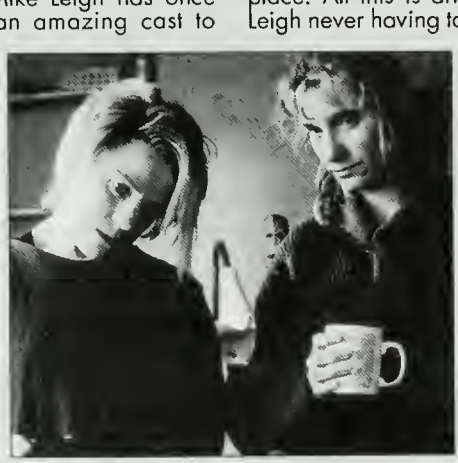
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DAY AND DATE: AUGUST 8 NY/LA

CAREER GIRLS ★★★★★

Starring Katrin Cartlidge and Lynda Steadman. Directed and written by Mike Leigh. Produced by Simon Channing-Williams. An October release. Comedy/drama. Rated R for language and some sexuality. Running time: 91 min. Opens 8/8 NY/LA, 8/15 expands.

Writer/director Mike Leigh has once again assembled an amazing cast to render a spectrum of human emotions beyond the range of most filmmakers' reach. Lynda Steadman is the wispy-voiced, quavery, anxiety-ridden Annie (reminiscent of Brenda Blethyn's character in Leigh's "Secrets & Lies"), and Katrin Cartlidge (a Leigh veteran from "Naked") is unforgettable as Hannah, an idiosyncratic character who's sharp-tongued, sharp-witted, sharp-angled and always good-humored, if with a psychotic tinge.



MAKING A "CAREER": *Mike Leigh's new "Career Girls" is from October Films.*

The film begins with Annie embarking on a trip to visit Hannah, whom she hasn't seen since graduating from university six years ago. The reunion is interspliced with flashbacks to the late 1980s (effectively depicted, with appropriate costuming and music), when the pair first met in college.

Leigh is a master at capturing oblique layers of complex emotion, particularly insecurity and the discomfort of feeling out-of-place. Annie and Hannah, both of whom have mellowed and matured in the intervening decade, are glad to see each other, but there is a palpable yet subtle awkwardness, owing to the rift of time since they've seen one another, as well as to their disparate natures, which made their friendship an unlikely one in the first place. All this is artfully conveyed, with Leigh never having to articulate these sentiments with words.

The two women soon begin to recapture the closeness they developed years before as they spend a day traveling through London househunting for Hannah. On their trek, they coincidentally—or synchronistically—encounter key figures from their past. The story neatly unravels to show how these people have affected Hannah and Annie's lives, both then and now.

Like much of Leigh's work, "Career Girls" is an unflinching look at the lives of lonely, alienated but everyday (if notably eccentric) people that evolves uplliftingly from despair to hope, buoyed throughout with clever humor. Cartlidge and Steadman accomplish Leigh's vision with incredibly spot-on portrayals of these compellingly unique protagonists.—***Christine James***

CANNES DO!

More 50th Cannes coverage from the Croisette

L.A. CONFIDENTIAL ★★★1/2

Starring Kevin Spacey, Russell Crowe and Kim Basinger. Directed by Curtis Hanson. Written by Brian Helgeland and Curtis Hanson. Produced by Arnon Milchan, Curtis Hanson and Michael Nathanson. A Warner Bros. release. Drama. Rated R for strong violence and language, and for sexuality. Running time: 135 min. Opens 10/3.

Adapted from the novel by James Ellroy, Curtis Hanson's dark and moody "L.A. Confidential" is a top-notch thriller, an intricate tale of corruption, lust and betrayal that thematically recalls vintage film noir while stylistically coming closer to Roman Polanski's "Chinatown." That said, though, the movie has a voice of its own, distinguished by some imaginative casting.

Two Australian actors, Russell Crowe ("Rough Magic") and Guy Pearce ("The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert") are downright unrecognizable as police detectives in 1950s Los Angeles, trading witty barbs and clever retorts in perfect American accents. Crowe in particular exudes noir appeal; he's like a latter-day Robert Mitchum from "Out of the Past," all jaded cynicism and smoky secrets.

As the girl with a past, Kim Basinger looks radiant and has her best part in ages; she's a perfect femme fatale counterpart to Crowe's weary detective. Kevin Spacey, as an unctuous celebrity cop, does a memorable turn, as do James Cromwell ("Babe") as a seemingly wise police captain and Danny DeVito as an overzealous editor of a celebrity gossip rag (aptly dubbed "Hush-Hush"). Acting, dialogue and production values are all superb. What doesn't work so well, however, is the narrative. With a story so convoluted you don't know who's coming or going, it's hard to keep track of plot points; before you know it, in true noir style, just about everyone ends up dead. Would that we knew why.—*Lael Loewenstein*

THE END OF VIOLENCE ★★★

Starring Bill Pullman, Andie MacDowell, Gabriel Byrne, Loren Dean, Traci Lind and Daniel Benzali. Directed by Wim Wenders. Written by Nicholas Klein. Produced by Deepak Nayar, Wim Wenders and Nicholas Klein. An MGM release. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 123 min. Opens 9/12.

Leave it to Wim Wenders to make a film about violence...without violence.

Like many previous Wenders films, most notably the recent "Lisbon Story" (yet to be released stateside), "The End of Violence" stations itself somewhere between a philosophical meditation and an old-fashioned detective mystery. This kind of dualistic fusion has never worked particularly well for Wenders, although here it works well enough to at least get its message across.

The ensemble piece revolves primarily around movie producer Mike Max (Bill Pullman), whose ultra-violent epics hit home when he's kidnapped and nearly murdered by bungling killers. After escaping under uncertain circumstances, Max goes underground. Clues to the caper turn up with a surveillance expert (Gabriel Byrne) while testing a secret citywide network of video cameras. As events steadily move the two men closer to solving the mystery, other characters become entangled: Max's dissatisfied wife (Andie MacDowell), a young detective (Loren Dean) and a stuntwoman-turned-actress (Traci Lind).

The resolution of the "mystery" is considerably less than satisfying, especially in light of the careful and deliberate setup. Wenders' choice to allow all of the story's violence to occur offscreen, though interesting in concept, is odd in execution and underscores the film's overall lack of dramatic energy. But observations and subtextual commentary about violence in America are well-nuanced in Nicholas Klein's script, affording Wenders a chance to philosophize less obtrusively yet no less effectively than before.—*Wade Major*

THE SWEET HEREAFTER ★★★★

Starring Ian Holm, Sarah Polley and Maury Chaykin. Directed and written by Atom Egoyan. Produced by Camelia Frieberg and Atom Egoyan. A Fine Line release. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 100 min. Won the Grand Jury Prize, the Ecumenical Prize and the Fipresci Critics Prize. Opens 10/10.

One of the few films to be widely praised at this year's fest, Atom Egoyan's "The Sweet Hereafter" garnered several key prizes. A stirring portrait of a community struggling to heal after a crisis, the film—based on the novel by Russell Banks—is distinguished by an array of fine performances, Egoyan's signature evocative camera work, and a story that leaves one thinking without heavy-handed moralizing.

In a Canadian town, a school bus crash has left dozens of children dead. Some people want to lay blame; others mourn quietly. A big-city lawyer ("The Fifth Element's" Ian Holm) arrives looking for clients and promising riches, dividing the townspeople further. Then a survivor's crisis of conscience brings her to a momentous decision that will lead her to the "sweet hereafter," a realm for those at peace with their fate.

Holm is superb, worming his way into the grieving families' homes with slippery charm and inflated promises. Compelled to speak, the residents each narrate their different versions of events in intriguing "Rashomon" style, and Egoyan weaves together the various voiceover narrations into a richly detailed quilt of subjective impressions, memories and beliefs. He varies the texture by juxtaposing intimate close-ups of characters speaking with sweeping aerial shots of the bus speeding toward its demise. Most importantly, "The Sweet Hereafter" manages to impart a moral without delivering a sermon. A call to individual as well as community responsibility, it is a particularly apt tale in an era of lawsuits and finger-pointing.—*Lael Loewenstein*

THE TASTE OF CHERRY ★★1/2

Starring Homayon Ershadi and Abdolrahman Bagheri. Directed, written and produced by Abbas Kiarostami. No stateside distributor set. Drama. Iranian-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 103 min. Co-won Palme d'Or.

"The Taste of Cherry" ("Ta'm E Guilass") had been withdrawn from Cannes by Iranian authorities because of its subject matter: suicide. After the fest opened, the government relented, and the film tied for the top prize. No stranger to controversy, director/writer Abbas Kiarostami ("Under the Olive Trees") also wrote the screenplay for "The White Balloon," another film that found detractors in its homeland.

In "The Taste of Cherry," as Badii (Homayon Ershadi) gives people rides, he tells them life has been painful and he believes suicide will "liberate" him. Only a museum guard (Abdolrahman Bagheri) has the sympathy to consider helping: He talks about simple pleasures like the taste of a cherry that Badii would never again experience.

Although Ershadi's performance gives a clear sense of Badii's anguish, the screenplay does not give the character enough personal details to make him compelling. The film has the minimalist style and simple storyline common to many other Iranian films, but Kiarostami's direction is not only uncompromising but also unvarying and severe: Most of the film is a series of static conversations. When Badii does leave the car, he is dwarfed by mountains, emphasizing his sense of insignificance. And a documentary-like conclusion is distracting and spoils the poignancy achieved when Badii makes his decision.—*Ed Scheid*

FESTIVAL REVIEWS

SHE'S SO LOVELY ★★

Starring John Travolta, Sean Penn and Robin Wright Penn. Directed by Nick Cassavetes. Written by John Cassavetes. Produced by Rene Cleitman. A Miramax release. Drama. Rated R for strong language and some violence. Running time: 100 min. Won the Best Actor prize. Opens 8/15.

Other than Penn's award-winning portrayal of Eddie, a half-mad alcoholic crazy in love with his wife Maureen (real-life wife Robin Wright Penn), there's very little redeeming about "She's So Lovely." Scripted by the late John Cassavetes and directed by his son Nick ("Unhook the Stars"), the film feels like the cinematic equivalent of a Jackson Pollock painting; it's as if scenes of doomed people arguing were splattered on the screen randomly. While John Cassavetes' cinema verite style might have been better suited to adapting his own script, in Nick's relatively untested hands serious scenes are so overdone they become funny.

Searching for Eddie from bar to bar—and getting raped along the way—Maureen finds him in a dive. They fight, make love, dance, then fight again—until Eddie goes so far off the deep end that Maureen has him committed. Ten years later, Maureen is married (apparently happily) to wealthy Joey (John Travolta) and has three kids. When Maureen learns Eddie is out, she decides to go back to him: "I love him more." Soon Eddie, two friends (Debi Mazar and Harry Dean Stanton), Maureen and Joey are tumbling, screaming, and wielding guns on Joey's lawn as romantic music plays.

Except for Penn, just about everyone here overacts egregiously. Wright Penn's overdone New York accent recalls Barbra Streisand in "Funny Girl"—surely not the intended association—and Travolta mocks his tough-guy turns. "She's So Lovely" is supposedly a "romantic fable," but most moviegoers will be so turned off by these despicable characters that "morality tale" is closer to the truth.—*Lael Loewenstein*

NIL BY MOUTH ★★★

Starring Ray Winstone, Charlie Creed-Miles and Cathie Burke. Directed and written by Gary Oldman. Produced by Luc Besson, Douglas Urbanski and Gary Oldman. A Sony Classics release. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 128 min. Won Best Actress prize. Opens Feb. 1998.

Gary Oldman has worked with some of the best and most commercial directors in Hollywood, so it may come as a surprise to some that his semi-autobiographical directing/writing debut instead casts a nod to the work of gritty English realists like Stephen Frears, Mike Leigh and Ken Loach. But gritty English realism is where Oldman honed his craft, and his bow here, though imperfect, does the tradition proud.

A sort of South London version of "Once Were Warriors," "Nil by Mouth" centers on a working-class English family, consisting of a thuggish oaf named Ray (Ray Winstone), his world-weary wife Valerie (Cathie Burke) and Valerie's junkie brother Billy (Charlie Creed-Miles). Photographed in gritty, hand-held super 16mm, Oldman's portrait is a harsh one, pulling no punches as it shows the violence, profanity, blood and tears that there constitute daily life.

Elsewhere, the film fails to live up to its emotional billing, with Oldman allowing scenes to drag on far longer than necessary. The script's episodic nature is also problematic, but audiences might warm to the approach as they grow accustomed to the characters. Other noteworthy contributions include Eric Clapton's warmly subdued score and colorful supporting players, plus agile "on the zoom" work by cinematographer Ron Fortunato.—*Wade Major*

KICKED IN THE HEAD ★★

Starring Kevin Corrigan and Linda Fiorentino. Directed by Matthew Harrison. Written by Kevin Corrigan and Matthew Harrison. Produced by Barbara De Fina. An October Films release. Comedy. Rated R for strong language, drug content, some sex and brief violence. Run time: 87 min. Opens 9/12 NY/LA, 9/19 exp.

With an overabundance of self-consciously random action and dialogue, "Kicked in the Head" leaves the viewer feeling just that: assaulted. Not even its

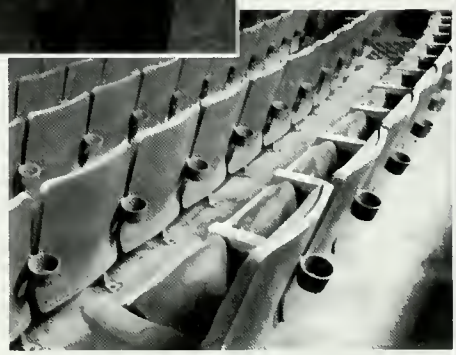
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FESTIVAL REVIEWS

stellar cast or its Martin Scorsese (who executive produces) pedigree can redeem this tale of a lower Manhattan loser (Kevin Corrigan) on a series of misadventures.

Over a frenetic four days, he fends off his ex-girlfriend ("I Shot Andy Warhol's" Lili Taylor) and nutty uncle (James Woods), romances a fiesty flight attendant (Linda Fiorentino), dodges his slippery friend Stretch ("Metro's" Michael Rapaport) and barely avoids a shootout. He also waxes philosophical on the Hindenburg crash, fortune cookies and "Planet of the Apes."

What it all means is anybody's guess. Corrigan plays hapless well, but he fails to sparkle; ditto Fiorentino, playing another ice queen. On the positive side, Woods is memorably wacky, and the camera work is impressively sharp. Alas, not sharp enough to save the film.—*Lael Loewenstein*

MRS. BROWN ★★★★1/2

Judi Dench, Billy Connolly, Geoffrey Palmer and Anthony Sher. Directed by John Madden. Written by Jeremy Brock. Produced by Sarah Curtis. A Miramax release. Drama. Rated PG for a beating, language and brief nudity. Running time: 103 min.

Since the day when Shakespeare first put pen to paper, the English monarchy and drama have been gloriously intertwined, and nowhere with more aplomb and majesty than in the cinema. Director John Madden's magnificent "Mrs. Brown," however, stands as more than just another addition to the catalog. With grace, wit and unerring sensitivity, this literate telling of Queen Victoria's scandalous friendship with loyal Scottish servant John Brown is one of the finest and most human portraits of any monarch ever to grace the screen.

Despite similarities to "The Madness of King George" and "Carrington," "Mrs. Brown" succeeds on its own terms, owing much to freshman scribe Jeremy Brock's fine blending of fact and speculation. Madden is also in peak form, rebounding from "Ethan Frome" and "Golden Gate."

The engine that drives the film, of course, is the chemistry between its leads, and here they could find themselves contending for Oscars. Although the casting of stage legend Judi Dench opposite madcap comic Billy Connolly might seem eccentric, the pair collide with an elegance and passion not seen since O'Toole and Hepburn in "The Lion in Winter."—*Wade Major*

MA VIE EN ROSE ★★★★

Starring Michele Laroque, Jean-Philippe Ecoffey and Georges du Fresne. Directed by Alain Berliner. Written by Chris Vander Stappen and Alain Berliner. Produced by Carole Scotta. A Sony Classics release. Comedy. Not yet rated. Running time: 89 min. Opens Feb. 1998.

The first film by Belgian director Alain Berliner, "Ma Vie en Rose" is a scathingly funny, brutally critical commentary on gender roles and bourgeois thinking that turned out to be one of Cannes' unexpected delights. Just moved to the suburbs, married Hanna (Michele Laroque) and Pierre (Jean-Philippe Ecoffey) have only one problem: Their nine-year-old son Ludovic (Georges du Fresne, a revelation) thinks he's a girl.

Berliner's film is a triumph on several levels. He deftly renders his cinematic suburbia at once real and surreal, with a tone that manages to be both hilarious and affecting. Amid a color palette of extremes—cotton candy-pink dresses, an electric blue sky—Berliner's characters exist in a Magritte paradise. Clever camera techniques and bold cinematography underscore the unique tone: High-angle shots lend an air of precipitousness, while over-the-shoulder shots provide a sense of depth in a seemingly shallow world. Contrapuntally, the heightened look of the film comedically undercuts the potentially serious nature of Ludovic's dilemma.

Yet Berliner also draws a moving portrait of a family in crisis with a well-played role reversal between the parents. Hanna, initially her son's fervent supporter, crumbles under the social pressure and loses her patience with him; Pierre, at first threatened by Ludovic's behavior, later softens into gentle understanding. "Ma Vie en Rose" is a rare gem: a comedy/drama with crossover potential, sure to appeal as much to gay audiences as straight ones.—*Lael Loewenstein*

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REVIEWS

MIMIC ★★1/2

Starring Mira Sorvino, Jeremy Northam, Charles S. Dutton and Josh Brolin. Directed by Guillermo Del Toro. Written by John Sayles, Matthew Greenberg, W. Peter Iliff and Matthew Robbins. Produced by Bob Weinstein and B.J. Rack. A Miramax release. Horror. Rated R for terror/violence and language.

From the director of "Cronos" comes a near-future science thriller. In it, Susan Tyler (Mira Sorvino) and her husband ("The Net's" Jeremy Northam) must stop a disease from wiping out a generation. The carrier of the pediatric epidemic is the common cockroach—but, really, how common is a cockroach bigger than your palm? Unaffected by the creatures' size, a doctor casually refers to one as "just a baby."

The speed of the narrative early on is such that anyone not paying close attention will be lost throughout the remainder. A collaboration of writers on this film ruined what could have been a great thriller. Along with trying to conjure terror by rehashing horror-flick cliches, they occasionally slow the brisk pace to a crawl to let scenes sink in before the next jolt. Although close-up special effects are good, "Mimic" is a mere appetizer for hungry hard-core horror fans. Then again, for more squeamish soft-core buffs, the film will shoot the occasional chill up their spines.—*Dwayne E. Leslie*

GEORGE OF THE JUNGLE ★1/2

Starring Brendan Fraser, Leslie Mann and Thomas Hayden Church. Voice by John Cleese. Directed by Sam Weisman. Written by Dana Olsen and Audrey Wells. Produced by David Hoberman, Jordan Kerner and Jon Avnet. A Buena Vista release. Comedy. Rated PG for crude humor and mild violence, language and sensuality.

It's been a quarter-century since Jay Ward's animated "George of the Jungle" shorts swung onto TV. Via today's Cartoon Network, the nostalgic character's show (also featuring Super Chicken and Tom Slick) has been revived. And, via Disney, the loinclothed gent travels along vines to Hollywood for his first live-action feature.

In this adventure, George (Brendan Fraser, who played the neanderthal in "Encino Man") gets to rescue his true love, Ursula ("The Cable Guy's" Leslie Mann) from a lion, from a bad marriage proposal made by a most ineligible bachelor (Thomas Hayden Church) and from her parents. Then, for the first time, he leaves the jungle and goes to the civilized big city, where comic consternation with all its modern appliances awaits—until he must return to the wilds to save his mentor, Ape (who's voiced by John Cleese), from poachers and have his final confrontation with Ursula's finky fiance.

George's silver-screen debut could mean something to those who grew up watching his comic antics, and the youngest moviegoers might be charmed—plus, pre-teen girls (and maybe some post-teeners) will flock to the movie to see Fraser's admirably toned body. But today's high-tech generation of young males, the movie's key demo, are unlikely to care for George. In the end, the film is a crossbreed of "Encino Man" without Pauly Shore, "Jungle 2 Jungle" without Tim Allen, and the live-action "Jungle Book" without real animals. The only resemblances to the classic cartoon are that trees still get in George's way, Shep the elephant still thinks he is a doggie, the ape named Ape still talks, and his girlfriend's name is still Ursula. But that's not enough to keep this "George" from being a bungle in the jungle.—*Dwayne E. Leslie*

MEN IN BLACK ★★★1/2

Starring Tommy Lee Jones, Will Smith, Vincent D'Onofrio, Rip Torn and Linda Fiorentino. Directed by Barry Sonnenfeld. Written by Ed Solomon. Produced by Walter Parkes and Laurie MacDonald. A Columbia release. SF/comedy/action. Rated PG-13 for language and sci-fi violence. Running time: 96 min.

Based on the conspiracy theory that there is a secret cadre of black-suited men whose job is to hide evidence of extraterrestrials, "Men In Black" takes this urban legend a fantastical step further. Tommy Lee Jones stars as Kay, a top MIB agent who not only conceals UFO landings but is part of a high-tech monitoring system of alien "immigrants" who take secret but legal refuge on earth. When "illegal" aliens pay our planet a visit, the MIB force must deal with them—a dangerous job of slimy battles with malevolent multi-tentacled creatures.

With his partner retired, Kay recruits a young upstart NYPD cop, Jay (Will Smith). The gruff veteran/brash rookie chemistry comes across in some comically extreme scenarios as a war-mongering, humanity-despising "bug" of an E.T. plots to destroy the world and start an intergalactic battle.

ILM's special effects are amazing, of course, but the great part is the inventive and fun ways in which the effects are used. Particularly impressive is Rick Baker's makeup for the Bug, who inhabits the body of a cantankerous farmer named Edgar (Vincent D'Onofrio). As one might imagine, the shape of a giant insect monster is significantly different from that of a human, and so it's not exactly a perfect fit when Bug puts on his "Edgar suit." Things protrude, bulge and poke; D'Onofrio's physical comedy is out-and-out hysterical. Even against such a scene-stealer, the two leads more than hold their own: Jones is dryly hilarious and Smith comically exuberant.

Still, a narrative weakness is the underexplained motivations for and ramifications of killing an alien ambassador to start a war; also, a clue involving a cat is too insultingly obvious and important. And, though there's a multitude of visual splendors, even more out-of-this-world gadgetry and a wider variety of aliens would have made the mythos feel more complete.—*Christine James*

PREVIOUSLY REVIEWED: *JULY, AUGUST AND SEPT. RELEASES*

In light of our continuing commitment to bring you reviews as early as possible, we now provide a reader guide to upcoming releases we've already critiqued. The alphabetical list below notes the issue of BOXOFFICE in which the review appeared, gives its star rating, and provides newly updated distributor and release date information.

"Alive and Kicking" ★★1/2: First Look, 7/27 ltd; see July 1997.
"Bandwagon" ★★★1/2: CFP, 9/12 ltd; see April 1997.
"Box of Moonlight" ★★1/2: Trimark, 7/25 NY, 8/8 LA; see Nov. 1996.
"Brilliant Lies" ★★★: Castle Hill, 7/11 NY; see April 1997.
"The Delta" ★: Strand, 8/1 NY, 8/15 LA; see July 1997.
"Different for Girls" ★★: First Look, 8/22 ltd; see March 1997.
"Dogs" ★★: Phaedra, August undated; see April 1997.
"Fire" ★★★1/2: Zeitgeist, 8/22 NY; see July 1997.
"Forever Mozart" ★★★★: New Yorker, 7/4 NY; see Jan. 1997.
"The Full Monty" ★★★★: Fox Searchlight, 8/15 NY/LA, exp 8/29; see April 1997.
"Guantanamera" ★★★1/2: CFP, 7/2 ltd, 7/4 exp; see April 1997.
"The Ice Storm" ★★1/2: Fox Searchlight, 9/26; see July 1997.
"In a Strange City" ★★★1/2: Filmopolis, Sept. undated; see July 1996.
"In the Company of Men" ★★1/2: Sony Classics, 8/1 NY/LA; see Apr. 1997.
"Intimate Relations" ★★: Fox Searchlight, 9/5; see Sept. 1996.
"Love Serenade" ★★1/2: Miramax, 7/11 NY/LA, 7/18 exp; see Aug. 1996.
"Mouth to Mouth" ★★★1/2: Miramax, 9/5 NY/LA; see Sept. 1996.
"The Myth of Fingerprints" ★★★1/2: Sony Classics, 9/19 NY; see Apr. 1997.
"Nenette et Boni" ★★★: Strand, mid-Sept.; see April 1997.
"Omaha: the movie" ★★1/2: Movieworld, 9/26; see April 1996.
"Paperback Romance" ★★1/2: Goldwyn, 8/1 ltd; see May 1997.
"Self Made Hero" ★★★★: Strand, Sept. undated; see March 1997.
"Shall We Dance?" ★★★1/2: Miramax, 7/4, 7/11, 7/18 exp; see May 1997.
"Sunday" ★★★★: CFP, 8/22 NY/LA; see July 1997.
"Timeless" ★★★: Phaedra, Sept. undated; see April 1996.
"Trojan Eddie" ★★: Castle Hill, 8/29 NY; see April 1997.

REVIEWS

FACE/OFF ★★★★

Starring John Travolta, Nicolas Cage and Joan Allen. Directed by John Woo. Written by Mike Werb & Michael Colleary. Produced by David Permut, Barrie M. Osborne, Terence Chang and Christopher Godsick. A Paramount release. Action. Rated R for intense sequences of strong violence, and for strong language. Running time: 139 min.

Not as serious as Woo's Hong Kong work about love and integrity paid for by self-sacrifice ("The Killer," "Bullet in the Head"), this Douglas/Reuther-WCG Entertainment-David Permut production succeeds by using a comedic tone as it becomes as messy and complex as human life, with contradictory elements simultaneously taking up the same space. Manifesting this struggle are two fabulous actors (Nicolas Cage and John Travolta), known for having fun, taking risks and creating their own kind of antics onscreen.

To save the world, FBI agent Archer (Travolta) has himself surgically grafted with the face of a comatose enemy, the terrorist Troy (Cage). When Troy (now acted by Travolta) appears "wearing" Archer's face after destroying FBI scientists who know about the switch, the fun begins, and the clean line between good and evil disappears. Troy (with whom Travolta has a terrific time) gleefully uses his FBI powers to do harm yet protects Archer's teenage daughter (Dominique Swain) in two acutely funny scenes. Archer (now played by Cage, who has the more difficult job of displaying warring emotions within his character's mind) protects killers he once hunted, and kills law officers who now threaten him.

Arguably the best action director in the world, Woo also manages complex emotional content and a deft way with music. Woo's use of women throughout "Face/Off" is genre-busting and exceptionally good, particularly the smooth trickery of Troy by Archer's wife (Joan Allen). Woo's usual audience-pleasing details, such as extra shots of a villain reacting to his own demise, here rest with Archer in Cage's guise: Post-op, he first sees himself in Troy's face and goes nuts with regret; at Troy's final moment, Archer can't stop himself from screaming "Die!"—***Karen Achenbach***

HERCULES ★★★

Voices by Tate Donovan, Danny DeVito, James Woods, Susan Egan and Rip Torn. Directed by John Musker and Ron Clements. Written by Ron Clements & John Musker, Donald McEnery & Bob Shaw and Irene Mecchi. Produced by Alice Dewey, John Musker and Ron Clements. A Buena Vista release. Animated. Rated G. Running time: 93 min.

Disney's latest animated film takes on the tale of fabled demigod Hercules, with hit-and-myth results. In this telling, Hades (James Woods), Lord of the Underworld, plots to kill newborn Hercules. A plan to turn baby Herc human doesn't quite succeed: He's made mortal with a magic potion, yet he retains his super strength. As Hercules matures, he discovers his divine origins and strives to regain his godly status, aided by a satyr (Danny DeVito). But Hades and his minions, Pain and Panic (Bobcat Goldthwait and Matt Frewer), try to stop him at every turn, using the cynical but beautiful Megara (Susan Egan) as bait.

The audience gets to know Hercules only superficially, and there's no moment when he goes from "zero to hero." Meg is more interesting, breaking the mold of Disney heroines past, with her astringent anti-heroine attitude belying a tragic history. The overly familiar set-up—with the naive hero, sardonic villain, bumbling sidekicks, traitorous pawn, ignorant townspeople and over-simplified life lesson—lacks any real twists and turns, but some punch is provided by humorous dialogue. Woods as the ever-exasperated Hades is the comic highlight, his acrid wit balancing out some of the over-the-top feel-good elements indigenous to the genre.—***Christine James***

MY BEST FRIEND'S WEDDING ★★★

Starring Julia Roberts, Dermot Mulroney, Cameron Diaz and Rupert Everett. Directed by P.J. Hogan. Written by Ron Bass. Produced by Ron Bass and Jerry Zucker. A TriStar release. Romantic comedy. Rated PG-13 on appeal for one use of strong language and brief sex-related humor. Running time: 107 min.

Julianne (Julia Roberts) believes her best friend Michael ("Kansas City's" Dermot Mul-

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SPECIAL FORMATS

AMAZON ★★★1/2

Narrated by Linda Hunt. Directed by Kieth Merrill. A MacGillivray Freeman release. Documentary. Unrated. Running time: 40 min. Format: IMAX.

Filmed in the broad span of IMAX over more than a year in the Amazon, this documentary literally springs to life in a colorful explosion of sound and movement, taking a travelogue approach to this mysterious region of the world. Oscar-winning director Kieth Merrill ("Grand Canyon: The Hidden Secrets") provides a balanced mix of information and intrigue in this fast-moving film, including an up-close look, for the first time, at the Zoe, an isolated indigenous tribe never before shown on film.

But what makes this movie so engrossing is the way this film unfolds as the cameras follow two men of opposite cultures in their search for plants with curative powers. Mamani is a Bolivian Callawaya shaman whose journey takes him on foot from his home high up in the Andes to the dense rainforest. Just as determined but equipped with modern means is ethnobotanist Dr. Mark Plotkin, who for 20 years has been studying Indian shamans to learn the medicinal qualities of their native plants. As their stories unfold, so too does the Amazon: Covering 2.2 million square miles, it is home to more than 5,000 species of fish, hundreds of thousands of plants, scores of insects, and many native tribes who still use poisoned arrows and blowguns to dispatch their prey.

Describing each man's journey is actress Linda Hunt ("The Year of Living Dangerously"), whose gift for narration shines through here. That, combined with an evocative score that highlights the different native rhythms (from festive flutes to intense beating drums), recreates the aura of this magnificent but dangerous terrain, one of the last wild places on earth. Awe-inspiring in its depth and coverage, "Amazon's" 40 minutes fly by far too fast. Yet "Amazon" thrills and excites without losing sight of its mission: to inform and educate.—***Pat Kramer***

FLASHBACK: *FEBRUARY, 1985*
What BOXOFFICE *said about...*

THE COTTON CLUB

[A dozen years ago, Orion released "The Cotton Club," a big-budget spectacle that found less than spectacular boxoffice ($25.9 mil.) after its Dec. 14, 1984 debut. This August, UA releases "Hoodlum," a crime saga that shares with "The Cotton Club" its setting—between-the-wars Harlem—and several of its characters: Dutch Schultz (Tim Roth in "Hoodlum," James Remar in "The Cotton Club"), Lucky Luciano (Andy Garcia, Joe Dallesandro) and Bumpy Johnson (Laurence Fishburne, who also played the role as Bumpy Rhodes in "The Cotton Club").]



"The Cotton Club" is lavish entertainment, but it's also a movie without a center. It has some wonderfully funny moments and a whole gallery of great supporting characters. But it also has two leads—Richard Gere and Diane Lane—who add up to something less than zero. The cinematic equivalent of a black hole, the would-be romantic duo succeed in pulling down everything around them. That plus a wildly unfocused script prevent "The Cotton Club" from being a complete success. Yet, despite all these problems, Francis Coppola also supplies enough dazzling sideshows to keep the movie moving and the audience happy.

The dancing is great, the music is great, the set and costume designs are great, and all the supporting players are great. Unfortunately, audiences also have to deal with Gere and Lane, and they are not great; they're not even very good. Repeatedly, the camera cuts away from a musical number (not one at the Cotton Club is seen in its entirety) to their relationship, which is so devoid of chemistry that it brings the movie to a halt. Another, not quite as destructive problem is the scattershot approach of the script. Much has been written about producer Robert Evans' trials in getting "The Cotton Club" to the screen and the manner in which Coppola created the script as he went along. Sad to say, all of that shows up in the improvised feeling and inconsistencies of the finished product.

But it's also easy to dismiss all those faults, at least while one is watching the movie, and enjoy "The Cotton Club" for all its virtues. There're always something and someone interesting just around the corner; and, if Coppola seems to have difficulty with the story's narrative line, he does manage to help the audience keep straight the huge cast of characters.—*Jimmy Summers*

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REVIEWS

roney) is going to ask her to live up to one of those pacts that movie characters tend to make—in which two friends agree to marry each other if they haven't met anybody else by a certain age. She gets a shock when he instead asks her to fly down for his wedding to his new love, 20-year-old co-ed Kimmy ("Head Above Water's" Cameron Diaz). At this fall-on-the-floor moment, Julianne realizes that *she* wants to walk down the aisle with Michael, and she decides to do whatever she can to break the duo up.

However, her match-breaking mischief is not very fun or creative; at one point, she even admits that her ill-intentioned actions were "not even inventive," which seems to be more an apology from scripter Ron Bass than anything else. Mostly, though, the film suffers from the lack of a charismatic leading man. A guy would have to be pretty irresistible to incite a woman to go to such lengths to win him, but Michael is not very exciting and even a little boorish and insensitive. Roberts and Diaz are both energetically exuberant as the dueling dames, but it's Rupert Everett ("Cemetery Man") who steals the show as Julianne's fake fiance.—***Christine James***

BATMAN & ROBIN ★★

Starring George Clooney, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Chris O'Donnell, Uma Thurman and Alicia Silverstone. Directed by Joel Schumacher. Written by Akiva Goldsman. Produced by Peter Macgregor-Scott. A Warner Bros. release. Action/adventure. Rated PG-13 for strong stylized action and some innuendos. Running time: 124 min.

Where the first "Batman" had the brooding darkness of Tim Burton's harsh vision, the second had Catwoman and the third one had Jim Carrey, it's unfortunate that this fourth installment has a lot of nothing. Despite stabs at campy humor, "Batman & Robin" is repetitive, slow and messy.

In the hands of George Clooney, who lacks the dark irony of a Michael Keaton or twisted dramatics of a Val Kilmer, the Caped Crusader is but a cipher in rubber. As the evil Mr. Freeze, who leagues with the devilish Poison Ivy (Uma Thurman), Arnold Schwarzenegger seems to be the only one who's really invested in his role. Case in point: As Batgirl, Alicia Silverstone offers little more than a butt jiggle.

The sets impress but the setups are annoyingly illogical. The fight scenes are poorly choreographed and frankly yawn-inspiring. There's simply nothing at risk this time around for the batboys, and therefore nothing gained. In its place: batbabble about the importance of family.—***Susan Lambert***

REVIEWS

SPEED 2: CRUISE CONTROL ★★

Starring Sandra Bullock, Jason Patric and Willem Dafoe. Directed by Jan De Bont. Written by Randall McCormick and Jeff Nathanson. Produced by Jan De Bont, Steve Perry and Michael Peyser. A Fox release. Action. Rated PG-13 for frenetic disaster action and violence. Running time: 120 min.

"'Speed' on a boat" is more doomed than the Titanic and as ill-helmed as the S.S. Minnow. Where "Speed" paved new roads in the genre, "Speed 2," about a disgruntled former employee who wreaks havoc on a cruise ship, drowns in waterlogged cliches of the milieu. This craft springs plot leaks everywhere, causing the story's interest and credibility to sink like a stone.

Jason Patric is above and beyond the call of bland as an LAPD rogue, and Sandra Bullock only semi-successfully reprises her role as the sweet but sassy Annie. Willem Dafoe as the villain is his usual compellingly demented self, but his motivation makes no sense. Finally, the rescue process kills off more people than it saves, lessening the tension by devaluing human life.—***Christine James***

CON AIR ★★

Starring Nicolas Cage, John Cusack and John Malkovich. Directed by Simon West. Written by Scott Rosenberg. Produced by Jerry Bruckheimer. A Buena Vista release. Action. Rated R for strong violence and language. Running time: 115 min.

Producer Jerry Bruckheimer's first solo outing since the passing of partner Don Simpson is basically a dressed-up retread of their last film together, "The Rock," by way of "Die Hard." But this Touchstone effort—about an ex-con (Nicolas Cage) who battles hijackers led by a mastermind (John Malkovich)—falls well below such stature, substituting bombast for believability before finally plunging headlong into the ridiculous.

Although Cage and John Cusack, as a helpful G-Man, handle their respective action hero roles well enough, it's Malkovich's wiseacre psychopath and a colorful collection of mostly cartoonish bad-guys that keep "Con Air" at cruising altitude until a climactic shootout at an abandoned airfield. Unfortunately, the shootout is only the beginning of the end, the first in a long series of climaxes and explosion-laden set pieces that stretch the film's credibility far past the breaking point. On the technical side, first-time director Simon West (presumably not a pseudonym for Jerry Bruckheimer) does a Tony Scott impression, and Scott Rosenberg ("Beautiful Girls") seamlessly integrates every imaginable action film cliche.—***Wade Major***

GONE FISHIN' ★

Starring Joe Pesci and Danny Glover. Directed by Christopher Cain. Written by Jill Mazursky Cody and Jeffrey Abrams. Produced by Roger Birnbaum and Julie Bergman Sender. A Buena Vista release. Comedy. Rated PG for mild violence and language. Running time: 94 min.

Comedies about fishing have never worked, not even for Howard Hawks, whose worst film was 1964's "Man's Favorite Sport?" The dictum is proven again in 1997 with "Gone Fishin'," a Hollywood/Caravan effort (held from summer 1996 release) whose lame slapstick, nonexistent plot and incompetent moviemaking should discourage anyone from trying again. What are Joe Pesci and Danny Glover doing acting like obnoxious clowns in a feeble series of misadventures? The only moment that works comes during a cameo by Willie Nelson as some sort of deus ex machina. God knows the picture needed someone to save it.—***Dale Winogura***

TRIAL AND ERROR ★

Starring Michael Richards and Jeff Daniels. Directed by Jonathan Lynn. Written by Sara Bernstein and Greg Bernstein. Produced by Gary Ross and Jonathan Lynn. A New Line release. Comedy. Rated PG-13 for some sexual content. Running time: 97 min.

"Lame" is the kindest adjective one can ascribe to helmer Jonathan Lynn's humorless comedy. Michael Richards (TV's "Seinfeld") stars as Richard, a well-intentioned, unemployed actor who, exhibiting many Kramer-esque mannerisms, pretends to be his best friend, lawyer Charlie (Jeff Daniels), who's out of commission after a bachelor party. Charlie has another problem: He falls in love with a new woman. Richards is irritating but ultimately reveals some humanity; as for Daniels, he's unwatchable.—***Jean Oppenheimer***

Review Digest

Story-type key: (Ac) Action; (Ad) Adventure; (An) Animated; (C) Comedy; (D) Drama; (Doc) Documentary; (F) Fantasy; (Hor) Horror; (M) Musical; (My) Mystery; (R) Romance; (Sat) Satire; (SF) Science Fiction; (Sus) Suspense; (Th) Thriller; (W) Western.

TITLE/MPAA DISTRIBUTOR	RUN TIME	GENRE	REVIEWED IN ISSUE	BOXOFFICE	VARIETY	H. REPORTER	L.A. TIMES	N.Y. TIMES	USA TODAY	AVERAGE	TOTAL BOXOFFICE $*
5 Excellent 4 Very Good 3 Good 2 Fair 1 Poor											
Absolute Power **R** (Col)	*122*	Th	5-97	3	3	3	3	2		2.8	50.0
Addicted to Love **R** (WB)	*100*	R C	7-97	3	3	3	2	2	3	2.7	30.2
Anaconda **PG-13** (Col)	*90*	Adv	6-97	2	2	3	3	3	3	2.7	60.9
Austin Powers **PG-13** (NL)	*89*	C	7-97	3	3	4	2	3	3	3.0	46.0
Beverly Hills Ninja **PG-13** (TS)	*85*	C	3-97	2	2	2	3	2		2.2	31.2
Bliss **NC-17** (Tri)	*102*	D	5-97	4	2	2	3	2		2.0	0.1
Brassed Off (Mir)	*107*	C	3-97	3	3	3	3	3	3	3.0	0.6
Breakdown **R** (Par)	*95*	Th	7-97	4	4	3	3	3	4	3.5	46.7
Buddy **PG** (Col)	*84*	C D	7-97	2	2	2	3	2	2	2.2	6.8
Chasing Amy (Mir)	*105*	D	4-97	3	3	4	4	3	3	3.3	9.3
A Chef in Love **PG-13** (SC)	*98*	C D	5-97	2	2	3	3	3		2.2	0.5
Children of the Revolution **R** (Mir)	*100*	C D	5-97	3		4	3	3	3	3.2	0.7
Con Air **R** (BV)	*115*	Ac	8-97	2	3	3	2	2	2	2.3	49.9
Dante's Peak **PG-13** (Uni)	*108*	Ac D	4-97	4	2	3	2	2	3	2.8	67.1
The Daytrippers (CFP)	*90*	C	8-96	3		2	3	3		2.8	1.7
The Devil's Own **R** (Col)		AcD	5-97	2	3	2	2	3		2.4	42.6
Double Team **R** (Col)	*93*	AcAd	6-97	4	3	2	3	2	2	2.7	11.0
The English Patient **R** (Mir)	*159*	R	1-97	3	3	4	4	4	4	3.7	77.3
Fathers' Day **PG-13** (WB)	*101*	C	7-97	3	2	3	2	3	3	2.7	27.6
Female Perversions **R** (Oct)	*114*	D	11-96	2			3	2		2.2	0.7
The Fifth Element **PG-13** (Col)	*125*	SF	7-97	3	2	2	3	2	2	2.3	57.9
Gone Fishin' **PG** (BV)	*94*	C	8-97	1	1	1	2			1.3	13.8
Grosse Pointe Blank **R** (BV)	*107*	C	5-97	4	4	3	3	3	3	3.3	26.7
Jerry Maguire **R** (TS)	*138*	D	2-97	4	4	2	3	4	4	3.5	153.0
Jungle 2 Jungle **PG** (BV)	*105*	C	5-97	2	3	3	3	2	2	2.5	56.3
Kama Sutra (TM)	*115*	D	1-97	2	2	2	2	3		2.2	4.0
Kolya (Mir)	*111*	D	12-96	3	4	4	4	4		3.8	5.5
Liar Liar **PG-13** (Uni)	*86*	C	5-97	3	4	4	3	3	3	3.3	170.0
Lost World: Jurassic Park **PG-13** (Uni)	*129*	Adv	7-97	4	3	3	3	2	3	3.0	190.7
love jones **R** (NL)	*110*	R C	5-97	3			2	3		2.7	12.0
McHale's Navy **PG** (Uni)	*108*	C	6-97	1	2	1	2			1.5	4.3
Murder at 1600 **R** (WB)	*106*	Th	6-97	3	3	2	2	2	3	2.5	25.2
Night Falls on Manhattan **R** (Par)	*110*	D	7-97	3	3	3	4		4	3.4	9.1
The Pillow Book (CFP)	*126*	D	7-96	3			2	4		3.0	0.3
Private Parts **R** (Par)	*109*	C	5-97	3	4	4	4	3		3.7	41.2
Rudyard Kipling's 2nd Jungle Book **PG** (TS)	*90*	Adv	7-97	1	3	3	2	2		2.2	0.2
Romy and Michele **R** (BV)	*91*	C	7-97	4	2	3	3	3	2	2.8	27.3
The Saint **PG-13** (Par)	*117*	Ac	6-97	2	2	2	2	2	2	2.0	60.0
Scream **R** (Mir)	*111*	HorC	2-97	3	2	3	3	2		2.5	101.7
Selena **PG** (WB)	*127*	D	5-97	3	3	3	3	2	3	2.8	35.2
Shiloh **PG** (Leg)	*93*	D	4-97	4		3	3	3		3.3	0.8
The 6th Man **PG-13** (BV)	*108*	C	6-97	3	3	3	3	2	2	2.7	14.0
Sling Blade **R** (Mir)	*140*	D	11-96	4	4	4	4	3		3.8	23.8
Speed 2 **PG-13** (Fox)	*120*	Ac	8-97	2	2	2	2		2	2.0	16.2
Sprung **R** (TM)	*90*	R C	6-97	3	2	3	3	3		2.8	7.1
That Darn Cat **PG** (BV)	*90*	C	5-97	2	2	2	3			2.2	18.2
Til There Was You **PG-13** (Par)	*113*	R C	7-97	1	2	2	2			1.8	3.0
Trial and Error **PG-13** (NL)	*97*	C	8-97	1	3	2	3			2.3	11.5
Ulee's Gold (Ori)	*113*	D	4-97	4	4		4		4	4.0	0.1

** Total boxoffice, in millions, as of June 17, 1997.*

NATIONAL NEWS

NEW LINE SECURES FINANCING

It looks as though New Line has finally found a means of maintaining its independence from parent company Time Warner now that a Dutch bank, ABN-Amro, has committed to arrange a $400 million production loan financing deal for the film company. Sources say the loan is specifically a New Line deal, meaning it won't appear on Time Warner's balance sheet and the huge conglomerate won't be held liable for payment. Ever since Time Warner acquired New Line as a piece of the Turner Broadcasting buyout last year, it has been looking for a way to keep New Line separate. At first TW hoped to sell the company, but couldn't find a buyer at the right price. So it set about looking for ways to independently finance New Line, which currently produces about 15 films a year.

Insiders were surprised to see ABN move in as the lead bank on the deal and take it as a sign that the bank, which has previously had little presence in the entertainment industry, plans to be more aggressive in setting up film financing deals. Most expected Chase Securities, a big lender in the film industry and historically New Line's lender, to be the main bank on the arrangement, yet Chase is completely absent from the deal. ABN is now working on syndicating the loan with interested banks. The loan will reportedly have a life of four years.

Meanwhile, Chase may eventually be involved in a financing role. New Line still wants another financial facility to fund the purchase of New Line's completed pictures—a deal similar to what Fox, Universal and Polygram have in place. The second facility would be a bet on New Line's future performance. If the film performs, revenues from the pictures would repay the loan. ABN's facility is a straightforward, special purpose loan under which, once the films are completed, New Line is committed to buy back the pictures.

New Line has been reportedly made even more frustrated by owner Time Warner due to a deal it made with Time Warner entity Warner Bros. Reportedly, New Line "borrowed" director Barry Levinson to make a small, sharp-tongued political satire, "Wag the Dog," starring Dustin Hoffman and Robert De Niro. Part of the deal with WB said New Line couldn't release its movie until after WB released Levinsons' "Sphere." So, even though "Wag the Dog" is done and ready for release in September and the close to a $100 million "Sphere" (which also stars Hoffman, along with Sharon Stone and Samuel L. Jackson) won't be ready until Christmas, Warner Bros. is holding New Line to their contractual deal. So "Wag the Dog" is now scheduled for February '98 and New Line has yet another reason to want out from under the big Time Warner umbrella. And maybe Time Warner is afraid that, if New Line had its way, that would be considered a case of the tail actually wagging the dog.

SOUTHERN BAPTISTS JUST SAY NO TO DISNEY

After firing a warning shot a year ago, giving the Walt Disney Co. a year to respond to their objections, denomination leaders from the Southern Baptist Convention voted this past June to boycott all Walt Disney subsidiaries, including theatrical releases, the theme parks, toys and ABC television, for what it calls "anti-family, pro-gay" policies by the entertainment corporation. About 14,000 delegates participated in the annual meeting of the Southern Baptists, considered to be the nation's largest Protestant denomination with an estimated 15.7 million members.

Representatives from the convention said the boycott was in response to Disney's "gay-friendly" actions by allowing "Gay Days" at its theme parks organized by gay rights groups and extending health benefits to the partners of homosexual employees. The delegates also cited the "coming out" episode of ABC's "Ellen" as a reason for the boycott.

In response, some gay and lesbian organizations encouraged their members to show support for Disney by supporting Disney products. The company issued a written statement saying, "We are proud that the Disney brand creates more family entertainment of every kind than anyone else in the world. We plan to continue our leadership role and, in fact, we will increase production of family entertainment."

COOPER LANDS AT DREAMWORKS

Robert Cooper, who resigned as president of TriStar Pictures in May, has joined the Dreamworks SKG team as head of theatrical film development and production. Cooper will take over many responsibilities that film division co-heads Walter Parkes and Laurie MacDonald now shoulder. Cooper was head of HBO Pictures before former Sony Pictures Entertainment head Mark Canton brought him to TriStar last summer. After Canton exited SPE, Cooper and new SPE president and COO John Calley never saw eye to eye.

ALMOND EXITS LIVE

Paul Almond, executive vp production and acquisitions at Live Entertainment, left the company in May in what insiders say is the first response to the impending purchase of Live by Boston-based investment company Bain Capital Partners. Some inside Live attribute Almond's departure to differing approaches to production and acquisitions between Almond and Bain Capital. Rumors fly that more changes are coming from the independent company.

MORE MOVEMENT AT MGM

Robert E. Relyea has been promoted to president of production for MGM Pictures and United Artists. Relyea played a vital role in the successful rebuilding of the MGM and United Artists brand names and will continue to oversee all aspects of production from inception through post-production for both units. An industry veteran of over 40 years, Relyea served as executive vice president of production for MGM and UA since 1993. Prior to joining MGM, Relyea was senior vice president of production at Paramount Pictures.

SOUND LEADER SHUBERT BACK IN BUSINESS

Lynn Shubert, a popular past president of ITEA (International Technical Equipment Association) and past vice president of the Theatre Division of Christie Electronic Corp. has emerged from retirement to come on board as principal consultant for Los Angeles-based Miller & Kreisel Sound Corp. (M&K) in order to spearhead the company's launch of its new THX-approved line of monitors and powered subwoofers. Shubert, in addition to his stint at Christie, was instrumental in the discovery, development and introduction of numerous new theatre products. Some of his most successful products include the Christie projector and the ELF, the Endless-Loop Autowind.

SUMMER ADMISSIONS LOST WITHOUT "LOST WORLD"?

From the look of things in spring, insiders were saying the 1997 boxoffice was easily going to hit the $6 billion mark. This year marked the fastest climb in history when in May domestic boxoffice was running 17 percent ahead of last year. If it remains on pace, the numbers could surpass $6.2 billion by year's end due to a number of high-profile sequels and franchise movies and no pesky Olympics or presidential elections to slow down the summer movie fun. The "Star Wars" trilogy started it all and "The Lost World" cleaned up its opening weekend to the tune of $92.7 million, forecasting welcome bright days for the summer. But an ill wind began blowing even with "The Lost World" and "Con Air" topping the charts: overall boxoffice dropped 19 percent from last year's numbers in early June and continued to drop for weeks. When "Speed 2" opened to a disappointing $16.2 million, the summer seemed definitely in a slump. Executives are worried that even the huge $100 million blockbusters don't have the legs they used to have. Most films can count on making between only three and four times their opening weekend grosses. Of course, with the huge debut of "Batman and Robin" and the best opening for a romantic comedy ever with $21.5 million for "My Best Friend's Wedding," finally the summer started to heat up. Still it remains to be seen if the hot and cold running boxoffice based on very few, very expensive blockbusters will ultimately mean a healthy 1997 for exhibitors.

FOR THE LOVE OF DRIVE-INS

We at BOXOFFICE know from the response to the tribute to drive-in theatres that many BOXOFFICE readers love the drive-ins, so we thought that info on a quaint newsletter might be of interest to you. The premiere issue of "Drive-In Speaker" was published in May. Also known as DIS, the new and independent monthly newsletter is the official publication of the Drive-In Theatre Preservation Society, Inc. Featuring news, advertisements, theatre discounts and information on drive-ins past and present, the newsletter is of interest for anyone who operates a drive-in theatre or those who simply love them. For more information or subscriptions write to: D.B. Louder at Drive-In Speaker, 1247 Queen, Southington, CT 06489-1267.

EXHIBITION BRIEFINGS

CARMIKE STILL IN "FIRST" PLACE

In yet another major acquisition on the exhibition front, Carmike, the nation's largest circuit by screen count, will add even more to its tally with the purchase of 105 screens from First International Theatres. The First International sites being acquired are located in Kansas, Missouri, South Dakota, Arkansas and Nebraska. Columbus, Ga.-based Carmike will reportedly have a total of 2,695 screens upon the completion of this transaction.

It was also recently announced that Carmike plans to further expand through a joint venture with retailer Wal-Mart to develop entertainment centers anchored by second-run movie theatres. Under the 50-50 deal, Carmike will manage the entertainment centers while Wal-Mart will oversee the real estate and development aspects. The first of the entertainment centers will feature eight-screen theatres, skating rinks, arcades and restaurants, and will be located at former Wal-Mart sites that closed after Super Wal-Marts were opened nearby. The first center is scheduled to open this month in Goshen, Ind., followed by an opening this fall in Valparaiso, Ind., and a spring 1998 opening in Dekalb, Ill.

MARCUS ENTERS OHIO MARKET

Marcus Theatre Corp. has announced plans to build its first theatres in Ohio. The company will construct one 16-plex on the north side of the Columbus metropolitan area, and another 16-plex on the southeast side. "The Columbus area represents an exciting new growth market for Marcus Theatres," says Bruce J. Olson, president of Marcus. "We're confident that moviegoers in Ohio will respond just as enthusiastically to the unique Marcus experience as their counterparts have in Wisconsin and Illinois." The expansion into Ohio is part of Marcus' recently accelerated growth plan, in which the chain plans to have a total of 500 screens by the year 2000. The circuit currently operates 297 screens.

WEHRENBERG: LIFE'S A BEACH

Wehrenberg Theatres plans to build a 39,000-square-foot 10-plex in Osage Beach, Mo. The cinema will seat 1,800 and will feature top-of-the-line sound systems and plush stadium seating. Based in St. Louis, Wehrenberg operates theatres in Arizona, Illinois and Missouri.

PACIFIC'S LATEST FASHION

Due to open in the summer of 1998, Pacific Theatres' Northridge Fashion Center 10 will be a 2,800-seat state-of-the-art complex serving the residents of Northridge, Calif. Located in the Northridge Fashion Center Mall, the multiplex will feature DTS, SDDS and Dolby digital sound; stadium seating; loveseats with retractable armrests and cupholders, and large wall-to-wall screens.

LEAD STORY: LOEWS, CINEPLEX MAY MERGE

Regal Cinemas' acquisition of Cobb's 643 screens (see story, page 54) may not be the only mega-merger in the works. Sony Corp., parent company of Loews, the nation's ninth-largest circuit with 900 screens, is in talks with Cineplex Odeon, which ranks fifth in North America with 1,500 screens, to merge the two chains, with Sony taking the controlling interest in the combined company. A press release from Cineplex confirmed that negotiations are taking place, but warned that "no assurances can be given at this time that an agreement will be entered into with Sony, or if entered into that a transaction will be completed. Any transaction would be subject to a number of approvals, including shareholder and regulatory approvals in both Canada and the United States." Cineplex chooses its words with caution for good reason; two years ago, Cineplex was involved in a headline-making merger proposal with Cinemark USA, which would have formed the world's largest theatre company. But that deal fell apart when Cineplex's major shareholder, MCA Inc., was bought by Seagram Co.

If the venture does take place, the merged entity, at 2,400 screens, would rank as either the second or third largest circuit in the world, depending on United Artists' screen tally at the time (last reported to be 2,301, though new builds and divestitures could cause that figure to fluctuate significantly in the near future). Regal, whose screen count will increase to 2,076 after the completion of the Cobb purchase, would then be fourth. Carmike would still hang on to the top spot with 2,695 screens.

NATIONAL AMUSMENTS BUILDS IN BROOKLYN

National Amusements Inc. has announced plans to construct a 14-screen cinema in East Brooklyn—the first new cinema in the East New York neighborhood in decades, according to the circuit. The theatre will feature 3,200 custom-designed, deep-cushioned rocking recliner seats with cupholder armrests arranged in stadium-style seating; state-of-the-art projection and sound equipment; automated ticketing; and an 800-car parking lot. The refreshment center will offer standard and specialty food items freshly prepared moments before serving.

CINEMASTAR GETS $2M LOAN TO EXPAND CHAIN

CinemaStar Luxury Theaters Inc. announced it has reached an agreement with financing and concession services company Pacific Concessions Inc., under which PCI will loan the chain $2 million, which will go in part to a theatre expansion program. The loan was part of an agreement under which CinemaStar granted exclusive concession rights to all existing theatres to PCI. CinemaStar, founded in 1989, currently runs 64 screens in Southern California.

DTS PASSES 10,000 MARK

Digital Theater Systems announced that it has become the first digital sound provider to surpass the 10,000 mark in units shipped worldwide. DTS's position as the exclusive digital sound provider for "The Lost World: Jurassic Park" helped DTS post record number in April and May, shipping over 1,200 units in two months. That "The Lost World" was instrumental in setting this record is fitting, as DTS was launched with the release of the original "Jurassic Park" in 1993.

IMAX SPACES OUT WITH NASA

The Imax Corp. and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) have signed a deal under which Imax will produce a 3-D documentary on the construction of the international space station, which begins in 1998 and is scheduled for completion in 2002. The U.S., Russia, Canada and several European nations are participating in the space station project. Astronauts will shoot the documentary using Imax's large-format film. Upon its release, the film will be shown exclusively at Imax theatres, which currently number approximately 153 worldwide.

ON THE MOVE

SMART Devices Inc. of Norcross, Ga., has appointed a new president to supervise factory operations and develop domestic sales. **Vincent P. Luciani,** formerly of Panasonic Car Audio Products, rejoins SMART after a six-year absence; he was previously employed by SMART as a design engineer. Luciani takes over for **Norm Schneider,** who is now CEO of the corporation, and is involved in promoting international sales...**Regal Cinemas** has promoted head film buyer **Jud Parker** to vice president and head film buyer. Parker has been with Regal since March of 1996...**Digital Theater Systems** has named **Dr. Marina Bosi** as vice president of technology standards and strategy. Bosi, a digital audio expert, is vice president of the Audio Engineering Society's western region, and previously worked with Dolby and Digidesign...The **International Theatre Equipment Association (ITEA)** announced its new officers, to serve until the year 2000: **Dan Taylor,** president; **Terri Westhafer,** vice president; **Steve Lawrence,** secretary; and **Jerry Van De Rydt,** treasurer.

SHOWMINDER:

Remember to save the following dates: **Australian Movie Convention,** August 13-16, Royal Pines Resort, Gold Coast, Australia. Call 61 733565671...**ShowSouth,** August 19-20, Callaway Gardens and Resort, Pine Mountain, Ga. Call (770) 455-8988...**ShowEast,** Oct. 20-23, Trump Taj Mahal, Atlantic City, N.J. Call 212-246-6460...**CineAsia,** December 3-5, Singapore International Convention and Exhibition Centre. Call 212-246-6460.

CLARIFICATION

Coca-Cola does not own National ICEE, as reported in the June issue of BOXOFFICE. National ICEE is a privately-owned company that buys Coca-Cola syrup.

REGAL HARVESTS COBB

Mike Campbell Discusses the Acquisition That Will Rocket Regal Up the Ranks of Exhibition

by Christine James

Mike Campbell gave up his career as manager of a regional grocery store chain in 1982 to pursue the possibilities exhibition had to offer. Within five years of building up his first circuit, Premiere Cinemas, he accepted an offer from Cinemark and sold the chain. But by then, exhibition was in his blood, and he founded Knoxville, Tenn.-based Regal Cinemas in 1989, taking on the position of president and CEO. Under his leadership, a mere eight years later, Regal is among the top-ranked circuits in the nation. And following the impending $200 million acquisition of Cobb Theatres and its 643 screens in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida and Mississippi (with 83 additional screens in the works in South Carolina, Florida and Tennessee), Regal will leap forward to likely become the third largest chain in North America by the end of this year, with 2,076 screens in operation (and 900 more under construction). Shortly after the Cobb announcement, Campbell spoke with* Boxoffice *about his formula for success.

Boxoffice: What made Cobb a good fit for Regal?

MIKE CAMPBELL: Actually, it fits like a glove. Number one, it's Southeastern-based, with heavy concentrations in Alabama and Florida. And in fact, I think Cobb is the number one exhibitor in Florida as far as number of screens, and when you combine that with what we have in Florida as Regal, we have a tremendous market share in Florida, which is a very high-growth state. In addition, Cobb has quality properties. They average currently about 9.6 screens per location, which is, as far as I know, one of the highest in the industry. So I think we have good long-term assets that we're acquiring in attractive markets.

Boxoffice: What about the design of Cobb's theatres?

CAMPBELL: The quality of the properties is very good, and we're particularly impressed with what they've done with recent construction. They've built some very impressive complexes in Florida and Alabama recently.

Boxoffice: Will some of the Cobb executives and employees stay on with Regal?

CAMPBELL: As in any acquisition, I think you're going to realize some efficiencies when you consolidate. Historically, we have retained certain members of acquired companies. At this point it's too early in the process to make a full determination, but I'm sure we will be retaining some of their corporate people.

Boxoffice: Will the Cobb name be retired?

CAMPBELL: I think there is value in the Cobb name; it's a very well-respected trademark. But I think over time, it will be converted to the Regal logo, probably within six months to a year.

Boxoffice: Do you plan to go forth with building plans Cobb may have had?

CAMPBELL: We plan on going forward with everything that they have in the development pipeline. It complements our building program and doesn't compete or conflict with it in any location, so that's another plus to us doing this deal.



Boxoffice: Regal has obtained a lot of its screens through mergers and acquisitions. Do you know about what the percentage would be, as opposed to building?

CAMPBELL: With the Cobb acquisition, I'm just guessing that by the end of '97, once we've opened several more of our new screens that are under construction, we're going to still be comprised probably of two-thirds acquired properties and one-third properties that we have built.

Boxoffice: Why do you prefer to buy out existing theatres rather than build new ones to your standards?

CAMPBELL: I think it boils down to just executing our overall growth plan. And Cobb's complexes and their market strategy are very, very similar to Regal's. They have a fairly new screen base; their properties are modern. And we've also been able to use our stock again in this transaction as a currency, which makes it an attractive deal not only for Regal, but also I think it's attractive to members of the Cobb family, who have the potential of getting additional upside as this company grows.

Boxoffice: Has this acquisition affected Regal's previously announced building plans in any way?

CAMPBELL: It doesn't have any impact on that. We're going forward with everything that we've announced.

Boxoffice: Which other chains have you acquired in the past few years?

CAMPBELL: Just a few months ago, we acquired Magic Cinemas in New Jersey. Last year we acquired Krikorian Premiere Theatres in Southern California, as well as Georgia State Theatres, which was more commonly known as Storey Theatres, in Georgia. Prior to that, we acquired the Litchfield Theatre chain, or I would say maybe the Litchfield II chain, which was the successor company to the Litchfield chain that was sold to United Artists back in the '80s. We acquired National Theatre Corp. in Northern Ohio and NEI [Neighborhood Entertainment Inc.] in Virginia. And most of the other acquisitions that we've done have been really just small piecemeal acquisitions that probably wouldn't be a significant factor in the total screen count.

Boxoffice: Size-wise, Regal's probably going to clock in at about number three with this new acquisition.

CAMPBELL: That's probably correct.

Boxoffice: Do you envision that Regal will take the crown in the next few years and become number one?

CAMPBELL: We've really never focused on being number one, or who's number one. I think our strategy is to continue to grow this company as efficiently and profitably as we can. We don't really have any regard to being number one. If it happens, it happens. But that's not really a goal. We're proud of what we've accomplished, but we're careful not to let the thought of being number one or the thought of being the biggest chain influence our decisions. I think we try to keep those type of things in check, because in my opinion, when that becomes your primary goal, that's when ego kicks in to the decision-making process, and we really don't want ego to play a factor here. We want it to be business judgment only.

Boxoffice: What is your overall philosophy about the business?

CAMPBELL: I think it's a business that's undergoing tremendous change now, not only through technology, but through consolidation. It's a business that has to be constantly aware of technologies that are competing for the entertainment dollar. But at the same time, I think the future of this industry, at least the exhibition end of the industry, can be very bright, as long as we don't over-

build, and kill the goose that laid the golden egg. I think in some cases, there is going to be overbuilding in certain markets, and I'm not sure what the ultimate impact of that will be. But that's one of the concerns that we do have.

BOXOFFICE: Do you have any international building plans?

CAMPBELL: At this point in time, we don't have any international plans. We're not terribly inclined to go out and start developing theatres from the ground up in markets and territories that we don't understand and that are dramatically different from the domestic market. However, if we ever found the right partner or the right acquisition opportunity internationally, I wouldn't rule it out. It's not something that's currently in the works.

BOXOFFICE: What makes a Regal theatre a Regal theatre?

CAMPBELL: It begins with the personnel, starting at corporate and flowing down through the theatres. I think we try to instill a sense of pride and a sense of customer service in those employees. And we do feel like we execute fairly well in that respect. What makes a Regal theatre a Regal theatre? The look is obviously a factor. We have a distinctive look. Typically, what we're building today is focusing on an art deco look, something that takes the moviegoer back to maybe the '30s and '40s look. A lot of neon. A lot of art deco colors in the color scheme. Many of our theatres include cafes, specialty concessions. Some units are continuing to be built that include our new FunScape entertainment unit. The amenities that we're putting in these new theatres are state-of-the-art.

BOXOFFICE: What do you think Regal provides to the average moviegoer?

CAMPBELL: We bring a quality building, we bring good customer service, convenient location and a variety of films. It's rewarding to be able to bring this to a lot of communities that really haven't had this type of operation historically. It's gratifying to go to grand openings and see the consumers come in and go "Wow!"

BOXOFFICE: What would you say is the most exciting thing happening in the exhibition and film industries today?

CAMPBELL: We're certainly excited about the magnitude and the quality of new theatres that are opening. We hope to continue being a part of that phenomenon. To me, on the exhibition end, that's the major force today. I think on the studio end and the distribution end, we're certainly excited about the studios continuing to produce quality films. At least the sense that I have is that exhibition is becoming much more a year-round business as opposed to being so seasonal.

BOXOFFICE: What do you enjoy most about being the head of Regal?

CAMPBELL: Coming to work every day. Other than that, I really enjoy being able to share the success of this company with our employees and not just a handful of key executives. All of our corporate employees are equity partners in this company. We have distributed stock and stock options throughout our corporate structure. And it gives me a lot of satisfaction to have been able to do that with a publicly-traded company that has been successful.

BOXOFFICE: You seem very calm about your rapid ascension in the ranks of exhibition.

CAMPBELL: Well, I mean, we just stick to business. We just make sure we go on with business and try to be the best company that we can be.

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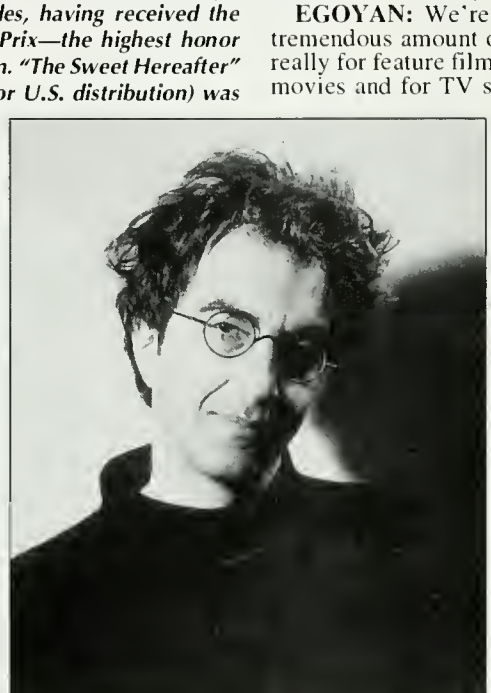
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NORTHERN EXPOSURE

Canadian News Notes *by Shlomo Schwartzberg*

Along with fellow Torontonian David Cronenberg, 36-year-old Atom Egoyan is one of Canada's best-known directors—and a towering figure in the world of independent filmmaking. His films, including "The Adjuster" and "Exotica," have garnered him a reputation as the purveyor of quirky, compelling films about sexual obsession and ennui. Now, Egoyan's newest film, "The Sweet Hereafter," his first adapted screenplay (from Russell Banks' book about the ramifications of a calamitous bus crash on a small community), has won the eccentric indie new accolades, having received the Cannes Film Festival's prestigious Grand Prix—the highest honor Cannes has yet bestowed on a Canadian film. "The Sweet Hereafter" (which has been picked up by Fine Line for U.S. distribution) was Egoyan's fourth Cannes entry: "Exotica," which went on to gross $5 million in the States, also played in competition and won a critics' prize, and "The Adjuster" and "Speaking Parts" both played the Director's Fortnight. Egoyan spoke to BOXOFFICE *about his new film and other aspects of his unique career, including a brief flirtation with Hollywood that didn't come to fruition.*



"It saddens me that there are emerging filmmakers who won't have the freedom to experiment that I had."

BOXOFFICE: Does "The Sweet Hereafter" follow in the vein of your other films, or is it very different?

ATOM EGOYAN: It falls in the vein of the other films structurally very much so. The film is not linear. However, because the central event pictured in the film is so dramatic, it has a different emotional effect. And also it's about a community, and the other films have really been about individuals searching for identity. There's a sense of detail—the characters all know themselves—and in the other films the people didn't really know themselves. Even though the characters are experiencing extreme pain and anguish and confusion, they're all self aware. That's quite a major departure from the other films. They're not as numbed emotionally and spiritually as the characters in my previous films.

BOXOFFICE: Could you have made a film like this earlier in your career?

EGOYAN: I wouldn't have approached this material. It's really searing emotionally and I couldn't have dealt with it a few years ago. What's interesting about it is it might seem simpler than the other films but there's like 30 different time periods in the film itself. So it's infinitely more complex than anything I've ever done, but it doesn't seem that way because you always know where you are emotionally.

BOXOFFICE: Does being in Cannes help you crack markets you haven't yet penetrated?

EGOYAN: Weirdly enough, I can say that [thanks largely to a presence at Cannes] the film has basically been pre-sold everywhere. A lot of these markets were sold on the basis of this film having gotten into competition [even prior to the Grand Prix win]. It's a huge feather in the cap. It has an immeasurable effect.

BOXOFFICE: You have the reputation, certainly in Europe and at home in Canada, as one of world cinema's most significant filmmakers. How does that strike you?

EGOYAN: I can say that I'm genuinely humbled by that, because I understand how that's happened, and yet for me, I think that there are a lot of films ahead of me, and I'm really grateful that the films I have made have been able to enjoy a certain status.

BOXOFFICE: How do you feel about the recent film funding cutbacks in Canada, especially in your home province of Ontario?

EGOYAN: We're in a perverse situation where there's a tremendous amount of money floating around, and yet it's not really for feature films. There seems to be a lot of money for TV movies and for TV series, and I think it's strange that feature films have been somewhat marginalized in the process because, ultimately, those are our most visible cultural export. There's a climate that I was definitely a product of, in Ontario, in the mid- to late-'80s, with the Ontario Film Development Corporation. That was a very heady time—there was a lot of support [for filmmakers], and I wouldn't have had the career I've had without that support. So it saddens me that there are emerging filmmakers who won't have the freedom to experiment that I had. But I continue to be really involved in supporting first features. There are three first features that I'm executive producing. I think it's really important to do that.

BOXOFFICE: What happened to the Warner Bros. film, "Dead Sleep," that you were supposed to direct in Hollywood?

EGOYAN: The film was about a female lawyer who deals with right-to-die cases, who falls in love with a doctor whose wife is in a coma. She's in the strange position of falling in love with the man whose wife she's effectively killing. My involvement was based on limited and narrow choices to cast. I wanted Susan Sarandon to play that role, and for the longest time they didn't want her. And by the time they wanted her [after her Oscar win for "Dead Man Walking"], it was too late. If we had approached her when I wanted to, there's sufficient evidence that she would have [done the part]. She really liked "Exotica" and she liked the script. By the time we finally got around to meeting her, I think the last thing she would have accepted to do was a thriller, because her career was in a different place.

Making a film is all about controlling your casting, because if you have a good relationship with your star, it's the star who has the power. It was very important to me to have an actress I was really excited about working with.

BOXOFFICE: What did that experience teach you about working in Hollywood?

EGOYAN: I'm getting lots of scripts, but I'm just more cautious after that experience. I know the playing field much more now. I know that a Hollywood project is either going to get made quite quickly or it's going to hang around for awhile, and I'm not one of those people who can just hang around L.A. I need to make things.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS BRIEFS

EUROVIEWS

European News Notes *by Melissa Morrison*

LEAD STORY: BRITISH REVOLUTION

LONDON—The Arts Council of England (ACE) announced May 15 three film consortiums that will receive a hefty $149 million, which is expected to revolutionize British filmmaking. The award, to be split among the recipients, will create what are in effect mini-studios, and is intended to make the United Kingdom a more powerful international filmmaking force. The consortiums, formed expressly for the ACE competition, contain the major elements necessary to realize a film, including producers, directors, distributors, sales agents and exhibitors. The winners are: The Film Consortium, made up of four production companies, the Virgin Cinemas chain, and Carlton Film Distributors; Pathe Pictures, with financial backing from non-British European banks; and DNA Films, made up of "Trainspotting" director Andrew Macdonald and "Four Weddings and a Funeral" producer Duncan Kenworthy.

The three groups beat out 34 other applicants, including such competition as Partners in Film (made up of, among others, Merchant Ivory Productions, major U.K. distributor First Independent, Elton John's Rocket Pictures, and EMI Music Publishing) and Penzance Films (including directors Nicolas Roeg and Ken Russell). One applicant estimated that being awarded a franchise could allow him to spend $10 million per film, one-third above the British average. British film industry personnel hope the studio franchises will bolster U.K. distribution, regarded as a weak link in the industry chain. DNA's future films will be distributed regionally by PolyGram, while CiBy Sales recently announced international sales rights.

Deals with U.S. distributors for any of the three franchises have yet to be made. The total amount awarded to the three franchises was actually less than the initial $253 million originally earmarked for the venture. The remainder of the money may be used to fund projects by nonfranchisees.

LABOUR: THE MOVIE

LONDON—The Labour Party's victory in Britain's May elections have boosted the British film industry, already invigorated by the studio-franchise awards (see above). Labour leader Tony Blair, the new prime minister, had promised during the election campaign that the U.K. would rejoin Eurimages, Europe's co-production and distribution funding body—although, post-election, he is noncommittal about when. The new government also appointed Britain's first film minister, Tom Clarke, a signal that the incoming government intends to take the business and cultural aspects of the film industry seriously. The new culture secretary, Chris Smith, announced a policy plan for the film industry, including doubling the number of British films on U.K. screens (from their current 10 percent market share), although he did not say how. Other goals of the seven-point plan include wooing older audience members to the cinema, improving exports, and developing technical skills within the industry by working with the government's education department. Meanwhile, the country of "Trainspotting" is having its own mini-revival, with a new country-wide booster agency Scottish Screen and the launch of the Glasgow Film Fund.

CZECH STUDIO POWER PLAY, TAKE TWO

PRAGUE—Barrandov studio head Vaclav Marhoul (**BOXOFFICE** EuroViews Q&A, Nov. 1996) was fired in May by the company's majority shareholder, the Moravia Steel company, to make room for one of its own directors, Pavel Prerovsky. The firing immediately prompted an outcry from the Czech film community. The Oscar-winning director of "Kolya," Jan Sverak, said the loss of Marhoul's visionary direction would hurt Czech film. Milos Forman ("The People Vs. Larry Flynt"), the honorary chairman of the studio's board, said a steel company shouldn't run a movie studio. Marhoul is credited with effecting Barrandov's transformation from a communist-era, state-run institution to a private enterprise. It was deja vu for Marhoul, who had been fired before by the former board of directors only to arrange a secret takeover of the company that put him back on top. Meanwhile, the Czech Ministry of Culture, which holds a "golden share" giving it the power to veto any nonfilm-related uses of the studio, is investigating Moravia Steel's mortgage of Barrandov property to secure a major loan for one of its steel subsidiaries.

PRIX FIXE MENU

NANTES—The presence of three rival multiplexes in the French city of Nantes provides one vision of a future when Europe reaches screen saturation: higher rates of movie-going, but at the cost of discounted tickets and unhappy distributors. France's three giants UGC, Gaumont and Pathe have been locked in a battle for filmgoers since each opened multiplexes in Nantes recently. Overall, cinema attendance in the city increased 47 percent but declined at individual theatres. To jump-start falling ticket sales, the UGC Apollo cinema (a seven-screen theatre that existed before the three multis arrived) in January began offering discounted ticket prices ($1.70 instead of $7.20) for second-run films, which it promoted according to themes, including cult films, love stories and auteur works. The strategy worked: Attendance jumped to 15,000 tickets sold per week from 2,000. That represents a boxoffice take of $27,000, up from $10,200 since the arrival of the three giants. In March, the Pathe-run multiplex followed suit, cutting its ticket prices to $4.30 and sparking fears among distributors that their percentage of the boxoffice would diminish. Several distributors, including the French independents Bac Films and MK2, threatened to yank their product. As a result, Pathe returned its prices to the normal level. Gaumont stayed out of the fracas, keeping its tickets at the standard $6.80. A Gaumont representative said he feared the discounts could lead patrons to regard normal ticket prices as too high.

DO YOU HAVE AN EXHIBITION OR FEATURE FILM RELATED NEWS ITEM ABOUT THE EUROPEAN MARKET?
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BOXOFFICE

	May	June	July	AUGUST (Current)
Buena Vista (818) 567-5000 (212) 593-8900	**Gone Fishin'**, 5/30, Com, PG, 94 min, Dolby SR & SR-D, Flat. Joe Pesci, Danny Glover, Lynn Whitfield, Rosanna Arquette. Dir: Christopher Cain.	**Con Air**, 6/6, Act/Adv, R, 112 min, Dolby SR & SR-D, DTS, SDDS, Anamorphic. Nicolas Cage, John Malkovich, John Cusack, Steve Buscemi, Ving Rhames. Dir: Simon West. **Hercules**, 6/6 excl. NY, 6/20 Chicago, 6/27 wide, Ani, G, 91 min, Dolby SR-D, SDDS, Flat. Voices: James Woods, Danny DeVito, Tate Donovan, Susan Egan, Matt Frewer Dirs: Ron Clements, John Musker.	**Nothing to Lose**, 7/11, Com, R, 97 min, Dolby SR-D, SDDS, Flat. Martin Lawrence, Tim Robbins, John C. McGinley, Giancarlo Esposito, Kelly Preston. Dir: Steve Dedekerk. **George of the Jungle**, 7/16, Live Act. PG, 92 min, PG, Dolby SR-D, SDDS, Flat. Brendan Fraser, Leslie Mann, Thomas Hayden Church, Abraham Benrubi. Dir: Sam Weisman.	**MVP (Most Valuable Pooch)** (formerly Air Bud), 8/1, Com, 98 min, Dolby SR, Flat. Kevin Zegers, Michael Jeter, Bill Cobbs. Dir: Charles Martin Smith. **G.I. Jane** (formerly In Pursuit of Honor, Nav Cross), 8/15, Act, R, Dolby SR & SR-D, SDD Anamorphic. Demi Moore, Viggo Mortensen Anne Bancroft, Jason Beghe, Daniel Von Bargen. Dir: Ridley Scott.
Columbia (310) 280-8000 (212) 833-8500	**The Fifth Element**, 5/9, SF, PG-13, 127 min, Dolby A & SR, SDDS, Anamorphic. Bruce Willis, Gary Oldman, Ian Holm, Milla Jovovich. Dir: Luc Besson.	**Buddy**, 6/6, Com, PG, 80 min, SDDS, Anamorphic. Rene Russo, Robbie Coltrane, Paul Reubens, Irma P. Hall. Dir: Caroline Thompson.	**Men in Black**, 7/2, SF, PG-13, 96 min, Dolby A & SR, SDDS, Flat. Tommy Lee Jones, Will Smith, Linda Fiorentino, Rip Torn. Dir: Barry Sonnenfeld **Air Force One** (formerly AFO), 7/25, Act, Dolby A & SR, SDDS, Anamorphic. Harrison Ford, Gary Oldman, Glenn Close, Wendy Crewson, Jurgen Prochnow. Dir: Wolfgang Petersen.	**Excess Baggage**, 8/15, Act/Adv, Dolby A SR, SDDS, Flat. Alicia Silverstone, Benicio Toro, Christopher Walken, Jack Thoomps Nicholas Turturro. Dir: Marco Brambilla.
MGM/UA (310) 449-3000 (212) 708-0300	**Warriors of Virtue**, 5/2, Act/Adv, PG, 104 min, DTS. Angus MacFadyen, Mario Yedidia, Marley Shelton, Chao-Li Chi. Dir. Ronny Yu.			**Hoodlum** (formerly Hoods), 8/29, Dra, R, DTS, Flat. Laurence Fishburne, Tim Roth, Andy Garcia, Vanessa Williams. Dir: Bill D
Miramax (212) 941-3800 (213) 951-4200	**Children of the Revolution**, 5/1 NY/LA, Com, R, 102 min, Flat. Judy Davis, Geottrey Rush, Sam Neill. Dir: Peter Duncan. **Brassed Off**, 5/23 NY/LA, Dra, R, 107 min, Dolby SR, Flat Pete Postlethwaite, Tara Fitzgerald, Ewan McGregor. Dir. Mark Herman.	**Mouth to Mouth** (Spain), 6/6, Com, R, Dolby SR-D, Anamorphic, 110 min. Javier Bardem. Dir: Manuel Gomez Pereira **Squeeze**, 6/13, Thr, R Dir: Robert Patton-Spruill. **Temptress Moon**, 6/13, Dra, R, 115 min Gong Li. Dir: Chen Kaige. **Love Serenade** (Australia), 6/20. Com/Dra, R, 101 min. Miranda Otto. Dir: Shirley Barrett. **Shall We Dance** (Japan), 6/27, Com, PG Koji Yasuyo. Dir. Masayuki Suo.	**Mimic**, 7/18 wide, SF/Thr. Mira Sorvino, Josh Brolin, Jeremy Northam, Charles Dutton. Dir Guillermo del Toro. **Mrs. Brown**, 7/18, Dra, PG Judi Dench, Billy Connolly. Dir: John Madden. **Seven Notes in Black** (Italy), 7/25 NY/LA. Jennifer D'Neill. Dir. Lucio Fulci.	**Copland**, 8/1, Dra. Sylvester Stallone, Rober Niro, Harvey Kertel, Ray Liotta, Janeane Garofalo. Dir: James Mangold. **Talk of Angels**, 8/8, Dra, PG-13, 97 min, Dolb SR. Polly Walker, Vincent Perez. Dir: Nick Har **She's So Lovely**, 8/15, Dra. Sean Penn, Rc Wright, John Travolta Dir: Nick Cassavetes **Operation Condor** (Hong Kong), 8/22 wide, Act/Adv, PG-13. Dir/Star. Jackie Chan.
New Line (310) 854-5811 (212) 649-4900	**Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery**, 5/2, Com, PG-13, 88 min, Dolby SR & SR-D, SDDS, Anamorphic. Mike Myers, Elizabeth Hurley, Mimi Rogers, Michael York. Dir: Jay Roach. **Trial and Error**, 5/30, Com, PG-13, 106 min, Dolby SR & SR-D, SDDS, Anamorphic. Michael Richards, Jeff Daniels, Rip Torn, Charlize Theron. Dir: Jonathan Lynn.			**Spawn**, 8/1, SF, 87 min, Dolby SR, DTS, SDI Flat. Michael Jai White, John Leguizamo, D.E Sweeney, Martin Sheen. Dir: Mark Dippe. **Money Talks**, 8/22, Act/Com, R, 92 min, Dolby SR, DTS, SDDS, Anamorphic. Charl Sheen, Chris Tucker, Heather Locklear. Dir: Brett Ratner. **Dark City**, 8/29, Thr, Dolby SR & SR-D, SDD William Hurt, Rufus Sewell. Dir: Alex Proy
Paramount (213) 956-5000 (212) 373-7000	**Breakdown**, 5/2, R, 95 min, Dolby SR-D, Anamorphic. Kurt Russell, Kathleen Quinlan, J.T. Walsh. Dir: Jonathan Moslow. **Night Falls on Manhattan**, 5/16, Dra, R Andy Garcia, Richard Dreyfuss, Lena Olin, Ian Holm. Dir: Sidney Lumet. **'Til There Was You**, 5/30, Rom/Com, PG-13, 114 min. Jeanne Tripplehorn, Dylan McDermott, Sarah Jessica Parker, Jennifer Aniston. Dir: Scott Winant.	**Face/Off**, 6/27, Act, Dolby SR-D, SDDS, Anamorphic. John Travolta, Nicolas Cage, Joan Allen, Gina Gershon. Dir: John Woo.	**Kiss Me Guido**, 7/18 ltd, Com Nick Scotti, Anthony Barrile. Dir Tony Vitale. **Good Burger**, 7/25, Com. Kel Mitchell, Kenan Thompson, Abe Vigoda Dir: Brian Robbins.	**Event Horizon**, 8/1, SF/Thr. Laurence Fishburne, Sam Neill, Kathleen Quinlan. Dir: Paul Anderson. **A Smile Like Yours**, 8/15, Rom/Com, R. Gr Kinnear, Lauren Holly, Jay Thomas. Dir: Keith Samples
TriStar (310) 280-8000 (212) 833-8500	**Rudyard Kipling's Jungle Book 2: Mowgli & Baloo**, 5/2 ltd Bill Campbell, Jamie Williams, Roddy McDowall. Dir: Duncan McLachlan.	**My Best Friend's Wedding**, 6/20, Rom/Com, PG-13, 105 min, Dolby A & SR, SDDS, Anamorphic. Julia Roberts, Dermot Mulroney, Cameron Diaz, Rupert Everett, Philip Bosco. Dir: P.J. Hogan.		
20th Century Fox (310) 369-1000 (212) 556-2400		**Speed 2: Cruise Control**, 6/13, Act, PG-13, 125 min, Dolby SR, DTS, SDDS, Anamorphic. Sandra Bullock, Jason Patric, Willem Dafoe, Glenn Plummer, Temeura Morrison, Brian McCardie. Dir: Jan De Bont.	**Out to Sea**, 7/2, Com, PG-13, Dolby SR, Flat. Walter Matthau, Jack Lemmon, Brent Spiner, Dyan Cannon, Elaine Stritch, Hal Linden, Donald O'Connor, Alexandra Powers. Dir: Martha Coolidge.	**Picture Perfect**, 8/1, Rom/Com, PG-13, 105 m Dolby SR & SR-D, Flat. Jennifer Aniston, Kevi Bacon, Olympia Dukakis, Jay Mohr, Illeana Douglas. Dir: Glenn Gordon Caron.
Universal (818) 777-1000 (212) 759-7500	**The Lost World**, 5/23, Adv, PG-13, 130 min, DTS, Flat. Jeff Goldblum, Julianne Moore, Vince Vaughn, Pete Postlethwaite, Arliss Howard, Richard Schiff, Peter Stormare, Vanessa Lee Chester. Dir: Steven Spielberg.		**A Simple Wish** (formerly The Fairy Godmother), 7/11, Com, PG, 95 min, DTS, Flat. Mara Wilson, Martin Short, Kathleen Turner, Robert Pastorelli. Dir: Michael Ritchie.	**Leave It to Beaver**, 8/22, Com. Janine Turn Christopher McDonald, Cameron Finley, Er Von Detten. Dir: Andy Cadiff. **Kull the Conqueror**, 8/29. Adv, PG-13. Kev Sorbo, Tia Carrere, Karina Lombard, Litefo Thomas Ian Griffith. Dir: John Nicoella.
Warner Bros. (818) 954-6000 (212) 484-8000	**Fathers' Day**, 5/9, Com, 101 min, Anamorphic. Robin Williams, Billy Crystal, Nastassja Kinski, Julia Louis-Dreyfuss Dir: Ivan Reitman. **Addicted to Love**, 5/23, Rom/Com, R, 101 min. Dolby SR-D, DTS, Flat. Meg Ryan, Matthew Brodenck. Dir: Griffin Dunne	**Batman & Robin**, 6/20, Act/Adv, PG-13, 124 min, DTS. George Clooney, Chris O'Donnell, Alicia Silverstone, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Uma Thurman. Dir: Joel Schumacher.	**Wild America**, 7/2, Adv, PG, 107 min, Dolby SR & SR-D. Jonathan Taylor Thomas. Dir: Bill Dear. **Contact**, 7/11, Thr, DTS. Jodie Foster, Matthew McConaughey, John Hurt. Dir: Robert Zemeckis. **187**, 7/30, Dra, R, DTS. Samuel L. Jackson, Kelly Rowan, John Heard Dir: Kevin Reynolds.	**Conspiracy Theory**, 8/8, Thr, DTS. Mel Gibson, Julia Roberts, Patrick Stewart. Dir. Richard Donner. **Free Willy 3**, 8/8, Fam/Adv,PG, DTS. Jason James Richter, August Schellenberg, Annie Corley. Dir: Sam Pillsbury **Steel**, 8/15, Act/Adv, 105 min, DTS. Shaquille O'Neal, Judd Nelson, Annabeth Gish, Richard Roundtree, Irma P. Hall. Dir: Kenneth Johnson

FEATURE CHART — AUGUST 1997

September	October	Forthcoming	
Thousand Acres, 9/12, Dra, Flat. Jessica nge, Michelle Pfeiffer, Jennifer Jason igh, Jason Robards, Keith Carradine. r: Jocelyn Moorhouse.	**Deep Rising**, 10/3, Act/Thr. Treat Williams, Famke Janssen, Wes Studi, Anthony Heald Dir: Stephen Sommers. **Rocket Man** (formerly Space Cadet), 10/10. Harland Williams, Beau Bridges, Shelley Duvall. Dir: Stuart Gillard **An American Werewolf in Paris**. Hor. Julie Delpy, Tom Everett Scott. Dir: Anthony Walker	**Flubber** (formerly The Absent Minded Professor), 11/26, Com. Robin Williams. Dir: Les Mayfield. **The Little Mermaid** (1989 reissue), Nov, Ani. Dirs: John Musker, Ron Clements. **Kundun**, 12/25 ltd, Dra. Tenzin Thutob Tsarong. Dir: Martin Scorsese. **The Horse Whisperer**, Dec, Dra. Robert Redford, Kristin Scott Thomas. Dir: Robert Redford. **Mr. Magoo**, Dec, Com. Leslie Nielsen, Kelly Lynch. Dir: Stanley Tong. **Playing God**. Dec, Dra, R, Flat. Timothy Hutton, David Duchovny. Dir: Andy Wilson. **An Alan Smithee Film** (working title), Com. Sylvester Stallone. Dir: Alan Smithee (Arthur Hiller). **Firelight**, Dra. Sophie Marceau, Stephen Dillane. Dir: William Nicholson. **Ishmael**, Dra. Dir: Jon Turteltaub. **Mulan**, Ani. Voices: Ming Na Wen. Dirs: Barry Cook, Tony Bancroft. **Washington Square**. Dra. Jennifer Jason Leigh, Albert Finney. Dir: Agnieszka Holland.	**Buena Vista** (818) 567-5000 (212) 593-8900
	Gattaca (formerly The Eighth Day), 10/17, SF. Ethan Hawke, Uma Thurman, Jude Law. Dir: Andrew Niccol. **I Know What You Did Last Summer**, 10/24 Jamie Lee Curtis, Sara Michelle Gellar, Jennifer Love Hewitt, Freddie Prinze Jr. Dir: Jim Gillespie	**Les Miserables**, Dra, Christmas. Liam Neeson, Uma Thurman. Dir: Bille August. **Bad Boys 2**, Act/Com. Will Smith, Martin Lawrence. Dir: Tom Dey. **Close Encounters of the Third Kind** (1977 reissue). Richard Dreyfuss, Teri Garr. Dir: Steven Spielberg. **Duets**. Brad Pitt, Gwyneth Paltrow. Dir: Bruce Paltrow **Homegrown**, Dra. Billy Bob Thornton, Kelly Lynch, Hank Azaria. Dir: Stephen Gyllenhall. **My Giant**. Billy Crystal. Dir: Michael Lehmann. **The Replacement Killers**, Act. Chow Yun-Fat, Mira Sorvino, Michael Rooker, Clifton Gonzales-Gonzales, Jurgen Prochnow. Dir: Antoine Fugua. **Shut Up and Dance**. Vanessa Williams, Kris Kristofferson. Dir: Randa Haines.	**Columbia** (310) 280-8000 (212) 833-8500
he End of Violence, Dra. Gabriel Byrne, ill Pullman, Andie MacDowell, Traci Lind. r: Wim Wenders.	**Hurricane Streets** (formerly Hurricane), Dra Brendan Sexton III, Kit Carson, Shawn Elliot. Dir: Morgan J. Freeman.	**Red Corner**, Nov, Dra. Richard Gere, Bai Ling, Byron Mann. Dir: Jon Avnet **Tomorrow Never Dies** (aka Bond 18), Christmas. Pierce Brosnan, Michelle Yeoh, Jonathan Pryce, Desmond Llewellyn, Judi Dench. Dir: Roger Spottiswoode. **Breakers** (formerly Sirens), Com. Anjelica Huston, Alicia Silverstone **The Man in the Iron Mask**. Adv. Leonardo DiCaprio, John Malkovich, Gabriel Byrne, Gerard Depardieu, Jeremy Irons. Dir: Randall Wallace. **Sixteen Pleasures**. Dir: Michael Apted **Supernova**, SF/Thr. Dir. Joe Nimziki. **The Ump**, '98. Sylvester Stallone. Dir: Frank Dz.	**MGM/UA** (310) 449-3000 (212) 708-0300
Monkey, 9/12, Dra. Asia Argento, Jared rns, Rupert Everett, Thandie Newton. r: Michael Radford. **ide Awake**, 9/19, Dra, PG. Dana Delany, nis Leary. Dir. M. Night Shyamalan. **ttle City**, 9/26.	**The House of Yes**. 10/10 NY/LA, Dra/Com. Parker Posey, Josh Hamilton. Dir: Mark Waters. **Phantoms**, 10/24 wide, Hor. Peter O'Toole, Joanna Going. Dir: Joe Chappelle.	**Wishful Thinking**, Fall. Jennifer Beals. **Wings of the Dove**. 11/21, Dra. Helena Bonham Carter, Linus Roache, Terence Stamp, Alison Elliott. Dir: Ian Softley. **Nightwatch**, Nov. Ewan McGregor, Josh Brolin. **Welcome to Sarajevo** (formerly Sarajevo), Nov, Dra. Stephen Dillane, Woody Harrelson. Dir: Michael Winterbottom. **Artemesia**. Michel Serrault, Miki Manojlovic. Dir: Agnes Merlet. **Full Tilt Boogie**. Dir: Sarah Kelly. **Jackie Brown**. Pam Grier, Samuel L. Jackson. Dir: Quentin Tarantino. **The Mighty**, Dra. Sharon Stone, Gena Rowlands. Dir: Peter Chelsom. **A Price Below Rubies**, Dra. Renee Zellweger. Dir. Boaz Yakin. **The Revenger's Comedies**, Dra. Sam Neill, Helena Bonham Carter. Dir: Malcom Mowbray. **Scream 2**, Hor. Neve Campbell. Dir: Wes Craven. **Sliding Doors**. Gwyneth Paltrow. Dir: Peter Howitt. **Sonatine**, Dra. Dir/Star: Takeshi Kitano.	**Miramax** (212) 941-3800 (213) 951-4200
	Boogie Nights, 10/3 ltd, 10/10 exp, Com/Dra, Dolby SR & SR-D, SDDS. Mark Wahlberg, Julianne Moore, Burt Reynolds. Dir: Paul Thomas Anderson.	**Most Wanted** (formerly America's Most Wanted), 11/7, Act/Com, R. Keenen Ivory Wayans. Dir: David Hogan. **One Night Stand** (formerly One Night), 11/14, Dra. Wesley Snipes, Nastassja Kinski. Dir: Mike Figgis. **Mortal Kombat II: Annihilation**, 11/21, Act. Robin Shou, Talisa Soto. Dir: John R. Leonetti. **American History X**. Edward Norton, Edward Furlong. Dir: Tony Kaye. **Lost in Space**. William Hurt, Gary Oldman. Dir: Stephen Hopkins. **Pleasantville**, Com. Tobey Maguire, Reese Witherspoon. Dir: Gary Ross. **Wag the Dog**. Dustin Hoffman, Robert De Niro. Dir: Barry Levinson. **The Wedding Singer**, Com. Adam Sandler, Drew Barrymore. Dir: Frank Coraci. **Woo**, '98, Rom/Com. Jada Pinkett, Tommy Davidson. Dir: Daisy Von Scherler Mayer.	**New Line** (310) 854-5811 (212) 649-4900
and Out, 9/19, Com. Kevin Kline, m Selleck, Joan Cusack, Debbie Reynolds. r: Frank Oz.	**Kiss the Girls**, 10/3, Sus. Morgan Freeman, Ashley Judd, Alex McArthur, Cary Elwes. Dir: Gary Fleder. **The Magic Hour** (tentative), 10/17. Paul Newman, Susan Sarandon, Gene Hackman. Dir: Robert Benton.	**Dead Man on Campus**, 8/29, Com. Tom Everett Scott. Dir: Alan Cohn. **The Flood**, Fall, Act. Christian Slater, Morgan Freeman, Minnie Driver, Randy Quaid. Dir: Mikael Salomon. **The Truman Show**. Fall, Dra. Jim Carrey, Ed Harris, Laura Linney. Dir: Peter Weir **Going West in America**, 11/7, Thr. Dennis Quaid, Danny Glover, Jared Leto. Dir: Jeb Stuart. **FairyTale: A True Story** (formerly Illumination), 11/26, Dra. Peter O'Toole. Dir: Charles Sturridge. **Titanic**, 12/19, Rom/Adv. Leonardo DiCaprio, Kate Winslet, Bill Paxton, Billy Zane. Dir: James Cameron. **Deep Impact**, Act/Thr. Tea Leoni, Elijah Wood. Dir: Mimi Leder. **The Rainmaker**. Dra. Matt Damon, Claire Danes. Dir: Francis Ford Coppola. **The Real Blonde**. Matthew Modine. Dir: Tom DiCillo. **Snake Eyes**. Thr. Nicolas Cage. Dir: Brian De Palma	**Paramount** (213) 956-5000 (212) 373-7000
	U-Turn (formerly Stray Dogs), 10/3. Sean Penn, Billy Bob Thornton, Jennifer Lopez, Nick Nolte, Powers Boothe. Dir: Oliver Stone. **Seven Years in Tibet**, 10/10, Dra. Brad Pitt, David Thewlis, B.D. Wong. Dir: Jean-Jacques Annaud.	**Bloodline** (formerly Kilronen), Thr, Fall. Jessica Lange, Gwyneth Paltrow. Dir: Jonathan Darby. **Starship Troopers**, 11/7, SF, SDDS. Neil Patrick Harris, Denise Richards. Dir: Paul Verhoeven. **Apt Pupil**, Dra. Ian McKellen, Brad Renfro, Kevin Pollak, Joe Morton. Dir: Bryan Singer. **Desperate Measures**. Act. Michael Keaton, Andy Garcia. Dir: Barbet Schroeder. **Godzilla**. Hank Azaria, Matthew Broderick, Jean Reno. Dir: Roland Emmerich. **The Mask of Zorro**, Act/Adv. Antonio Banderas, Anthony Hopkins, Catherine Jones. Dir: Martin Campbell. **Old Friends**, Dra. Jack Nicholson, Helen Hunt, Greg Kinnear. Dir: James Brooks. **Stinkers**, Com. B.D. Wong, Bronson Pinchot, Jennifer Coolidge. Dir: Barnet Kellman. **To Love and Be Loved** (formerly Forever). Vincent Perez, Rachel Weisz. Dir: Beeban Kidron.	**TriStar** (310) 280-8000 (212) 833-8500
e Edge (formerly The Wild, formerly ookworm), 9/26, Act/Thr, Dolby SR & SR-D. amorphic. Anthony Hopkins, Alec Baldwin, e Macpherson, L.Q. Jones, Harold Perineau r: Lee Tamahori.	**Soul Food**, 10/3, Dra, R. Vanessa Williams, Mehki Phifer. Dir: George Tillman Jr. **A Life Less Ordinary**, 10/24, Dra. Cameron Diaz, Holly Hunter. Dir: Danny Boyle.	**Anastasia**, 11/21, Ani. Voices: Meg Ryan, John Cusack. Dirs: Don Bluth, Gary Goldman **Alien Resurrection**, 11/26, SF. Sigourney Weaver, Winona Ryder. Dir: Jean-Pierre Jeunet **Home Alone 3**, 12/19, Com. Alex D. Linz. Dir: Raja Gosnell **Great Expectations**, 12/31, Dra. Robert De Niro, Gwyneth Paltrow. Dir: Alfonso Cuaron. **Doctor Dolittle**, Dec, Com. Eddie Murphy. Dir: Betty Thomas. **Untitled Bulworth**, Dec. Dir/Star: Warren Beatty. **Firestorm**, Act/Adv, R. Howie Long. Dir: Dean Semler. **Hope Floats**, Com. Sandra Bullock. Dir: Forest Whitaker. **How Stella Got Her Groove Back**. Angela Bassett. Dir: Kevin Rodney Sullivan. **The Newton Boys**. Matthew McConaughey **The X-Files Movie**. David Duchovny, Gillian Anderson. Dir: Rob Bowman.	**20th Century Fox** (310) 369-1000 (212) 556-2400
		The Jackal, 11/14. Thr. Bruce Willis, Richard Gere, Sidney Poitier. Dir: Michael Caton-Jones. **The Boxer**, 12/26 ltd, 1/9/98 wide, Dra. Daniel Day-Lewis, Emily Watson. Dir: Jim Sheridan. **For Richer For Poorer**, Dec, Rom/Com. Tim Allen, Kirstie Alley. Dir: Bryan Spicer. **Meet Joe Black**. Rom/Dra. Brad Pitt, Anthony Hopkins. Dir: Martin Brest. **Primary Colors**. Dra. John Travolta, Billy Bob Thornton. Dir: Mike Nichols **Reach the Rock**. Dra/Com. Alessandro Nivola, William Sadler, Bruce Norris. Dir: Bill Ryan. **Simple Simon**, Thr. Bruce Willis. Dir: Harold Becker. **Virus**. Thr. Jamie Lee Curtis, Donald Sutherland, William Baldwin, Cliff Curtis. Dir: John Bruno.	**Universal** (818) 777-1000 (212) 759-7500
e Down Below, 9/12, Act, DTS. Steven Seagal, g Helgenberger. Dir: Felix Enriquez Alcala. **aking Up**, 9/26 NY/LA/Tor. Russell Crowe, na Hayek. Dir: Michael Cristofer.	**L.A. Confidential**, 10/3, Dra, R, 136 min. Kevin Spacey, Kim Basinger, James Cromwell, Danny DeVito. Dir: Curtis Hanson. **The Devil's Advocate**, 10/17, Dra. Al Pacino, Keanu Reeves, Charlize Theron. Dir: Taylor Hackford. **Incognito**, 10/31, Thr. Jason Patric, Irene Jacob, Rod Steiger. Dir: John Badham.	**Courtesan** (formerly Venice), Dra, R, 112 min. Catherine McCormack. Dir: Marshall Herskovitz **Edwards and Hunt**, Com. Chris Farley, Matthew Perry. Dir: Christopher Guest. **Eyes Wide Shut**. Tom Cruise, Nicole Kidman. Dir: Stanley Kubrick. **Fallen**, Dra. Denzel Washington, John Goodman. **Goodbye, Lover**. Patricia Arquette, Ellen DeGeneres, Dermot Mulroney. Dir: Roland Joffe. **Home Fries**, Com. Drew Barrymore, Gary Busey. Dir: Dean Parisot. **Mad City**. Dra. John Travolta, Dustin Hoffman. Dir: Constantin Costa-Gavras. **Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil**. Dir. Clint Eastwood. **The Postman**, SF. Dir/Star: Kevin Costner. **Pre**, Dra. Billy Crudup, Donald Sutherland. Dir: Robert Towne. **Sphere**, SF. Dustin Hoffman, Sharon Stone, Samuel L. Jackson. Dir: Barry Levinson. **Watch That Man**. Bill Murray. Dir: Jon Amiel.	**Warner Bros.** (818) 954-6000 (212) 484-8000

BOXOFFICE Independent Feature Chart AUGUST 1997

JULY

Artistic License
212-265-9119

La Rencontre *(France)*, Dra, 80 min. Dir: Alain Cavalier.

Castle Hill
212-888-0080

Brilliant Lies *(Australia)*, Dra, 91 min. Ray Barrett. Dir: Richard Franklin. 7/11 NY

CFP
212-995-9662

Guantanamera, Com, NR, 124 min. Dirs: Thomas Gutierrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabio Rey. 7/4

First Look
310-855-1199

Alive and Kicking *(formerly Indian Summer)*. Jason Flemyng, Antony Sher. Dir: Nancy Meckler. 7/25

Fox Searchlight
310-369-4402

Star Maps, Dra, 90 min, R, Dolby SR. Dir: Miguel Arteta. 7/23 ltd

International Pictures
212-925-0404

Love's Debris, Doc, 120 min. Featuring Anita Cerquetti. Dir: Werner Schroetrer. 7/23 NY

Leisure Time
212-267-4501

Score *(1972 reissue)*, Dra/Com, 90 min. Dir: Radley Metzger.

Live
818-778-3174

The Winner, Thr, 89 min. Rebecca DeMornay, Frank Whaley. Dir: Alex Cox. 7/25 NY/LA/SF

New Yorker
212-247-6110

Forever Mozart, Dra, NR, 84 min. Madeleine Assas, Frederic Pierrot. Dir: Jean-Luc Godard. 7/4

Orion Classics
310-282-0550

This World, Then the Fireworks. Billy Zane, Gina Gershon. Dir: Michael Oblowitz. 7/18 NY/LA

Strand
310-395-5002

Contempt *(1963 reissue)*. Dir: Jean-Luc Godard. 7/4 LA
Late Bloomers, Rom/Dra, 104 min. Dir: Julia and Gretchen Dyer. 7/18

Theafilm
213-368-1778

Dirty Weekend. Lia Williams. Dir: Michael Winner. 7/11 ltd

Trimark
310-314-3040

Box of Moonlight, 107 min. John Turturro, Sam Rockwell. Dir: Tom DiCillo. 7/25 NY, 8/8 LA

AUGUST

Artificial Eye
212-255-1922

Mon Homme *(France)*, Com/Dra, 95 min. Anouk Grinberg. Dir: Bertrand Blier.

CFP
Sunday, Dra, 93 min. David Suchet, Lisa Harrow, Jared Harris. Dir: Jonathan Nossiter. 8/22 NY/LA

Castle Hill
Trojan Eddie, Dra, 105 min. Richard Harris, Stephen Rea. Dir: Gillies Mackinnon. 8/29 NY, Sept LA

Cinema Parallel
410-442-1752

Talking to Strangers *(reissue)*. 8/2

First Look
Different for Girls, Rom/Com, 97 min. Rupert Graves. Dir: Richard Spence. 8/22

First Run
212-243-0600

Hamsun *(Norway)*. 160 min. Max Von Sydow. Dir: Jan Troell 8/6

Fox Searchlight
The Full Monty, Com, 90 min, R, Dolby SR, Flat. Robert Carlyle. Dir: Peter Cattaneo. 8/13

Goldwyn
310-282-0550

Paperback Romance *(formerly Lucky Break)*, Rom/Com. Anthony LaPaglia, Gia Carides. Dir/Scr: Ben Lewin. 8/1
Napoleon, Ani, G, 82 min. Voices: Adam Wylie, Bronson Pinchot. Dir: Mario Andreacchio. 8/8

Gramercy
310-385-4400

How to Be a Player, Com. Bill Bellamy, Lark Voorhies. Dir: Lionel Martin. 8/15

Kino
212-629-6880

The Keeper. Giancarlo Esposito, Isaach de Bankole.

Kit Parker
800-538-5838

Coffy *(1973 reissue)*, Dra, 91 min. Pam Grier. Dir: Jack Hill. 8/29 NY

Live
Dirty Dancing *(1987 reissue)*, 97 min. Patrick Swayze. Dir: Emile Ardolino. 8/22

Manga
415-975-5405

Tetsuo II: Body Hammer. Dir: Shinya Tsukamoto. 8/15 LA

Northern Arts
413-268-9301

Soul in the Hole, Doc. Dir: Danielle Gardner. 8/8 NY/LA

October
212-539-4000

Career Girls, Dra. Katrin Cartlidge, Lynda Steadman. Dir: Mike Leigh. 8/8

Phaedra
310-478-3308

Dogs. Toby Huss, Pam Columbus. Dir: Eve Annenberg.
Kiss and Tell, Com. Rose McGowan. Dir: Jordan Alan.
Sleepy Heads. Dir: Yoshifumi Hosoya.

Seventh Art
213-845-1455

Things I Never Told You, Rom/Com. Lili Taylor, Andrew McCarthy. Dir: Isabel Coixet.

Sony Classics
212-833-8851

In the Company of Men, Dra. Aaron Eckhart, Matt Malloy. Dir: Neil LaBute. 8/8

Strand
The Delta, Dra. Shayne Gray, Thang Chan. Dir: Ira Sachs. 8/1 NY, 8/15 LA
Nights of Cabiria *(1957 Italian reissue)*, Dra, 110 min. Giulietta Masina. Dir: Federico Fellini.

Triumph
310-280-8059

Masterminds *(formerly Smart Alec)*, Act/Com. Patrick Stewart. Dir: Roger Christian. 8/15

Zeitgeist
212-274-1989

Fire *(India)*, Dra, 104 min. Shabani Azmi. Dir: Deepa Mehta. 8/22 NY

SEPTEMBER

CFP
Bandwagon, Com/Mus, 103 min. Kevin Corrigan. Dir: John Schultz. 9/12 ltd
Stag, Dra, 94 min. Andrew McCarthy, Mario Van Peebles. Dir: Gavin Wilding. 9/26 ltd

Castle Hill
Eye of God, Dra. Martha Plimpton, Nick Stahl, Kevin Anderson. Dir: Tim Blake.

Dreamworks SKG
818-733-7000

The Peacemaker, Act/Adv. George Clooney, Nicole Kidman. Dir: Mimi Leder. 9/26

Filmopolis
310-914-1776

In a Strange City. Winston Chao, Kuei-mai Yang. Dir: Chi Yin.

Fine Line
212-649-4800

Gummo, Dra. Chloe Sevigny. Dir: Harmony Korine. 9/26

Fox Searchlight
Intimate Relations, Dra, 99 min, R. Dir: Philip Goodhew. 9/5
Ice Storm, Dra, R, 112 min, Dolby SR, Flat. Kevin Kline, Joan Allen. Dir: Ang Lee. 9/26
Cousin Bette, Dra. Jessica Lange, Bob Hoskins. Dir: Des McAnuff.

Gramercy
Going All the Way, Dra. Jeremy Davies, Ben Affleck. Dir: Mark Pellington. 9/19 ltd, 9/26 exp

Greycat
702-737-0670

I Was a Jewish Sex Worker, Doc, 74 min. Dir: Phillip B. Roth. 9/1 LA

Kino
Capitaine Conan *(French reissue)*. Dir: Bertrand Tavernier.

Legacy
213-467-3700

Love Always, Dra/Com. Marisa Ryan. Dir: Jude Pauline Eberhard.

Live
Suicide Kings *(formerly Boys Night Out)*, Thr. Christopher Walken, Sean Patrick Flanery. Dir: Peter O'Fallow. 9/12

Manga
Gravesend, Dra. Dir: Sal Stabile. 9/5 NY

Movieworld
510-244-5590

Omaha: the movie, Com. 9/26
Mary Jane's Not a Virgin Anymore, Dra. Dir: Sarah Jacobson.

Northern Arts
Withnail and I *(1987 British reissue)*, Com, 105 min. Richard E. Grant. Dir: Bruce Robinson.

October
Kicked in the Head, Com. Kevin Corrigan, Linda Fiorentino. Dir: Matthew Harrison.

Orion
310-282-0550

The Locusts, Dra. Kate Capshaw, Ashley Judd. Dir: John Patrick Kelley. 9/12
Criminal Intent *(formerly Gang Related)*, Dra, R. Tupac Shakur, Jim Belushi. Dir: Jim Kous. 9/17

Phaedra
Timeless, Dra. Dir: Chris Hart.

Seventh Art
The Long Way Home, Doc. Dir: Mark Jonathan Harris. 9/19 NY/LA

Sony Classics
The Myth of Fingerprints, Dra. Noah Wyle, Julianne Moore, Roy Scheider. Dir: B. Freundlich. 9/9 NY

Strand
Latin Boys Go to Hell. Irwin Ossa. Dir: Ela Troyano.
Nenette et Boni *(France)*, Dra. Gregoire Colin, Alice Houri. Dir: Claire Denis.

BOXOFFICE Independent Feature Chart AUGUST 1997

OCTOBER

Fine Line
The Sweet Hereafter, Dra. Ian Holm. Dir: Atom Egoyan. 10/10
Deconstructing Harry, Com. Kirstie Alley. Dir/Star: Woody Allen. 10/24 NY/LA, 10/31 exp

Goldwyn
Welcome to Woop Woop *(formerly The Big Red)*, Com. Jonathan Schaech. Dir: Stephan Elliott. 10/3

Gramercy
The Strangest Places *(formerly The Matchmaker)*, Com. Janeane Garofalo. Dir: Mark Joffe. 10/3
Bean, Com. Rowan Atkinson. Dir: Mel Smith. 10/17

Greycat
Parallel Sons, Rom/Dra, 93 min. Gabriel Mick. Dir: John G. Young. 10/10 NY
David Searching, Com/Dra, 103 min. Anthony Rapp. Dir: Leslie Smith.

Live
Wes Craven Presents Wishmaster, Hor. Dir: Robert Kurtzman. 10/3

Manga
Tokyo Fist, Act. Dir: Shinya Tsukamoto.

New Yorker
Deep Crimson, Dra, 114 min. Daniel Gimenez, Marisa Paredes. Dir: Arturo Ripstein. 10/6

Northern Arts
Midaq Alley *(Mexico)*, Dra, 140 min. Dir: Jorge Fons.

Orion
Best Men *(formerly Independence)*, Dra. Dean Cain, Drew Barrymore, Luke Wilson. Dir: Tamra Davis. 10/24

Sony Classics
Fast, Cheap & Out of Control, Doc, 79 min. Dir: Errol Morris.

Theafilm
James Dean: Race With Destiny. Casper Van Dien, Robert Mitchum. Dir: Mardi Rustam. 10/3

Trimark
Eve's Bayou, Dra. Samuel L. Jackson. Dir: Kasi Lemmons. 10/17
Chairman of the Board, Com. Carrot Top. 10/24

NOVEMBER

Castle Hill
Further Gesture. Stephen Rea. Nov ltd

Dreamworks SKG
Mousehunt, Com/Ani. Nathan Lane, Lee Evans, Christopher Walken, Vicki Lewis. Dir: Gore Verbinski. 11/14

Fox Searchlight
Oscar & Lucinda. Ralph Fiennes. Dir: Gillian Armstrong. 11/14

Goldwyn
Bent, Dra. Clive Owen, Ian McKellen. Dir: Sean Mathias.

International Pictures
The Knowledge of Healing, Doc, 90 min. Dir: Franz Reichley. 11/5

Live
Critical Care, Dra/Thr. James Spader, Albert Brooks. Dir: Sydney Lumet.

Theafilm
Madam, the Grass Is High. Dir: Delbert Mann. Nov ltd

DECEMBER

Dreamworks SKG
Amistad *(formerly Mutiny)*, Dra. Matthew McConaughey, Anthony Hopkins, Morgan Freeman. Dir: Steven Spielberg. 12/12 ltd, 12/19 exp

Fine Line
Winter Guest, Dra. Emma Thompson, Phylidda Law. Dir: Alan Rickman. Christmas

Gramercy
The Big Lebowski. Jeff Bridges, John Goodman, Steve Buscemi. Dirs: Joel and Ethan Coen. 12/25

New Yorker
Beaumarchais *(France)*, Com, 100 min. Fabrice Luchini. Dir: Edouardo Molinaro. 12/19

FORTHCOMING

Artificial Eye
The Mother and the Whore *(France, 1973)*, Dra, 210 min. Dir: Jean Eustache. Fall
Happiness *(France)*, Com, 102 min. Michel Serrault. Dir: Etienne Chatiliez.

Artistic License
Color of a Brisk and Leaping Day, Dra, 90 min. Peter Alexander. Dir: Christopher Munch. Fall
Riding the Rails, Doc. Dirs: Michael Uys, Lexy Lovell.

Cinema Village
212-431-5119
Cartoon Noir, Ani, 85 min. Fall
Mondo Plympton, Ani, 85 min. Dir: Bill Plympton. Fall

Dove
310-786-1600
Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, Com/SF, 92 min. Douglas Adams. Dir: Neil Davies.

Dreamworks SKG
Ants, Ani. Voice: Woody Allen.
Blue Vision. Dir: Neil Jordan.
El Dorado: City of Gold, Ani. Dir: Will Finn.
Paulie: A Parrot's Tale. Dir: John Roberts.
The Prince of Egypt, Ani. Voices: Val Kilmer, Steve Martin, Martin Short. Dirs: Simon Wells, Steve Hicker and Brenda Chapman. '98
Saving Private Ryan, Dra. Tom Hanks. Dir: Steven Spielberg. '98

Fine Line
Didier *(France)*. Alain Chabat. Dir: Alain Chabat.
Girl Talk, Dra/Com. Troy Beyer, Randi Ingerman. Dir: Troy Beyer.
The Legend of the Pianist on the Ocean, Dra. Tim Roth. Dir: Giuseppe Tornatore.
Red Violin. Samuel L. Jackson.
Tears of Julian Po, Dra. Christian Slater. Dir: Alan Wade.
When I Close My Eyes *(Japan) (formerly Letters of Love)*, Dra, 116 min. Dir: Shunji Iwai.

First Look
Mrs. Dalloway, Dra. Vanessa Redgrave. Dir: Marleen Gorris. Fall
Slaves to the Underground, Dra, 92 min. Dir: Kristine Petersen. Fall
Keep the Aspidistra Flying, Dra/Com. Richard E. Grant, Helena Bonham Carter.
The Other Side of Sunday *(Norway)*, Dra. Dir: Berit Nesheim.

First Run
Forgotten Silver. Mock Doc. Dirs: Peter Jackson, Costa Botes.
Project Grizzly, Doc.
Six O'Clock News, Doc.

Fox Searchlight
Hard Men *(UK)*, Dra. Vincent Regan. Dir: J. K. Amalou. '97
Polish Wedding. Claire Danes, Gabriel Byrne, Lena Olin. Dir: Theresa Connelly. '98

Goldwyn
I Love You... Don't Touch Me, Com, 86 min. Dir: Julie Davis.

Gramercy
Body Count, Act. Ving Rhames, Forest Whitaker, David Caruso. Dir: Robert Patton Spruill. '98
Land Girls. Gwyneth Paltrow, Catherine McCormack. Dir: David Leland.
Tempting Fate *(formerly Shakespeare's Sister)*, Dra. Kenneth Branagh, Madeleine Stowe. Dir: Leslie Linka Glatter.

Greycat
A Gun for Jennifer, Thr.
Killer Tounge, SF/Adv.

Gurney Releasing
212-838-2929
Follow the Bitch, Com. Melissa Lechner. Dir: Julian Stone.

Legacy
Leading Man. Jon Bon Jovi.

Live
No Way Home, Dra. Tim Roth, Debra Winger. Dir: Buddy Gioviazzo. '98

Movieworld
The Killing Kind, Dra. Kirk Harris.
The Lost Woman. Jennifer Rubin.

New Yorker
Underground, Dra, 168 min. Dir: Emir Kusturica.

October
Year of the Horse, Doc. Neil Young. Dir: Jim Jarmusch. Fall
Condo Painting, Doc. Dir: John McNaughton. '98
Hearts and Minds, Thr, R, 105 min. Dir: Ralph Ziman. '98
Kiss or Kill *(Australia)*, Dra/Thr. Matt Day. Dir: Bill Bennett.
Three Seasons, Dra. Harvey Keitel. Dir: Tony Bui. '98

Orion
Music From Another Room, Com. Brenda Blethyn, Jennifer Tilly. Dir: Charles Peters.
Stella Does Tricks. Kelly Macdonald. Dir: Coky Giedroy.

Orion Classics
Storefront Hitchcock, Concert Doc. Dir: Jonathan Demme. '98

Shadow
La Petite Apocalypse *(France)*, Com/Dra, 110 min. Pierre Arditi. Dir: Constantin Costa-Gavras.

Sony Classics
Men With Guns, Dra. Mandy Patinkin. Dir: John Sayles.
Tango Lesson. Dir: Sally Potter.

Strand
Ayn Rand: A Sense of Life, Doc.
Full Speed, Dra, 85 min. Elodie Bouchez. Dir: Gael Murel.
La Sentinelle *(France)*, Thr, 144 min. Dir: Arnaud Desplechin.
The Mouse. John Savage, Angelica Torn. Dir: Dan Adams.
Nights of Cabiria *(1957 Italian reissue)*, Dra. Dir: Federico Fellini.
Self-Made Hero *(France)*, Dra. Matthieu Kassovitz. Dir: Jacques Audlard.
The Tit and the Moon *(Spain)*, Com, 92 min. Dir: Bigas Lunas.

Tara
415-454-5838
Mushrooms *(Australia)*, Com, 93 min. Dir: Alan Madden.

Trimark
Bombshell, Thr. Henry Thomas, Frank Whaley. Dir: Paul Wynne.
Prairie Fire. Natasha Henstridge.
Warrior of Waverly Street, SF.

Triumph
The Assignment, Act. Aidan Quinn, Donald Sutherland, Ben Kingsley. Dir: Christian Duguay.

Zeitgeist
Anthem, Doc. Dirs: Shainee Gabel and Kristin Hahn.
Conspirators of Pleasure *(Czech)*, Com. Dir: Jan Svankmajer.
My Sex Life... or How I Got Into An Argument *(France)*, Com. Dir: Arnaud Desplechin.

HOME RELEASE CHART

BOXOFFICE

AUGUST 1997

HOME VIDEO RELEASE DATE	TITLE	BOXOFFICE (MILLIONS)	SCREENS	THEATRICAL RELEASE	THEATRICAL/VIDEO DISTRIBUTOR
July 15	Fools Rush In	$29.0+	1,701	February 14	Columbia/Col. TriStar
July 15	Ghosts of Mississippi	$13.0	1,268	December 20	Columbia/Col. TriStar
July 15	Hamlet	$4.5	92	December 25	Columbia/Col. TriStar
July 15	Metro	$31.9	2,005	January 17	Buena Vista/Touchstone
July 15	Shine	$35.8	314	November 22	Fine Line/New Line
July 22	Donnie Brasco	$41.8+	1,593	February 28	TriStar/Columbia TriStar
July 22	Private Parts	$41.1	2,127	March 7	Paramount
July 22	Sling Blade	$23.8+	1,020	November 27	Buena Vista/Miramax
July 22	Smilla's Sense of Snow	$2.3	135	February 28	Fox Searchlight/Fox
July 28	Jungle 2 Jungle	$56.3+	2,340	March 7	Buena Vista/Hollywood
August 5	Booty Call	$20.0+	1,272	February 26	Columbia/Col. TriStar
August 5	Evita	$50.0	1,045	December 25	Buena Vista/Hollywood
August 5	That Darn Cat	$18.2+	1,891	February 14	Buena Vista/Walt Disney
August 12	Crash	$3.4	339	March 21	Fine Line/New Line
August 12	The Devil's Own	$42.6	2,504	March 26	Columbia/Col. TriStar
August 12	Everyone Says I Love You	$9.7	276	December 6	Buena Vista/Miramax
August 12	Lost Highway	$3.7	325	February 21	October/PolyGram
August 12	Mother	$19.1	621	December 25	Paramount
August 19	Cats Don't Dance	$3.6	1,252	March 26	Warner Bros.
August 19	Dante's Peak	$67.1	2,657	February 7	Universal
August 23	McHale's Navy	$4.3	1,861	April 18	Universal
September 23	The English Patient	$77.3+	683	November 15	Buena Vista/Miramax
September	The Beautician and the Beast	$11.5	1,801	February 7	Paramount
September	Chasing Amy	$9.3+	553	April 4	Buena Vista/Miramax
September	Grosse Pointe Blank	$26.7+	1,242	April 11	Buena Vista/Hollywood
September	Jingle All the Way	$60.6	2,404	November 22	Fox
September	Kama Sutra: A Tale of Love	$4.0+	79	February 28	Trimark/Vidmark
September	Liar Liar	$170.1+	2,909	March 21	Universal
September	love jones	$12.0	821	March 14	New Line
September	Murder at 1600	$25.2+	2,158	April 18	Warner Bros.
September	Romy and Michele's High School	$27.2+	1,607	April 25	Buena Vista/Hollywood
September	Rosewood	$13.1	991	February 21	Warner Bros.
September	The Saint	$60.0+	2,500	April 4	Paramount
September	Selena	$34.9+	1,873	March 21	Warner Bros.
October 7	That Old Feeling	$16.1	1,599	April 4	Universal
October	Austin Powers	$46.0+	2,187	May 2	New Line

Compiled by BOXOFFICE MAGAZINE. Numbers for ***Boxoffice Gross*** represent total domestic boxoffice grosses to the nearest $100,000; + signs indicate that films remain in theatrical release. Number of ***Screens*** indicates the maximum number of screens in widest, simultaneous release. Entries in the ***Theatrical/Video Distributor*** column list two names when the video releasing company is different from (or releases through a subsidiary different from) the theatrical distributor. Exact day-and-date specific entries for ***Home Video Release*** are confirmed; in all other cases, the month indicated for a release is forecast by the editors of BOXOFFICE. BOXOFFICE is not liable for errors or omissions in the chart.

Boxoffice Magazine presents



MovieFone's Moviegoer Activity Report

For the Month of May 1997

MovieFone® (777-FILM®) and its sister service, MovieLink® Online, are now the single largest source of movie showtime information in the country, providing information to over 12 million moviegoers each month. The following information represents the most requested theatres and exhibitors on MovieFone.

Top 10 Exhibitors & Theatres

Most Requested Exhibitors

Rank	Exhibitor	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
1	United Artists	653,143	1
2	Cineplex Odeon	621,057	3
3	AMC	567,365	4
4	Sony	543,741	2
5	General Cinema	346,414	5
6	Century	248,223	6
7	Cinemark	179,473	7
8	National Amusements	128,406	9
9	CinAmerica	124,109	8
10	Regal	109,874	10

Most Requested Theatres

Rank	Market	Theatre	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
1	NY	Sony Lincoln Square	46,272	1
2	BO	Sony Cheri	31,856	2
3	LA	AMC Century 14	31,499	5
4	NY	Sony 19th St. East	29,507	3
5	NY	CO Worldwide	29,348	10
6	NY	CO Chelsea	26,402	15
7	NY	Sony 84th St.	23,784	12
8	NY	Sony Orpheum	23,608	17
9	NY	CO Ziegfeld	23,026	189
10	NY	Sony Village 7	22,870	9

Most Requested Theatres Per Screen

Total Requests	Rank	Theatre (# screens)	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
New York	1	CO Ziegfeld (1)	23,026	3
1,081,459	2	CO Olympia (2)	11,246	31
	3	Sony 34th St. (3)	15,991	19
Los Angeles	1	Pacific Cinerama Dome (1)	6,754	7
580,717	2	GCC Avco (3)	16,977	1
	3	San The Vista (1)	4,494	17
Dallas	1	AMC Highland Pk (4)	7,616	1
514,669	2	GCC Richardson 6 (6)	10,611	26
	3	Sony 20 and 287 (6)	10,521	40
San Francisco	1	Century Cinema 21 (1)	7,949	22
351,107	2	Century Century 21 (1)	7,392	10
	3	Century Presidio (1)	5,983	17
Miami	1	Valentino Super Discount (3)	4,808	5
274,580	2	Cobb Miami Lakes (10)	15,348	2
	3	AMC Kendall T&C (10)	14,931	1
Philadelphia	1	UA Sameric (4)	17,126	1
254,945	2	Cinemagic 3 at Penn (3)	9,765	2
	3	AMC Olde City (2)	4,915	4
Phoenix	1	UA Christown Mall (6)	11,047	3
233,254	2	Hark Cine Capri (1)	1,779	2
	3	AMC Metro Village (6)	10,321	16
Boston	1	Sony Cheri (4)	31,856	1
233,107	2	Sony Janus (1)	4,302	10
	3	FEI Somerville (1)	3,865	2
Chicago	1	CO Broadway (1)	2,828	19
210,251	2	CO McClurg Court (3)	7,744	9
	3	CO Lincoln Village 7-9 (3)	6,177	5
Toronto	1	Famous Uptown (3)	8,967	1
170,068	2	CO Erin Mills Twn Ctr (5)	13,242	11
	3	CO York 1 & 2 (2)	4,046	13
Houston	1	CO Spectrum 9 (9)	11,620	3
162,734	2	CO River Oaks Plaza (12)	13,781	2
	3	GCC Point Nasa (6)	4,778	5
San Diego	1	Pacific Clairmont Twin (2)	2,665	14
125,851	2	CinAm Cinema 21 (1)	1,002	1
	3	CinAm Grove (9)	6,627	6

Total Requests	Rank	Theatre (# screens)	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
Atlanta	1	AMC Galleria 8 (8)	3,627	3
87,817	2	Carmike Exchange (3)	1,220	2
	3	UA Tara (4)	1,569	1
Kansas City	1	Boulevard D-I (1)	1,158	20
87,415	2	Dksn Glenwood (4)	4,349	2
	3	Dksn Antioch Twin (2)	1,995	10
Denver	1	Cinderella Twin D-I (2)	1,305	39
87,142	2	UA Continental (6)	3,460	2
	3	AMC Westminster (5)	2,816	4
Seattle	1	Landmk Neptune (1)	2,963	4
74,880	2	CO Cinerama (1)	2,023	8
	3	CO Northgate (1)	1,462	3
Minneapolis	1	Mann MN Highland (2)	1,419	3
66,840	2	CO Knollwood (4)	2,197	12
	3	Landmk Uptown (1)	536	2
Cleveland	1	Sony Cedar (2)	1,502	1
63,836	2	GCC Ridge Pk Sq (8)	5,248	2
	3	General Parma (3)	1,825	16
San Antonio	1	Act III Rolling Oaks (6)	4,416	3
63,045	2	Act III Westlakes (9)	6,533	1
	3	Act III Century Plaza (8)	5,008	7
Las Vegas	1	Century Las Vegas 6 D-I (6)	6,822	1
57,546	2	UA Showcase (8)	6,099	2
	3	Century Cinedome (12)	7,425	3
Nashville	1	Carmike Springfield (1)	1,274	3
52,717	2	Carmike Bell Forge (10)	6,370	8
	3	Carmike Lion's Head (5)	2,760	18
Washington, DC	1	CO Uptown (1)	4,556	1
49,735	2	CO Embassy (1)	754	2
	3	CO West End 1-4 (4)	1,786	6
Sacramento	1	Century Capitol (4)	2,443	5
43,454	2	Century Cinedome Sac (9)	5,079	4
	3	Century 49'er D-I (6)	3,047	N/A
Detroit	1	AMC Southland (4)	1,312	3
34,637	2	Star Lincoln Park (8)	1,814	2
	3	AMC Towne 4 (4)	854	17

Top 3 Actively* Requested Theatres:

1. CO Worldwide New York, NY
2. Sony Lincoln Sq. New York, NY
3. UA Sheepshead Bay Brooklyn, NY

*Caller specifically requested theatre

Key to Exhibitors

AMC	AMC Theatres, Inc.	Cobb	Cobb Theatres	Hark	Harkins Theatres	Pacific	Pacific Theatres
Act III	Act III Theatres	D-I	Drive-In	Landmk	Landmark Theatre Corp.	Regal	Regal Cinemas
Bim	Blumenfeld Theatres	Dksn	Dickinson Theatres	Laemmle	Laemmle Theatres	San	San Carlos
Carmike	Carmike Cinemas, Inc	Famous	Famous Players	Mann MN	Mann Minneapolis	Sony	Sony Theatres
Century	Century Theatres	FEI	FEI Theatres	Met	Metropolitan Theatre Corp.	Star	Loeks-Star Theatres
CinAm	CinAmerica Theatres, LP	GCC	General Cinema Theatres	MJR	MJR Theatre Service	SupSav	Super Saver Cinemas
CO	Cineplex Odeon Corp.	General	General Theatres	NA	National Amusements	UA	United Artists Theatre Circuit

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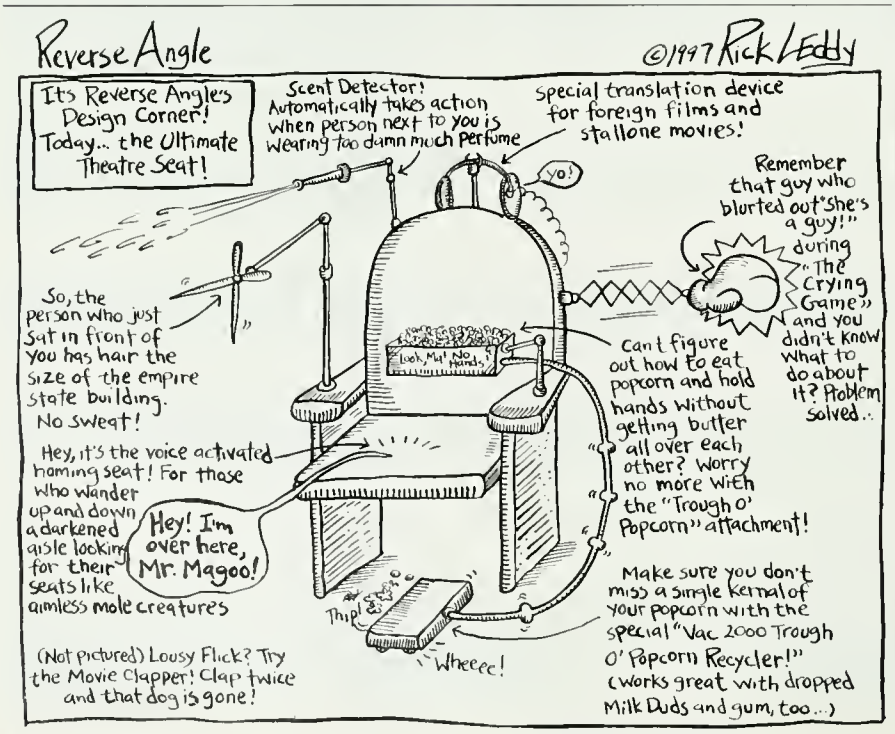
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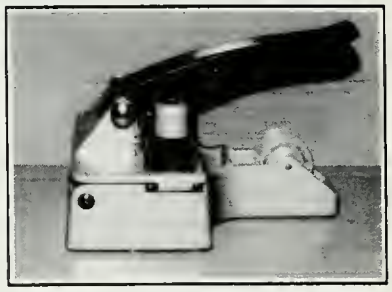
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The Big Picture

From Mel Gibson and Peter Weir to "Muriel's Wedding" and "Priscilla, Queen of the Desert," the impact of modern Australian cinema has been incalculable. The '80s "Australian New Wave" established a range of international luminaries, including Weir, Gibson, Bruce Beresford and Phillip Noyce. When that seminal talent pool relocated to Hollywood, Australia continued to stay in the vanguard of international production as home to such second-generation talents as Russell Crowe and Nicole Kidman, and by the creation of works as varied as the "Crocodile Dundee" features, "Young Einstein" and edgy, controversial fare like 1992's "Romper Stomper." When it comes to contemporary cinema, Australian production takes a back seat to no one.

There was a time, though, some 60 years ago, when Australian production was comparatively undeveloped, and when the international barriers to the export of Australian product were almost insurmountable. In that era, one unlikely rogue became the epitome of Australian charm and manliness: an actor named Errol Flynn.



Flynn's wayward life began on June 20, 1909, when the actor was born in Hobart, Tasmania, the son of Mrs. Marelle Young Flynn and a well-travelled Irish marine biologist named Theodore Thomson. Flynn inherited his father's wanderlust from a very early age; educated in Paris, London and Sydney, his school record was distinguished by young Errol's habit of running away when the mood took him. His first "adult" job was as second cook on a schooner, followed in rapid succession by a brief career in politics, a stint as the overseer of a copra plantation, and a slightly more successful period as a newspaper correspondent in Sydney.

But Flynn was too restless to stay put for long, and by the early 1930s, he was operating his own chartered schooner off the coast of New Guinea. One day, some Americans bearing esoteric motion picture gear asked him to help them scout locations for a documentary on local headhunters. Flynn's almost unbelievably photogenic appearance caught the filmmakers' fancy, and they shot a great deal of footage of their unknown skipper—images shown throughout Australia which marked Flynn's screen debut.

Flynn relocated to England to study acting, where a Warner Bros. talent scout spotted him in 1935, and from there Flynn's ascension to superstardom was a steep one. The silent stars were on their way out, and the pioneering moguls were looking for newcomers to replace such "names" of the '20s as Douglas Fairbanks and John Barrymore. Warner decided to position its new contract player as a combination of both Fairbanks and Barrymore in a swashbuckling adventure film so suited to his appeal that it became and remains a screen classic: 1935's "Captain Blood."

Flynn was quickly cast in some of the greatest adventure films of all time, including "The Charge of the Light Brigade," "The Sea Hawk," and a movie that amounted to typecasting, "The Adventures of Don Juan." The pinnacle of Flynn's career came with 1938's "The Adventures of Robin Hood"—a beautifully mounted, brilliantly directed and perfectly cast action film that managed to deliver the goods as both high adventure and high romance.

Flynn's visible glamor blinded many observers to his very real acting ability. The immediate source of his appeal was obvious; there may never have been a more dashing screen figure, and Warner, with its mania for easily marketable formula, rarely allowed Flynn to deviate from the action-packed mode. But Flynn's devil-may-care attitude and his impatience with what he felt was the exaggerated histrionics of co-stars like Bette Davis manifested itself in an understated naturalism that seems strikingly modern today. Almost two decades before the popularization of the "Method," Flynn instinctively knew what it took Marlon Brando a hundred acting lessons to discover: that sometimes, for the truest performance, it isn't so much necessary to do as it is to *be*.

Flynn's outrageous offscreen escapades made him one of the most infamous hedonists in an industry with a lot of competition for the title. His sexual conquests may have numbered in the hundreds, and he even stood trial for statutory rape in 1942 in a headline-grabbing circus that might have destroyed a star with a different kind of persona. Flynn was acquitted when one of the ladies in question admitted that she "didn't have no objections" when Flynn made a pass at her, and a new phrase entered American slang: for males of the '40s and '50s, it became common practice to describe good fortune (especially with women) as being "in like Flynn."

Flynn also had an inordinate fondness for alcohol, which led to increasingly erratic behavior as the '40s progressed and the gradual ravaging of that famous face. He was 50 when he died, but he looked 70, and his last years were marked by professional inactivity and a financial situation so desperate he was actually in Vancouver selling off his beloved yacht, the *Zaca*, when a heart attack claimed him.

Along with unproven rumors that he was everything from a drug addict to a Nazi spy, Flynn left behind one of the most purely enjoyable screen legacies of any action star. To generations, he remains one of the reigning icons of manliness—tough but tender, fairminded but capable of righteous anger, a man's man who often managed to look more beautiful onscreen than the ladies who starred opposite him. As one of Australia's first great emissaries to moviehouses all over the world, Flynn carried with him the mantle of a country both rugged and proud, embodying the best of that inheritance in terms anyone with eyes and ears could understand. It's a legacy that continues to last, of which his countrymen can be justifiably proud.—***Ray Greene***







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Response No. 47

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Response No. 3

BOXOFFICE

SEPTEMBER, 1997 VOL. 133 NO. 9

ABOUT THIS ISSUE'S SPECIAL COVER...

To celebrate the release of Warner's tabloidesque "L.A. Confidential," **BOXOFFICE** has re-invented itself as a parody/homage of groundbreaking '50s scandal sheet Confidential Magazine. See our Big Picture feature *(p.146)* and "L.A. Confidential" story *(p.18)* for more.

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34 SNEAK PREVIEW: "HURRICANE STREETS" *By Alex Albanese*
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36 INDEPENDENT EXHIBITION SHOWCASE *By Susan Lambert*
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104 FROM WHERE I SIT: SOUND 2001 *By Mark Mayfield*
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LETTERS

Last weekend I went to my local theatre to see "Con Air." As the movie started, I noticed that the picture went off the sides of the screen. You guessed it. The movie was in Scope and the screen was wall-to-wall 1.85:1 Flat.

I asked the manager and he played dumb at first, then told me it was a Scope picture on a Flat screen. He said most people don't notice and don't know any better, told me not to tell anyone, and then gave me a free pass.

This is a rip-off! The theatre in question is a 10-plex. Only two of the 10 screens can show a Scope movie—the rest are cropped. And they are preparing to build more of the same design!

Who can be contacted in the industry to put this problem right? I hope you care about this as I do, and can do something about it.

Thanks,

Bob Meza

Valencia, Calif.

Thank YOU, Bob. We do care about this far too common problem, which is why we've run your letter at the top of this section. We hope you don't mind that we've removed the name of the circuit you mentioned to avoid causing needless embarassment for it in print. Our hunch is that your letter will suffice to remind them of your complaint. As to who to contact in order to deal with this problem: in our view, you already came to the right place!

The projection article in the April '97 issue of **BOXOFFICE** was a benefit for all projectionists. "Projection's Seven Deadly Sins" by Sean Lohan is like a pocket manual that all projectionists should have hanging in the projection room. Mr. Lohan listed so many of the important "don'ts"—most notably using shoe polish on prints to distinguish splices! I myself was once told that it was the best way to mark splices; I'm glad to find written proof of my theory about it ruining film!

If possible, can you please publish info on the National Film Service, headed by Mr. Lohan? I am trying to learn all I can about being a projectionist, as I would like to own and operate my own theatre some day.

Thanks, and keep up the good work!

Philip Herman

Rockaway Beach, N.Y.

You'll find a listing for National Film Service on page 93 in the ALLIED portion of this issue's Buyers Directory.

I was just doing some thinking. Print as many of the following comments as you wish:

—Re: "The Movie Palace Guard" (4/97): Not a bad piece in the April '97 issue, but you missed at least one Hollywood palace: the Pacific on Hollywood Boulevard between Wilcox and Cahuenga. It's been closed in recent years but will hopefully be re-opened in mid-'98 by Tyrone Power's granddaughter...

—Probably the main reason for the closing of many of the Hollywood single screens was the opening of the GCC Galaxy multiplex on Hollywood Boulevard in the early '90s...

—Still waiting for the concessions revolution to hit L.A. Yeah, we've got bottled water, nachos, $2 bon-bons and ice cream bars, smaller pre-packaged hot dogs and high prices. But where are the branded goodies you mentioned in "Appetite for Construction" (4/97)?

—When is the IMAX and Iwerks theatre revolution going to come?

—Hollywood creativity still seems to be directed at the making of movies rather than the showing of movies. Witness all the shoebox screens with identical starting times, ensuring long lines at the boxoffice to accompany the high prices at the concession stand...

—How about bringing back the double feature with newsreels and cartoons instead of a half-hour of previews? Also bring back the drive-in (a great site in Hollywood would be the deserted TAV building between Selma and Sunset)...

—How about earlier starting times (7 to 9 a.m.) on Christmas? And why not have bargain prices the whole day?

PS: All in all, yours is a good magazine, except when you don't tell all sides of the story. Don't your arms get tired from patting yourselves on the back?

Gerald Janke

Hollywood, Calif.

Re: Our tired arms: They do, which is why we'll let that comment stand.



Response No. 9

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Response No. 473

BOXOFFICE BUYERS DIRECTORY QUESTIONNAIRE

GREETINGS, LOYAL READER!

Yes, another year has gone by. How do you know? Because you are about to read your copy of the **1998 BOXOFFICE MAGAZINE BUYERS DIRECTORY**, the most complete reference information source of its kind in the motion picture business!

Like literally THOUSANDS of industry professionals, you rely on the **BOXOFFICE BUYERS DIRECTORY** to do business. As in years past, you're downright delighted to receive your copy! Only one thing could increase your sense of joy and anticipation as you page through the B.O. B.D.:

If your company and roster were listed.

It's all right. Fess up. Despite receiving our form in the mail and then by fax, you didn't send us your corporate roster and a description of your product. Maybe you were too distraught over the underperformance of so many big-budget films this past summer, or too excited by the impending launch of two film distributors, DreamWorks SKG and Polygram, to think about taking FIVE MINUTES to reach THOUSANDS OF POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS at ABSOLUTELY NO COST TO YOU! Or maybe this ad represents the first time you ever realized you too could be included in the **BOXOFFICE BUYERS DIRECTORY**, in which case you might be suffering from that malaise called NGS—nonrespondents guilt syndrome.

So, right up front in this issue, we thought we'd provide you with the best cure possible: a response form for next year's **BUYERS DIRECTORY**. If you missed your chance to appear in these pages, or wound up in the Nonrespondents penalty pokey, here's your answer. If your competition is listed here, may we recommend a rapid response? And, if your competition isn't listed here, may we point out an unprecedented, risk-free opportunity for you to gain an edge?

DON'T BE A SCHLEMIEL! Take a minute! RESPOND! That way, if you liked this year's **BOXOFFICE BUYERS DIRECTORY**, we guarantee you'll just LOVE next year's!

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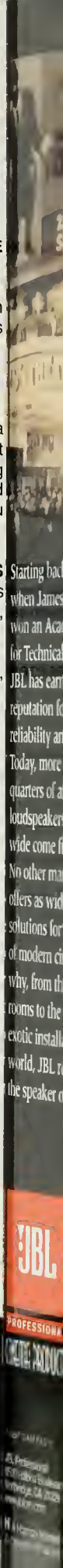
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HOLLYWOOD UPDATES

Disney is "Barry" busy making production deals: the studio has signed a three-year pact with director **Barry Sonnenfeld** (helmer of "Men in Black") and **Barry Josephson** (former president of worldwide production for Columbia Pictures), who first worked together on "Men in Black" and have joined forces to become a producing team.

Miramax recently paid a first-time filmmaker with the oddest currency, "bar" none. Bartender **Troy Duffy** not only earned a six-figure payday for his screenplay "The Boondock Saints," but he also got the studio to buy him J. Sloan's, a bar where he once worked and still frequents. Under the deal, Duffy will make his directorial debut, and his band, The Brood, will provide the soundtrack.

Polygram Filmed Entertainment has inked director **Alan Parker** ("Evita") and his production company, **Dirty Hands Prods.**, to a first-look deal, under which Parker will write, produce and/or direct. Polygram plans to finance and distribute one or two Dirty Hands productions per year.

Jonathan Frakes, who helmed and starred in "Star Trek: First Contact," has entered a two-year, first-look agreement with **Paramount,** under which he will develop and direct films. "I'm thrilled with Paramount's vote of confidence in me, and am proud to be staying with the studio I've called home for the past decade," says Frakes.

Writer-director **Jonathan Mostow** ("Breakdown") has signed a first-look deal with **Universal** to direct and produce features. The first film under the deal may be a historical drama he's co-scripting with John Bishop. He's also teaming with **Jon Favreau** (writer/star of "Swingers") on a project called "Leatherheads," about the formation of the National Football League.

Actress **Julia Ormond** ("Smilla's Sense of Snow") and her production company, **Indican Prods.**, have signed a two-year, first-look agreement with **Fox Searchlight** Pictures. Ormond will produce, direct and write projects for Searchlight, which is 20th Century Fox's art-house division. The first project under the deal is "Telling Lies," about an FBI polygraph expert accused of falsifying a test for the mob. The second may be an adaptation of Isak Dinesen's short story "The Dreaming Child."

Football star **Howie Long,** who made his screen debut last year in John Woo's "Broken Arrow," has signed a three-picture deal with **Morgan Creek Prods.** The agreement will 'kick off' with "Field Test," an action drama about a military test field. Long still has two films left in his three-picture pact with **Fox;** the first film under that arrangement is the upcoming actioner "Firestorm."

"Contact" director **Robert Zemeckis,** former CAA co-chairman **Jack Rapke** and "Forrest Gump" producer **Steve Starkey** have formed a company called **Image Movers** and have signed a five-year deal with **DreamWorks.** DreamWorks will finance Image Movers films, release them theatrically and pay for the company's overhead.

The **Independent Feature Project** will honor **Kevin Kline** at the 1997 IFP Gotham Awards, to be held Sept. 16 at New York City's Manhattan Center. The Gotham Awards recognize individuals who have been successful in New York and have demonstrated an outstanding commitment to independent filmmaking. Kline, whose credits include "Fierce Creatures," "A Fish Called Wanda," "Sophie's Choice" and "The Big Chill," as well as the upcoming Ang Lee film "The Ice Storm" and the Frank Oz-helmed "In and Out," will receive the actor award. Previous recipients include Christopher Walken, Sigourney Weaver, Harvey Keitel, Susan Sarandon and John Turturro. Also honored will be **Ruth Prawer Jhabvala** as the winner of this year's writer award. Jhabvala is an Academy Award-winning scribe who has collaborated with Merchant Ivory Productions on such films as "A Room With a View," "Howards End" and "Remains of the Day," among others.

ON THE MOVE: **Ann Daly,** former head of Walt Disney Home Video, has been appointed to head up **DreamWorks'** feature animation division...**Jerry Ketcham**, formerly executive production manager for **The Walt Disney Motion Pictures Group,** has been promoted to VP of motion picture production for the studio. He's currently in charge of such projects as "Flubber," "Mr. Magoo" and "My Favorite Martian"...**Michelle Manning** has been named president of production of **Paramount's Motion Picture Group,** overseeing all aspects of the development and production of the studio's motion pictures. Manning joined Paramount in 1991 as senior VP of production, and was promoted to executive VP of production in 1993..Also at Paramount, **Blaise Noto** has been upped from senior VP to executive VP, while western division VP **Clark Woods** has been promoted to senior VP, assistant general sales manager for the domestic distribution division...**Allison Brecker** will join **Universal Pictures** as senior VP of production...**William A. Jones** has been appointed to the post of senior executive VP of **MGM.** He's been with the company 14 years, most recently as executive VP of corporate affairs.

BITS AND PIECES: **Def Pictures,** whose "How to Be a Player" comes out this month, has renewed its first-look agreement with **Polygram Filmed Entertainment** for another three years...**Vondie Curtis Hall,** writer and director of "Gridlock'd," has signed a first-look deal under which he'll write, direct and produce films for both Fox 2000 and Fox Searchlight...Burst Bubble: **Universal** and **Sid Sheinberg's Bubble Factory** have ended their alliance. The Bubble Factory, which was fully financed by Universal, produced such tepid performers as "Flipper," "McHale's Navy" "That Old Feeling" and "A Simple Wish" under the pact.

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Attracted To "Opposite"

"JUST LIKE ME" An egomaniacal womanizer fantasizes about meeting a lady just like himself—and his wish comes true. Mike Myers ("Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery") will play a dual role as male and female versions of the same person. (New Line)

"ARKANSAS" Brad Pitt ("The Devil's Own") will star in this turn-of-the-century drama about a cold-hearted sharecropper who imports 25 orphans to work his land. Billy Bob Thornton ("Sling Blade") is in talks to direct. (DreamWorks)

"THE RELUCTANT GROOM" Hugh Grant, who became famous for playing a reluctant groom in his breakout hit "Four Weddings and a Funeral," will play another hesitant hubby in this romantic comedy. Grant will play a man who is wary of commitment, yet he marries a woman who happens to feel the same way. Later, they discover their marriage was not legitimate, and must decide whether they should stay together or break up. (Universal)

"OWD BOB" Colm Meaney ("Con Air") and James Cromwell ("Star Trek: First Contact") will star in this drama about a young American boy who goes to live with his British grandfather after his parents are killed. Rodney Gibbons ("The Neighbor") directs. (Distribution is to be set)

"EYE OF THE BEHOLDER" Ewan McGregor ("Trainspotting") will play a private eye tailing a woman who turns out to be a serial killer in this black comedy-thriller, to be directed by "The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert's" Stephan Elliott. (Distribution is to be set)

"HOLY MAN" Eddie Murphy ("The Nutty Professor") will star for director Stephen Herek ("101 Dalmatians") in this comedy about a greedy program director of a home shopping TV show who tries to boost sales by putting a guru on the air. (Buena Vista)

"THE PATRIOT" Steven Seagal continues to bring environmental messages to moviegoers while kicking bad guy ass, as seen in "On Deadly Ground" and the upcoming "Fire Down Below." This time, he must save millions from a biochemical terrorism threat instigated by a fanatical militia group. (Distribution is to be set)

"THE THIN RED LINE" Director Terrence Malick ("Badlands") has assembled an all-star cast including Woody Harrelson ("The People vs. Larry Flynt"), Sean Penn ("She's So Lovely"), John Travolta ("Face/Off"), Nick Nolte ("Mother Night"), George Clooney ("Batman & Robin"), John Cusack ("Grosse Pointe Blank"), Bill Pullman ("Lost Highway") and Ben Chaplin ("The Truth About Cats and Dogs") for this drama, which is based on James Jones' autobiographical novel about his experiences in the battle of Guadalcanal in 1942. Adrien Brody ("The Last Time I Committed Suicide") will portray Corporal Fife, the character based on Jones. (Fox)

"THE LEGEND OF THE PIANIST ON THE OCEAN" Tim Roth ("Hoodlum") will star for director Giuseppe Tornatore in this story about a gifted pianist's career aboard a cruise ship. Legendary composer Ennio Morricone ("The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly") will write the musical score. (Distribution is to be set)

"THE ICE QUEEN" Sydney Pollack ("Sabrina") will direct this drama, which will star Michelle Pfeiffer ("Up Close and Personal") as a drug enforcement agent-slash-distaff James Bond. (Columbia)

"A COOL DRY PLACE" "Swingers'" Vince Vaughn has signed to star in this drama, about a lawyer whose wife ("Con Air's" Monica Potter) leaves him and their young son. He moves with his son to Kansas, where he meets a new love interest (Joey Lauren Adams of "Chasing Amy"). Trouble arises when the mother shows up one day to reclaim the son. (Fox)

"SNAKE EYES" "Mission: Impossible's" director Brian De Palma and scripter David Koepp will reteam in this film about a corrupt city detective who becomes a hero when he discovers the man responsible for assassinating the Secretary of Defense. Nicolas Cage ("Face/Off") is attached to star, and Tim Robbins ("Nothing to Lose") is in talks to sign on. (Paramount)

"SCREAM AGAIN" Though her character was killed off in the first "Scream," Drew Barrymore will be making a cameo in its sequel. Neve Campbell, Courteney Cox, David Arquette, Liev Schreiber and Jamie Kennedy will reprise their roles, and Jerry O'Connell ("Jerry Maguire"), Laurie Metcalf ("Dear God"), Jada Pinkett ("Set It Off") and Sarah Michelle Gellar (TV's "Buffy the Vampire Slayer") will also star. Director Wes Craven and scripter Kevin Williamson will also return. (Miramax)

"MY GIANT" Billy Crystal ("Fathers' Day") will play an unscrupulous agent who tries to exploit a sweet but naive basketball player (Washington Bullets center Gheorghe Muresan) in this comedy. Kathleen Quinlan ("Breakdown") will play the agent's estranged wife. (Distribution is to be set)

"SYLVIA" The off-Broadway comedy hit about a dog who causes jealousy in a marriage is being brought to the bigscreen with director Lawrence Kasdan ("French Kiss") at the helm. Steve Martin and Diane Keaton, who played husband and wife in the "Father of the Bride" movies, will again play spouses. The husband sees the dog as an understanding companion, while the wife views the canine as competition. Her stance is more understandable given the fact that the role of the dog was portrayed onstage by Sarah Jessica Parker. The film incarnation of the pulchritudinous pooch has not yet been cast. Martin will also script the adaptation. (Paramount)

"THE OPPOSITE OF SEX" A girl ("That Darn Cat's" Christina Ricci) runs away to see her gay brother, but complications arise when she gets involved with his boyfriend. Lisa Kudrow ("Romy and Michele's High School Reunion"), Martin Donovan ("The Portrait of a Lady"), Johnny Galecki ("Suicide Kings") and Lyle Lovett ("Ready to Wear") also star. Don Roos, who wrote "Boys on the Side," scripts and makes his directorial debut. (Distribution is to be set)

ET CETERA: Christopher Lloyd will star as the titular extraterrestrial in Buena Vista's **"My Favorite Martian."** Jeff Daniels will co-star as the reporter who takes the martian into his home, pretending the alien is his uncle ...**"Lanai-Loa,"** a supernatural ghost story that will be the first release from Francis Ford Coppola's and Wayne Wang's production company, Chrome Dragon, will shoot in China and will star Angus MacFadyen ("Braveheart") as a cop who is drawn into a web of murder...Casper Van Dien, Rod Steiger, Craig Ferguson and Natasha Wagner will star in **"Revenant,"** a thriller about hip vampires living in L.A.



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MODERN MAJOR GENERAL



General Cinema Celebrates 75 Years By Looking to the Future *by Pat Kramer*

Cover photo by Richard O'Rourke

When BOXOFFICE asked some of the employees of General Cinema Theatres (GCT) what has most contributed to the company's success in 75 years of service, the answer we kept eceiving was "good customer service—General Cinema listens to its ustomers." *(See related story, page 16).* Known as a family-oriented xhibition circuit throughout its three-quarters of a century in business, ieneral Cinema's mission statement remains, "Service first, entertainnent always." Says Paul Del Rossi, president and CEO of GCT (the eventh largest circuit in the country, according to BOXOFFICE's last iants of Exhibition poll), "We think of ourselves as an entertainnent company, not just an exhibition circuit. What we strive for in ur business strategy is servicing the customer. People can go nywhere to a movie theatre. We want them to come to our theatre. ow do we distinguish it? By the quality of our service."

A family-owned business now in its third generation, General Cinema Theatres was founded n the Greater Boston area in 1922 by the late hilip Smith. Known as a businessman with a een farsightedness, Smith opened one of the first uccessful "auto theatres" in the U.S. in 1935, aving the way for the growth of the chain, then nown as Midwest Drive-Ins.

By the '50s, Philip and his son, Richard, connued GCT's tradition of trend-setting, seizing pon what they saw as the next major trend in onsumer habits: the shopping mall. Built in 951, GCT's single-screen Framingham Cinema t Shoppers World in Framingham, Mass., is elieved to have been the first suburban theatre ocated in the same complex as a shopping center. he convenience of dining and shopping around ie moviegoing experience proved so popular iat, by 1966, GCT was the largest shopping enter theatre operator in the country, according o Del Rossi.

With their exhibition chain thriving, the Smith amily began diversifying their business interests n the late '50s, opening drive-in restaurants, offee shops and bowling alleys. In 1960, the ompany went public, and changed its name to ieneral Drive-Ins. Then, as further acquisitions ere made, the company became known as Genral Cinema Corporation (GCC).

Through the '60s, '70s and '80s, GCC invested n radio and TV stations and retail furniture showooms, and helped finance several films. But the usiness which brought the greatest returns was merican Beverage Corporation, which they urchased in '68, leading to the formation of CC Beverages. By 1989, when they sold the ompany, they had grown from five production acilities in three states to 20 in 29 states, making iem the largest independent soft drink bottler in the nation and Pepsi's rgest franchisee.

GCC's other core businesses include the Neiman Marcus Group which includes Neiman Marcus, Bergdorf Goodman and Contempo asuals specialty retail stores) and the publishing company Harcourt race Jovanovich. With their acquisition of the publishing company in 91, the company name changed again from General Cinema Corporaon to Harcourt General. General Cinema Theatres was then spun off om the main company, Harcourt General, and now operates as a ivision of General Cinema Companies, Inc. (The familiar GCC logo efers to General Cinemas Companies, though the theatre arm refers to self as GCT).

Still a family-run business, Richard Smith is chairman and CEO of CC, while his son, Rob, serves as president and COO of GCC. Over t General Cinema Theatres, the "Johnny Come Lately" (as he refers to imself) in the Smith family business is president and CEO Paul Del Rossi. Del Rossi joined the company 17 years ago, after working in the venture capital business with The Boston Company and at national management consulting firm Arthur D. Little. By contributing expertise from outside the exhibition industry, Del Rossi says he's been able to bring different ideas to the business. But he notes that film has always been a passion: Since the time he saw his first animated Disney film, he's always had a love for the movies.

As the driving force behind the continued success and growth of the Chestnut Hill, Mass.-based exhibition circuit (currently with 1,250 screens in 186 locations in 24 states), Del Rossi has continued to uphold General Cinema's "Service first, entertainment always" goal. Citing the Smith family's historical precedent in presenting new innovations to the market, Del Rossi says, "We've always been a leader in sight and sound developments. We were the first theatre circuit to install THX sound systems in 1985. And there's always been a focus on providing exemplary customer service."



"People can go anywhere to a movie theatre. We want them to come to our theatre. How do we distinguish it? By the quality of our service."
—Paul Del Rossi

With the current massive increase in movie theatres in the U.S., Del Rossi believes innovation is key to remaining competitive in a market whose screen count has tripled over the past two decades. "The way you combat this is in [providing] service and innovation: audiovisual innovation, theatre design innovation, and where you locate your theatres—in or near entertainment retail."

GCT's five-year plan for their rapidly-growing circuit includes 350 to 400 new screens, all equipped with digital sound and stadium seating. GCT is also looking at international expansion in Europe and Latin America.

The circuit's biggest new news is a recently-inked partnership agreement with Robert Redford's Sundance Group, under which they'll be building a new chain called Sundance Cinemas. Located in city and suburban areas as well as in college towns, the cinemas will be art-house theatres with six to 10 screens, the first of which Del Rossi hopes to have up and running within a year.

One of GCT's newest multiplexes, the Northbrook Court 14, located in a suburb of Chicago, Ill., exemplifies how far exhibition can go. The Northbrook Court 14 is situated in an upscale shopping mall, offering an expanded entertainment experience. Says Frank Mack, general manager of the theatre, "Northbrook has all the latest, state-of-the-art items that people want in a theatre." This includes two self-serve concession stands selling branded items like Starbucks coffees and Pizzeria Uno. The theatres, with stadium seating for a total of 3,251 patrons, are located on two levels, with a cafe on the mid-level. Two of the auditoriums are THX-certified, and all 14 theatres are equipped to provide all three digital-sound capabilities. Ten mobile digital systems are available: five Dolby Digital, three DTS, and two SDDS. By having them on movable carts, Mack says they can provide whatever sound system is needed for a particular feature.

Since its grand opening last November, the Northbrook Court 14 has been very successful. Says Mack, "The town of Northbrook is, I think, very pleased with the design of the theatre. It's very glitzy in its look and the way it's laid out. It lends a lot of mystique to Northbrook. Many people are in awe over the look of the theatre and concept."

The design, however, is but a small part of the overall appeal. In keeping with the GCT philosophy of service and family-oriented programming, Northbrook launched their highly-successful "Summer Movie Camp" program in June. The eight-week series featured weekly matinees at 10:00 a.m. and noon, with games, prizes, singalongs and



TRUE BLUE: *The lobby of General Cinema's Framingham 14 in Framingham, Mass.* **(PHOTO: Richard O'Rourke)**

special guests in conjunction with the feature showing. Ronald McDonald and Chuck E. Cheese made appearances, and demonstrations were given by a local fire department. For the low admission price of $2.50, the kids got a full show as well as free popcorn and a drink.

"To service the community," says Mack, "we try to provide tie-ins with vendors for discount coupons at the concession stands as well as tie-ins with the adjacent stores in the mall." Through this type of exchange, positive relations are also built with area businesses. He adds, "We are really reaching out to what the customers expect when they go to see a film. It's very important that everyone get their money's worth. People come to the movies as an escape and they want two hours of enjoyment—and everything has to be perfect. It has to be fine-tuned to make the event special, with excellent customer service. The presentation must be flawless and employees and management must be focused on the fact that the moviegoing experience must be second to none."

> "The movies have always been a place of enjoyment, fantasy, escape. Our role in the industry is to perpetuate that. I want our company to be recognized as the 'best in class.'"

Calling his chosen line of work "enjoyable," Mack notes that, while the hours are sometimes long, he enjoys working with the public and his staff to create the enthusiasm that's needed to make the theatre successful. That quality, says Del Rossi, is an essential element in the people who work for General Cinema. "One of the things I try to do is find the best possible managers and give them an opportunity to go as far as they can in the business," he says. In that regard, Del Rossi says, "We've always been known as a fertile training ground for entertainment industry executives," pointing to a list of distinguished General Cinema alumni, including Chuck Viane, senior vice president and general sales manager of Buena Vista Pictures Distributing; Jim Tharp, president of DreamWorks distribution; Tom Sherak, chairman of 20th Century Fox Domestic Film Group and senior executive vice president of Fox Filmed Entertainment; and Barry Reardon, president of Warner Bros. Distributing. Given the track record of some of General Cinema's former employees' success in the entertainment business, Del Rossi says the Smith famil has created a company where the people hired are top-flight. "I thin [the caliber of GCT's personnel] is really the hallmark [of the company and it shows by where these people have ended up," he observes.

Of General Cinema's long-term success in exhibition, Del Rossi says "We are part of one of the mainstream cultural themes in the country the movies. The movies have always been a place of enjoyment, fantasy escape. Our role in the industry is t perpetuate that. I want our company t be recognized by theatregoers, our com petitors, and the studios as the 'best i class.' We want to be right up there at th top when they think of companies tha exemplify the moviegoing experience."

In keeping with the Smith family's ques to be innovative, this December, GC opens their newest multiplex: a 16-scree theatre (renovated from a former six-scree theatre) located at Chicago's Yorktow Mall. Two of the 16 auditoriums will b "premium" theatres with deluxe accom modations for 150 patrons. With very large over-stuffed chairs and extra leg room, th theatres are being built with comfort in mind. Tickets will be availabl by advance reservation, and food and beverage service will be provide by cafe located between the two theatres. Seat-side food service wi also be available, with orders taken right at the seats. Del Rossi liken this experience to "flying first class." Based upon the demand for this typ of theatre, General Cinemas will be looking to duplicate the premium theatr concept, retrofitting some of their existing theatres.

With innovation always in the forefront of GCT's plans, Del Ross notes that their basic philosophy hasn't changed since the business wa founded in the '20s. "At the end of the day in this industry it's pret simple: create the best possible moviegoing experience. Sometimes it the technology, sometimes it's what's on the screen, sometimes it customer service—making a person feel welcome. Those things reall haven't changed."

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6) Rail Chase II #1	1,232
7) Alpine Racer 2 # 1	1,228
8) Alpine Racer 2 #2	1,218
9) Rail Chase II #2	1,101
10) Maximum Force	1,055



GENERAL INFORMATION

Northbrook Court 14 Staff Members Reveal Secrets of GCT's Success *by Pat Kramer*



General Cinema's Northbrook Court 14 in Northbrook, Ill. **(PHOTO: Richard O'Rourke)**

Frank Mack, Northbrook Court 14 General Manager



What do you like about the exhibition business?

I think it's exciting. Movies always seem to be the talk of Monday morning conversations. [It's great] just to be a part of that, the openings, especially with big blockbusters. It's an ever-changing business. It's very intriguing and there's always something new to plan for.

What is most fulfilling about your job?

The idea of supplying a means of entertainment to the public—the satisfaction that you see on their faces as they walk out of the theatre [which demonstrates] that we're successful in creating a good escape environment for our patrons.

What is it about General Cinema that's enabled the company to be successful for the past 75 years?

I think it starts as the top: the upper management has always been solid and supportive of the industry. They've really been very innovative with different concepts and through those opportunities of change, they've stayed ahead of the competition, always trying to obtain a better means of providing the customers with more than just the movie.

Steve Fischel, Senior Supervisor

What do you like about the exhibition business?

It's a rewarding, exciting business. It's interesting seeing different movies that come out, seeing different people who come out and enjoy our movies.

What is most fulfilling about your job?

Working with great management, seeing what people like to see, seeing return customers back for other movies, seeing their satisfaction.



What is it about General Cinema that's enabled it to be successful for the past 75 years?

Customer service has always been number one. We take care of our customers—we treat them as if they are a guest in our house, not as a customer.

Brandy Werner, Cashier

What do you like about the exhibition business?

I love it. I've been with this company for five years, off and on. I love being able to see people's reactions to the movies. I love seeing people enjoy their entertainment.

What is most fulfilling about your job?

Seeing the faces of the little kids when they come out. I have four nieces and I love taking them to the movies, seeing their new experiences. Adults are funny too, with their reactions to special effects.



What is it about GCT that's enabled it to be successful for the past 75 years?

I believe they listen to their customers. If a customer suggests something, they take it into consideration and they go through all the channels, trying to do what their customers would like them to do.

John Vance, Chief Projectionist

What do you like about the exhibition business?

I've been in this business for 32 years and have seen many ups and downs. Today, we're a very viable industry. There are so many new and exciting technological advances coming on board and it greatly enhances the moviegoing experience for our customers.

What is most fulfilling about your job?

I love to see a full auditorium and I like to see the audience totally involved in the film, whether they're gasping or laughing. I take



pride that in some small way, I helped contribute to their enjoyment.

What is it about GCT that's enabled it to be successful for the past 75 years?

Customer satisfaction, clean and well-maintained theatres, quality presentations, and professionalism. They're very concerned about the patrons and the job that's done and the fact that customers are getting a good presentation and are happy.

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BLOOD &THUNDER

Cult Mystery Author JAMES ELLROY's Tough, Bloody Vision At Last Makes It to the Screen with Warner's "L.A. CONFIDENTIAL"

by Ray Greene

"What I want in a story is psychological gravity, plot density. I want deeply ambiguous, darkly driven, deeply committed, passionate men, riding the wave of history on a huge canvas. And I hate the noble loner myth.

"I am a 49-year-old white man, basically conservative in temperament. I am Protestant to the core. And I would rather err on the side of authority. I respect cops much more than I dislike them. I understand the ambiguities inherent in their lives. I understand the corruption of institutions. And I understand the passion of men who need to impose authority on other people because their inner lives are chaotic. I see my vision as moral."

The Argyle Hotel (aka The Sunset Tower) is one of those rare spaces in the changeable L.A. landscape where history seems to stand still. It's an art deco masterpiece—the kind of building that defined L.A. architecture before a post-WWII mania for prefabricated functionalism joined forces with L.A.'s pervasive contempt for its own past in an autodestruct act that consigned many of the most beautiful structures the town would ever see to the wrecking ball.

The Argyle survived all that—just barely, and thanks only to a last-minute infusion of foreign capital in 1986. To walk through the hotel's doors is to rub shoulders with ghosts—the outsize kind, the jumbo variety.

John Wayne lived here for awhile, and cryptic billionaire Howard Hughes haunted the Argyle's halls before retiring to weirdo obliv-

ion in his penthouse on the Vegas Strip. Paulette Godard, ZaSu Pitts, Joe Schenck, Billie Burke, all left their signatures in the Argyle's guestbook, as did that most Hollywood of Hollywood gangsters, the redoubtable Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel, en route to his premature death by gunfire in a Beverly Hills mansion.

The interior is a perfect presentation of a vanished time, right down to the elevator doors and ashtrays. It feels like any door could open onto a black and white, Tinseltown world of

I hate the noble loner myth. My guys are the toadies of the fascist system. To me, that's crime fiction in the twentieth century.

impossible violence or unthinkable romance. Pressed for an adjective, a certain kind of writer might describe the effect as "Chandleresque."

But not James Ellroy, contemporary king of a *noir*/pulp literary netherworld still most associated with Raymond Chandler in the popular mind. A cult crime novelist who has managed the leap into the critical and popular mainstream Chandler himself never pulled off, the bulk of Ellroy's signature works—"The Black Dahlia," "The Big Nowhere," "L.A. Confidential" and "White Jazz," popularly referred to as Ellroy's "L.A. Quartet," as well as six earlier novels—have often been likened to Chandler, owing to their L.A. milieus and the fact that they revolve around the investigation of violent crime. It's an obvious if unjustified analogy, and one Ellroy has never been comfortable with; "Chandleresque" could easily be this particular wordsmith's least favorite word.

"Ah, f--k," he says, leaning back against a chair in the bookless room the Argyle refers to as its "library." "That c--ks--ker." Ellroy sits bolt upright, his eyes gone serious beneath his wire rim glasses. "I'm not a fan. I reread Chandler as an adult—I loved him as a kid—and I was amazed how little Chandler knew about people. I was amazed at how slipshod his plots were, and how often his fabled style just didn't work. I thought the stories were schmaltzy, corny and filled with male self-pity. My guys are the toadies of the fascist system. To me, that's crime fiction in the 20th century.

"I understand Chandler's popularity," Ellroy adds. "I understand how easy it is for contemporary writers to adapt his stuff to their particular prejudices. Thus you've got the black private eye who sees all, who's noble, who exists outside the mainstream with the X-ray eye vision into everything petty and corrupt and meanspirited. Or the lesbian private eye or the gay private eye or the Chinese private eye or the lesbian, gay, handicapped, Chinese, gay, black, Irish-Catholic private eye. I don't buy it at all. I think it's a cheap shot, and cheap shit all the way."

Obviously, Ellroy is a man of strong opinions. A writer who knows his own mind, and hasn't a qualm about expressing it. He has an extremely high opinion of his output; he once referred to himself as "the greatest crime novelist who ever lived," then said he regretted the self-description only because it was too limited to the genre that made him a star.

To the growing readership that follows his work, the cocksure attitude is completely justified. Ellroy's intricate, complex *policiers* are like nothing anyone else in contemporary fiction is trying to do: as plot-driven as an airport paperback, but as complicated as a cubist painting, as dense and lyrical as a fugue.

"L.A. Confidential"—the first of his major works to make it to the bigscreen and the nominal subject under consideration on this hot July afternoon—is a perfect case in point. Set in '50s L.A. against a backdrop involving multiple murders, scandal sheet journalism, highjacked heroin, extra-legal police intrigue, and a Hollywood prostitution racket that makes Heidi Fleiss look like a boulevard pavement pounder, the screen version of "L.A. Confidential" has more plotlines than most TV mini-series. There are not one but three "hero cop" protagonists, and in true Ellroy fashion, each is deeply, almost desperately flawed. Bud White (played by Russell Crowe in the film) is a part-time vigilante who likes to find and punish wife abusers because of a horrific secret in his own past: as a child, he watched his father beat his mother to death with a tire iron, then spent four days handcuffed to a bed while the body decomposed before his eyes. Ed Exley (Guy Pearce) is both a brilliant investigator and an ambitious martinet willing to rat out other officers to advance his career. For superslick detective Jack Vincennes (Kevin Spacey), money-grubbing publicity stunts are his real profession: adviser to the "Dragnet"-like TV series "Badge of Honor," he keeps his name in the papers by accepting payola from a Confidential Magazine-like tabloid called Hush Hush in exchange for providing photo-op busts of celebrity dopers.

At two hours and 16 minutes, "L.A. Confidential" is already long by Hollywood release standards. Even at that length, half Ellroy's plot was left out. A child-murdering serial killer is missing in action—one "Dr. Frankenstein," known for his attempt to assemble a perfect playmate out of body parts butchered from his prepubescent victims. The bastard offspring of the Walt Disney-esque animation king Raymond Dieterling and the sordid creation of Dieterling's movie-driven '50s theme park Dream-a-Dreamland have also been excised. Ellroy-authored love interests for Vincennes and Exley are absent—a singularly significant omission, given that Ellroy describes the moral argument of his work in terms of the fact that "all my guys are capable of love and dying to give it up for some woman... All my guys are chumps for love."

"My dialogue is there in force," says Ellroy of the screen adaptation, "but it's been reworked. My characters have been pushed to the background, moved to the forefront, plotlines have been cut, jiggled, reworked extensively... None of the guys have the extensive character arc that they do in the book. And they can't possibly. Unless you were to have made a movie that's two or three times as long, and that would cover the entire [event structure of the novel]."

The bottom line is that Ellroy's novels are just too damn big for the movies—or so their author once thought. "My agent and I laughed like hell when we sold the movie option to [producer] David Wolper. 'How's anybody ever going to adapt this thing for the movies?'"

Enter Curtis Hanson, director of "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle" and "The River Wild." A self-described Ellroy freak who has said of the author that "his is the quintessential voice of L.A.," Hanson impressed Ellroy right from the start as somebody who just might be able to do the impossible by successfully translating his work to the screen.

"Curtis Hanson came to me only when he was reasonably sure that the film would be made," says Ellroy, whose works (most notably "The Black Dahlia") have been optioned in the past only to languish for years in that bottomless Hollywood maw known as "development hell." "I liked the guy immediately... I read two drafts of the script, [and] at the time I thought, 'I wouldn't do it this way.' But at the same time I knew full well I'm not a filmmaker. I don't want to be a filmmaker. I don't aspire to be a filmmaker in any way, shape, manner or form."

Visiting the set of "L.A. Confidential" and seeing characters which he had lived with for so long made flesh was a revelation to Ellroy. "I went to the set and I saw Paul Guilfoyle play [real-life gangster] Mickey Cohen. Here's a man who looks rather as Mickey Cohen did in the early 1950s, coming down the City Hall steps—in period garb, surrounded by period automobiles. It was a wonderfully dense little piece of footage.

"Then Curtis had me out to the editing room and showed me about seven minutes of the film, and I had my first startling minute with it, which was seeing James Cromwell as [corrupt police captain] Dudley Smith. Here's a character who appears in more books than any other one of my characters—'Clandestine,' 'The Big Nowhere,' 'L.A. Confidential' and 'White Jazz.' Here's this [actor] who's imperiously tall—about six-foot-six or seven, cocky, intelligent, sandy-haired, great looking in his way, with the same brogue that I gave [the character] in four of my books. 'Whoa! What's that?'"



This picture of the 10-year-old James Ellroy was taken by a news photographer just moments after he learned of his mother's death.

Ellroy might have been expected to object to the necessary changes that had been made to make "L.A. Confidential" work onscreen. He is, after all, a writer who prides himself on the sheer construction of his work, and who has said repeatedly that, in his fiction, "every word means something." But Hanson's devotion to the spirit if not the letter of Ellroy's story paid off. "I love the movie," Ellroy says. "What you've got is an amazingly dense, mysterious, complex ensemble piece... It's a work of art that exists on its own level, [but at the same time] it's recognizably me."

Asked if potential readers unfamiliar with his more complicated and far more violent novels will find the movie version of "L.A. Confidential" a fair introduction to his work, Ellroy doesn't miss a beat. "I've long contended that hard-boiled crime fiction is the story of bad white men doing bad things in the name of authority," he says. "I think people get that point... People that say, 'Boy, that was really good, I want more' will be able to walk out of the theatre and into the Barnes & Noble there in the mall and buy not only the movie tie-in edition of 'L.A. Confidential,' but Curtis Hanson and Brian Helgeland's screenplay, which is being published, and 'My Dark Places' in trade paperback as well."

My Dark Places" is a subject unto itself. Ellroy's most recent book-length work and also his bestselling volume ever, it departs from the overall pattern of his

"CONFIDENTIAL" CHAT



Born and raised in Los Angeles, Curtis Hanson was a natural to direct the screen version of James Ellroy's novel "L.A. Confidential." In addition to being a native son, Hanson was also a longtime fan of Ellroy's work. And though he'd never directed a period movie before, he was on familiar ground with the story's motifs of deception, betrayal, and violence.

Hanson, whose previous work includes "The Bedroom Window," "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle," "Bad Influence" and "The River Wild," is a writer/director who specializes in exposing the dark undercurrents beneath seemingly calm surfaces. So great was his affinity for the project that Hanson signed on as director, co-screenwriter, co-producer, and music supervisor. The director says the result is his most personal film to date.

BOXOFFICE: How did you approach the task of adapting such a dense, complex novel to the screen?

CURTIS HANSON: I was fortunate to find a gifted collaborator in [co-scripter] Brian Helgeland. Brian had been pursuing "L.A. Confidential" independent of me, and in fact he was going to pitch it to Warners. But then he learned that I was already doing it. So he came to me and we talked it over. And it was a huge advantage because not only is Brian a really talented writer, but he also loved Ellroy's book. When we were working together we'd be each other's watchdog. We would try to be as true as we could to the characters and sacrifice what we needed of the plot without sacrificing the moments of character. And I think that's what impressed Ellroy—the script was still in his voice, which was important because that's what brought us there in the first place.

BOXOFFICE: How important to you was the look of "L.A. Confidential"?

HANSON: It was important that it seem authentic, but I didn't want the period aspect of the story to overwhelm the audience. When I started out, every time I met with a potential collaborator, I gave a photo presentation of archival shots of L.A. from the 1950s that essentially represented my vision of the film. Once we were in preproduction, I would show the creative team a film a week, such as Nick Ray's "In a Lonely Place" and Robert Aldrich's "Kiss Me Deadly"—films that were contemporary to the time.

BOXOFFICE: With urban crime, police corruption and amoral characters, you're dealing with a lot of film noir themes here, and yet clearly you decided not to go with a noir-style mise-en-scene.

HANSON: That's true. We were very deliberately not doing a film that was about a noir mood. True noir, of course, expresses a certain attitude that is dark and full of fatalism, but also an attitude that was organic to the time that it was made. To do that today would be phony. The world is different today, and I wasn't interested in doing an homage to something that doesn't exist anymore. The point was to create a story that, like Ellroy's book, is set in the past but not of the past. The '50s was actually a very forward-looking period in Los Angeles, and I wanted that to show in the film.

BOXOFFICE: The film's music is also typical of the period. What guided your selection process for the songs?

HANSON: I had picked many of the songs before we started shooting, because I wanted them to help define characters and enhance themes. Also, I'm fascinated with the difference between appearance and reality, and to me the songs were a good way of underscoring this difference. For instance, in the beginning when Danny DeVito is narrating about the difference between the image and the reality of Los Angeles, I have Johnny Mercer singing "Accentuate the Positive" in the background.

BOXOFFICE: What led to the decision to cast two Australians, Russell Crowe and Guy Pearce, in the central roles as American cops?

HANSON: It was important that we have actors in these roles who the audience could take at face value, and Russell and Guy were relatively unknown. They were also believable. When you meet these characters you make certain assumptions about them, but as the story goes along you start to question your assumptions and reevaluate them.

BOXOFFICE: What is the essence of Los Angeles to you?

HANSON: L.A. is a city that's almost famous for its apparent disregard of its own past, and yet the past is everywhere, which we found when we were scouting locations. There are a lot of cities that it's easy to get a handle on: New York, Paris—you see them and you're blown away. L.A. isn't like that at all. You get here and you wonder, "Where is it?" I think L.A. is what you make of it. And it's challenging in that way, because to understand this city you really have to work at it.—*Lael Loewenstein*

career in several obvious—not to mention intricate and intriguing—ways.

It is nonfiction, first of all, and, singularly for a writer who says his idea of good writing always includes the biggest imaginable social and historic canvas, it revolves around a single, unsolved crime. It is also the book that is the key to all the others, a searing, almost masochistically detailed look at the event which, according to Ellroy, is "certainly the pivotal event in my life. That's what shaped my intellectual curiosity, and more than anything else, that's why we're sitting here talking to each other right now."

The crime in question is the brutal murder of Ellroy's mother, Jean, back in 1958, when Ellroy was just 10 years old. That occurrence explains not only Ellroy's deep fascination with criminal behavior but the current of almost inexplicably savage violence that runs through his work; his obsession with the details of police investigatory procedures; even his fixation on '50s Los Angeles, the town where his mother did much of her living, and just a little bit east of which she ultimately did her dying.

Ellroy had already dealt with his mother's death in fictional form: his breakthrough novel, 1987's "The Black Dahlia," imposed an imaginary solution on one of L.A.'s most notorious unsolved murders and was dedicated to his mother's memory. "My mother was not Elizabeth Short," Ellroy says of parallels with the Dahlia case's victim. "I used Elizabeth Short and her death as a symbiotic stand-in for my mother and hers. But they were different women—markedly so. In some ways I thought I had dealt with my mother when I wrote 'The Black Dahlia.' I was mistaken. I had to go out and confront the literal woman."

To "confront the literal woman," Ellroy brought his considerable research skills to bear on the original investigation and mounted a new investigation of his own, then organized the resulting data into an account he calls "my autobiography, really." The press the book received was both ecstatic and sensationalist—a combination which sells a lot of copies. The more interesting question, though, is the personal one: namely, did writing "My Dark Places" help Ellroy lay anything to rest?

"Well no, it didn't resolve anything," he says. "There'll never be any closure, and as I say in the book, closure's a preposterous concept. I wouldn't want closure if I could have it. I think my relationship with her will ever mutate. May end with the cessation of my consciousness when I die, and may continue onto some wild-ass plain after my death. No. It was a great confrontation, and now my mother is with me, and that's all to the good."

"My Dark Places" went even further than the grim details of Jean Ellroy's death, chronicling Ellroy's own youthful slide into alcoholic and chemical oblivion as well as his perverse career as a petty criminal and "panty sniffer." Surprisingly, Ellroy lived out an early life that is a lot closer to the pathologies of the criminals who wend their way through his fictions than it is to his police protagonists. "I never hated cops," he says. "I never blamed

society for making me who I was. I never blamed my parents. You can point to my mother's murder, but frankly, my wig wasn't on too tight before my mother's murder. I think if you shake my mother's family tree back in Europe and my father's, it'd be full of drunks and drug addicts and panty sniffers and general shitbirds. In some sense I think it was a genetic sentence."

His work shows a detailed understanding of the criminal mind, but with virtually no sympathy for criminal motives. "You take a guy like me," he says, "who quit drinking, quit stealing, quit taking drugs, quit breaking into houses and sniffing women's undergarments. Once you've turned your life around like that, you're a little bit impatient with people who haven't done it. If I were a government figure, and thank God I'm not, frankly, I would rather err on the side of judgement more than of permissiveness and forgiveness. I think the world could use more of that, and less of the latter."

In his most recent novel, Ellroy put both Los Angeles as a primary locale and police investigations as a structuring device behind him, and he claims he'll never look back. Set in the early 1960s, 1995's "American Tabloid" was an imaginary history of a parallel assassination plot against JFK—a historical figure Ellroy loathes.

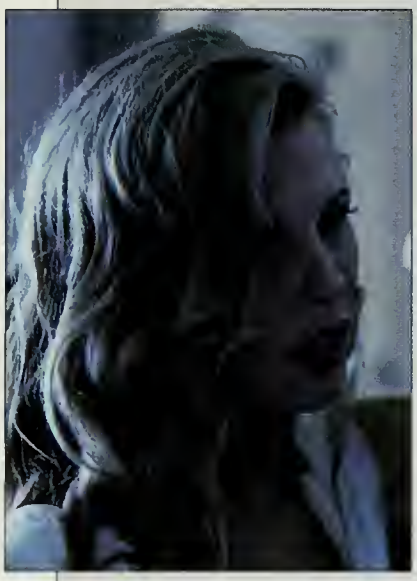
If it was a departure, it was a characteristic one: elaborate, multi-layered, bone-fascinated with the secrets behind the secrets of the American experience, a book that essentially proposed that the organizing principle of American history isn't capitalism or democracy but criminality itself. Abetted by the muscle of his publisher, Knopf, and his own growing reputation, it outsold every one of his previous fictions and became Time Magazine's selection as Novel of the Year.

"American Tabloid" was part one of what Ellroy calls his "Underworld U.S.A." trilogy, which will focus on behind-the-scenes intrigue in the national political arena during the '60s and early '70s. As he moves closer to contemporary times, the thought occurs that Ellroy (who has yet to revisit a period after treating it in one of his books) may be edging himself into extinction. It's an idea he dispels with an Ellroyesque monologue on current American politics that demonstrates how the man finds material everywhere.

"Look at Bill Clinton," he says. "Whatever you think of him—and frankly, I was glad to get the Republicans out and get Big Bill in. Tell me he isn't dirty from his toes to the top of his head. Tell me he isn't financed by dirty money. Tell me he hasn't lined his pockets. Yeah. Tell me he isn't a sleazy c--ks--ker who whips out his d--k on women left and right. Yeah. Tell me that you don't believe Paula Jones."

He leans back, the lenses of his glasses magnifying the obsessive gleam in his eyes. "America was never innocent," he says, in words that might just add up to the artist's worldview. "We popped our cherry on the boat over, and looked back with no regrets."

"L.A." WOMAN



L.A. Confidential" marks Kim Basinger's return to the bigscreen after an absence of nearly two-and-a-half years, during which she gave birth to a daughter, Ireland, now 20 months old. The actress, who says, "I have the worst record for picking projects," has been getting some of her best reviews for her portrayal of a high-priced hooker who incarnates Veronica Lake in a Hollywood brothel based on period movie stars.

A successful model before heading to Hollywood, the Georgia native made her feature debut in 1984's "The Natural." Subsequent films included "9 1/2 Weeks," "No Mercy," "Batman," "The Marrying Man" (on which she met husband Alec Baldwin) and "Final Analysis." But she made headlines less for her acting ability than for her allegedly "difficult" behavior on set. A lawsuit over her decision not to appear in the film "Boxing Helena" forced her into bankruptcy and brought more unwanted publicity (the judgement was substantially reduced on appeal).

Basinger says that those troubled times are behind her. Dressed casually and appearing relaxed, she talked with **BOXOFFICE** *about her latest picture and what she calls "a new time in my life."*

BOXOFFICE: How did you get involved with "L.A. Confidential"?

KIM BASINGER: My initial meeting with [director] Curtis Hanson was at the Formosa Cafe [a famous Hollywood hangout that figures in the movie]. He pulled out pictures of that era and presented a visual presentation. He just lured me into this world. I had never before been approached by a director who told me I was *going* to do a part. Not asked me, *told* me. Curtis decided I *was* Lynn Bracken, that I was the only person who could do this job. We're all little kids who have egos and insecurities. You want to be believed in. When a director stares into your eyes and says, "You're her!" that presents you with a challenge you want to live up to.

BOXOFFICE: What attracted you to the project?

BASINGER: After reading the script, I wasn't sure I wanted to play a call girl, the sweet whore. But I loved Curtis and that he had so much belief in me. And I loved the dialogue, and I loved the idea of going into Veronica Lake's life. By day, Lynn Bracken was Veronica Lake, so I had to capture a little bit of her spirit.

If this movie does only one thing, I hope it resurrects Veronica Lake. We lost a very great star at a very young age—I think the business really threw her for a loop. She was so talented and so misunderstood. She was known more for her "peekaboo" hair than her ability, but she was an amazing actress. She had it down.

BOXOFFICE: The tabloid press figures prominently in the story. Certainly, you're no stranger to that.

BASINGER: It's funny but I never thought about that. I think the movie's theme is "facade." It's about something you're not—what's real and what isn't.

BOXOFFICE: How have you dealt with being the brunt of a lot of negative publicity?

BASINGER: I always call it "old noise." Not even old news—it's not even newsworthy. There was a time when I probably should have come out and really faced the press and answered questions and [stood up] for myself. At that time I was incapable of coming out and exposing myself—I was much too shy. I chose to go underground and let it all pass. And when you do that, you really set yourself up for anything that anybody writes about you to become something you will have to live down forever.

BOXOFFICE: "L.A. Confidential" premiered at Cannes. What was that like?

BASINGER: It was indescribable. It was my first time attending. It's like a parade, 24 hours a day. I have never seen so many flashbulbs in my life. Walking up that red carpet at the Palais I told [co-stars] Russell Crowe and Guy Pearce to hold on to me—I was terrified I might trip! I don't know how those women do it—get out of the car and twirl around for the camera in those high heels!

BOXOFFICE: Critics are already saying this is your best screen work in quite some time.

BASINGER: Everything was right on this one—the director, the script, my demeanor toward the material, my co-stars. Everything just came together so beautifully. And I'll give myself some credit, too, in that I wasn't in any hurry. I just wanted to do a wonderful job. I wanted to do what I'm capable of doing.

BOXOFFICE: Do you think you've changed since the birth of your daughter? And has that affected your personal life?

BASINGER: Ireland's birth is the best thing I have ever done in my life, or ever will do. Children change you. Basically, you no longer have any time to focus on your own crap. It's so immediate, what's important and what isn't.—*Jean Oppenheimer*

OCTOBER TRAILERS

With so many booking selections, this must be the season of the which

Except for a few bright lights like "Men In Black" and "Face/Off," summer 1997 was downright disappointing. Despite lots of big-budget movies carefully arranged to avoid demographic competition on opening weekend, the likes of "Batman & Robin" and "Speed 2: Cruise Control" debuted at lesser numbers than expected—and then plummeted. Now comes fall, and exhibitors are hoping the Halloween season bears more treats than tricks. There's certainly plenty of candy to unwrap in October, with 15 major studio releases and 23 independent and interdependent offerings in distributors' goodybags.



With that rise in releases comes congestion. All seeking the male demo on the Oct. 3 weekend are four wide openers: an Oliver Stone film, a thriller and two horror flicks. The Oct. 17 date—which boasts the month's superstar film, the Al Pacino-Keanu Reeves "Devil's Advocate," with otherworldly leanings—also has two new sci-fi movies and a crime drama whose lead's fan base is the SF contingent. On Oct. 24, two thrillers—one psychological, one supernatural—go after chill fans. Only the 10/10 week (and 10/31 by default—it has just one entry) has good balance: a dramatic biopic and a Disney family film.

Of course, the more demo congestion there is among high-profile releases, the more chance there is for a sleeper title to break out. Key among these are 10/17's British comedy "Bean" and two 10/24 openers, "A Life Less Ordinary" (from the "Trainspotting"/"Shallow Grave" team) and the family fantasy/drama "FairyTale: A True Story" (see photo above). All in all, the month has some magic to it but might need a little extra dose of wizardry; one hopes it's enchantment and not necromancy.

OCTOBER 3

U-Turn

Sean Penn ("She's So Lovely") stars as a drifter who gets involved with a married woman ("Anaconda's" Jennifer Lopez). This Phoenix presentation (an Illusion Entertainment/Clyde Is Hungry production) was known as "Stray Dogs." Nick Nolte, Claire Danes ("Romeo & Juliet"), Billy Bob Thornton ("Sling Blade"), Powers Boothe ("Sudden Death"), Joaquin Phoenix ("Inventing the Abbotts") and Julie Hagerty co-star. Oliver Stone directs; John Ridley adapts his novel; Mike Medavoy produces. (TriStar, 10/3 wide)

Exploitips: *With its multiple-name cast and the Stone (and Medavoy) imprimatur, "U-Turn" boasts a high profile even before the usual Stone publicity engine kicks into gear. What he's not likely to hype is his recent stone-cool reception at the boxoffice: In the '90s, Stone's films have averaged under $35 million domestically (without '91's "JFK," another $10 mil. less)—not the kind of continued return one seeks of big-director, big-name, studio-budget films. This outing, sell the cast: Penn, Lopez, Danes and Thornton all have the cachet to which an audience likes to respond. A bookstore tie-in is a natural.*

An American Werewolf in Paris

This sequel to 1981's horror hit "An American Werewolf in London" moves to the City of Light. Julie Delpy ("Before Sunrise"), Tom Everett Scott ("That Thing You Do!") and Julie Bowen star. Anthony Waller ("Mute Witness") directs and scripts; Richard Claus produces. (Buena Vista, 10/3 wide)

Exploitips: *Waller's success d'estime "Mute Witness," a smart horror/thriller, leaptrogged him from Sony Classics to Miramax, where this film originated—but both he and this film were upped to studio level. Disney could have timed this closer to Halloween, so highlight the "boo!" season connection by decorating your theatre with monster paraphernalia. Buena Vista has a marketing-muscle edge, but Live's same-date "Wishmaster" has the again salable Wes Craven ("Scream") seal.*

Soul Food

"Mother Joe," matriarch of an embattled Chicago family, dishes out not only delicious vittles but also love and wisdom during weekly Sunday-night dinners. When she falls ill, her grandson must be the one to hold the family together. Vanessa Williams ("Hoodlum"), Vivica A. Fox ("Set It Off"), Nia Long ("love jones"), Michael Beach and Mekhi Phifer ("High School High") star. George Tillman Jr. directs and scripts; Tracey Edmonds and Robert Teitel produce, with songwriter/music maven Kenny "Babyface" Edmonds executive producing. (Fox, 10/3 wide)

Exploitips: *Although "Soul Food" doesn't have the built-in underserved audience that made "Waiting to Exhale" a $67 million success for Fox, expect the studio to push for similar numbers and similar adult demos (this isn't "Cosby"-type family fare, having been rated R for strong sexuality and language). Urban-aud affection for horror could mean "Soul Food" will lose some heads to the "American Werewolf" sequel and "Wishmaster," and Morgan Freeman's presence in "Kiss the Girls" could also dilute results.*

Kiss the Girls

"Seven's" Morgan Freeman stars in this suspense thriller as Dr. Alex Cross, a Washington, D.C. police detective searching for his niece who disappeared in North Carolina. Cross teams up with a local doctor, Kate McTiernan ("A Time to Kill's" Ashley Judd), who has information vital to his investigation. Gary Fleder ("Things to Do in Denver When You're Dead") directs; David Klass adapts the novel by James Patterson; David Brown and Joe Wizan produce. (Paramount, 10/3 wide)

Exploitips: *Although the film was held from a February release and was made by Rysher (whose litany of boxoffice underperformers recently caused that company to exit the feature biz), early word on "Kiss the Girls" suggests this is a crackling good work, with Freeman and Judd in top form. The real problem might be profile: Other 10/3 major debuts either have bigger casts or a specific demo base, and quality plays on the screen, not the marquee. Push the leads' credits; both "Seven" and "A Time to Kill" were hits.*

Wes Craven Presents Wishmaster

An evil force called Djinn grants people's secret desires in exchange for their souls. This frightfest stars three actors from '80s horror classics: Robert Englund (Freddy Krueger of "Nightmare on Elm Street"), Kane Hodder (Jason of "Friday the 13th") and Tony Todd (Candyman of "Candyman"). Robert Kurtzman ("The Demolitionist") directs; Peter Atkins ("Hellraiser") scripts. (Live, 10/3 wide)



NOTHING ELSE IS A PEPSI™

Exploitips: *Horror had gone from shock-'em to schlock-'em before "Scream" ($105 mil. and counting) reinvigorated audience interest in the genre and resuscitated Craven's cachet. Thus Live's wise move to give this a "Presents" status, which the new distributor hopes will support a wide release. The hypability of the Englund/Hodder/Todd trio is another factor that could give this a decent competitive chance against Buena Vista's same-date "American Werewolf" sequel.*

Boogie Nights

Set in the porn world's '70s heyday, this dark comedy follows a group of players hoping to revamp the industry. Mark Wahlberg, Julianne Moore, Burt Reynolds, Don Cheadle and William H. Macy star. Paul Thomas Anderson ("Hard 8") directs and scripts; Larry Gordon ("The Devil's Own") produces with John Lyons, Lloyd Levin and JoAnne Sellar. (New Line, 10/3 ltd, 10/10 wide)

Exploitips: *"Boogie Nights" (moved from early, then late, summer) could draw extra attention thanks to its sexy subject matter. But exhibitors desiring wide Baby Boomer support could hype the nostalgic '70s-era setting.*

Fast, Cheap & Out of Control

Errol Morris, the director of "The Thin Blue Line" and "A Brief History of Time," interweaves four unique stories of quite different characters—a robotics designer, a lion tamer, a man who studies mole rats, and a topiary gardener—in his latest documentary. Featuring Dave Hoover, George Mendonca, Ray Mendez and Rodney Brooks. Morris also produces. (Sony Classics, 10/3 NY/LA)

Exploitips: *In a three-star review, our Sundance critic said this film is "less a classically structured documentary than a strangely urgent examination of what the human race is becoming." This is art-house fare, though Morris' social theorizing—that "humans are on a path that could lead to us inventing ourselves out of existence"—should interest techies and non-techies alike.*

OCTOBER 10

Seven Years in Tibet

Brad Pitt stars in this epic biopic that tells the story of Austrian mountaineer Heinrich Harrer, who was captured by the British in the Himalayas during World War II but escaped by foot into Tibet, where he was befriended by the young Dalai Lama. David Thewlis ("The Island of Dr. Moreau") and B.D. Wong ("Father of the Bride") co-star. Jean-Jacques Annaud ("Wings of Courage") directs; Becky Johnston ("Bad Girls") scripts; Iain Smith ("City of Joy") and John Williams produce for Mandalay. (TriStar, 10/8 wide)

Exploitips: *Pitt's luck is bedeviled: He shepherded "The Devil's Own" only to see it rewritten and perform poorly; his relationship with fiancee Gwyneth Paltrow ends; nude photos of him appear in Playgirl; and now the SS background of the man he plays here comes to light. In a subsequent meeting with Jewish leader Simon Weisenthal, Harrer reportedly implied he joined the infamous Nazi corps as an athletic instructor in 1938 only under pressure, but he didn't mention he joined a Nazi teachers federation in pre-Hitler 1933, when the group was still illegal. Annaud can't want to be regarded as a latter-day Leni Riefenstahl, but his assertion he suspected Harrer's past hardly helps matters. Now, any Harrer claim of transformation under the Dalai Lama's tutelage is unlikely to pass public muster; call it "QBVII II." If the problem snowballs larger toward release date, look for distributor leadership.*



Rocket Man

When a member of the first manned mission to Mars is injured during training, NASA must call in the only possible replacement, Fred Randall (Harland Williams), who for a rocket scientist is no rocket scientist. Chaos ensues as the team heads to Mars in this family comedy. Jessica Lundy ("The Stupids"), William Sadler ("Solo"), Shelley Duvall and Beau Bridges co-star. Stuart Gillard ("Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles III") directs; Craig Mazin and Greg Erb script; Roger Birnbaum produces for Caravan. (Buena Vista, 10/10 wide)

Exploitips: *If "G.I. Jane" performs, exhibitors might look more kindly on booking a film made by Caravan (parent of such duds as "Gone Fishin'," "Celtic Pride" and "The Rich Man's Wife"). Even if that Demi Moore starrer doesn't prevail, "Rocket Man" still has one plus, in that it rules the studio family-film roost until 10/24's "FairyTale." Although the Mars Pathfinder mania is a bit dated, a comic link to that popular event should help. Catchline: "Remember the Mars Pathfinder mission, when most everything went right? Now comes 'Rocket Man,' where everything goes wrong."*

Gang Related

Aka "Criminal Intent," this police drama follows detectives ("Race the Sun's" James Belushi and "Gridlock'd's" Tupac Shakur, in his last role before his murder) who've framed gang members to hide their own drug crimes but now must set up an undercover DEA agent. Lela Rochon ("The Chamber") and Dennis Quaid also star. Jim Kouf (who wrote "Operation Dumbo Drop" and the "Stakeout" series) directs and scripts. (Orion, 10/10)

Exploitips: *Expect urban and male-demo support in some numbers. Shakur's previous, the Jan. '97 "Gridlock'd," pulled just $5.5 million despite good reviews and the fact that his death was then recent, and Belushi isn't the draw he was in the late '80s. The drug theme also has fallen into theatrical disfavor, though it remains a small-screen staple.*

Napolean

This live-action film tracks the adventures of a golden retriever puppy (voiced by "The Doctor's" Adam Wylie) that slips into a hot-air balloon and is carried to Australia's wilds. Bronson Pinchot, Wendy Makkena and David Ogden Stiers also voice. Mario Andreacchio directs, scripts (with Mark Saltzman and producer Michael Bourchier) and produces. (Goldwyn, 10/10)

Exploitips: *Any live-action animal film must compete in audience minds with the lipsynched "Babe." This film, two years on the Goldwyn slate, is of the older variety. Still, one can expect that a Goldwyn children's film would be different than a Disney children's film; if so, critical response could help. But "Napolean," newly moved from 8/8 in MGM's new slating of its MGM/UA/Orion/Goldwyn movies, now goes up against that king of kids, Disney, and its "Rocket Man."*

The House of Yes

When Marty ("Kicking and Screaming's" Josh Hamilton) returns for his family's Thanksgiving dinner, he brings his new fiancee (Tori Spelling of TV's "Beverly Hills, 90210"). When the electricity fails, the clan's dysfunctions take turns for the worse. Parker Posey and Genevieve Bujold co-star. Mark Waters directs and adapts Wendy MacLeod's black-comedy play; both of "johns," Beau Flynn and Stefan Simchowitz produce. (Miramax, 10/10 NY/LA)

Exploitips: *In a 3 1/2-star review, our Sundance critic said this "nefarious tale" of "family secrets and closet skeletons" is both "blisteringly funny" and "horrifyingly tragic." Art-house exhibitors should highlight the comedy to differentiate this from the more dramatic "Gang Related" and "Deep Crimson." Catchline: "Car wrecks...tabloid TV... and now a family reunion. You want to look away, but you can't. Enter 'The House of Yes.'"*

Deep Crimson

In this Mexican/French/Spanish co-production, an aging mother (Regina Orozco) abandons home and children to join with a handsome philanderer (Daniel Gimenez Cacho) on a crime spree. Marisa Paredes co-stars. Arturo Ripstein ("The Queen of the Night") directs; Paz Alicia Garciadiego scripts; Miguel Necoechea and Paolo Barbachano produce. (New Yorker, 10/8 NY)

Exploitips: *Moved from 6/20, the Spanish-language "Deep Crimson" won a four-star review from our Toronto fest critic, who called this "a lively and daring satirical horror/romance" and says Ripstein, a former assistant to filmmaker Luis Bunuel, "shows some of Bunuel's talent for mixing a sacrilegious sense of humor with prankish horror." Call this a "Scream" for the art-house set.*

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Parallel Sons

An unlikely bond grows between a rural white teenager (Gabriel Mick) and an escaped urban-black convict (Laurence Mason). Murphy Guyer, Graham Alex Johnson, Heather Gottlieb and Josh Hopkins co-star. John G. Young directs and scripts; James Spione and Nancy Larson produce. (Greycat, 10/10 NY)

Exploitips: *Another much-moved film (Cinevista first planned a March '96 bow, then Greycat acquired it and targeted June and then November of last year), "Parallel Sons" might be most effectively marketed to gay audiences through alternative media.*

OCTOBER 17

Playing God

A surgeon ("Kalifornia's" David Duchovny) is disbarred for operating while high. Hired by a criminal ("Beautiful Girls'" Timothy Hutton) as his "gunshot doctor"—to treat associates who can't visit a hospital—the doctor falls for the crook's moll ("Foxfire's" Angelina Jolie) and must decide whether to continue his new life or go straight. Andy Wilson directs; Mark Haskell Smith scripts; Marc Abraham ("Sugar Hill") and Laura Bickford produce for Touchstone. (Buena Vista, 10/17 wide)

Exploitips: *Buena Vista flirted with releasing this in mid-May, when it would have battled the similar-demo Andy Garcia starrer "Night Falls on Manhattan." The talented Duchovny is a small-screen icon thanks to Fox TV's "The X-Files," but just as his wattage wouldn't have outshown Garcia's then it won't dim Pacino and Reeves' now. Unless Buena Vista moves it again, it seems ordained that "Playing God" won't cast down "Devil's Advocate"—especially with Duchovny's many SF fans opting for "Dark Empire" or...*

Gattaca

In a future in which genetic engineering is a prosperous and competitive business, a young man ("Before Sunrise's" Ethan Hawke) who is predestined to die in his early 30s strives to change his fate. Originally titled "The Eighth Day," this science-fiction film also stars Uma Thurman ("Batman & Robin") and Alan Arkin ("Mother Night"). Andrew Niccol (scripter on Paramount's coming "The Truman Show") makes his directing debut; the "Matilda" trio of Danny DeVito, Stacey Sher and Michael Shamberg produce for their Jersey Films. (Columbia, 10/17 wide)

Exploitips: *"Gattaca" had been penciled for March, but the studio had the Ford-Pitt "The Devil's Own." Now this goes against Pacino-Reeves, another unhappy prospect. Still, one might expect part of the twenty- and thirtysomething crowd (Hawke and Thurman's strong suits) to prefer two young actors to one young and one old. And an SF entry usually performs well for at least the first weekend, when genre fans turn out in abundance. But which they might do for...*



Devil's Advocate

Keanu Reeves stars as young, ambitious attorney Kevin Lomax, who joins a powerful New York law firm headed by the mysterious and charismatic John Milton (Al Pacino). As Lomax is seduced by success, power and money, he realizes that his colleagues' abilities are somewhat more—or less—than human. Charlize Theron ("Trial and Error"), Judith Ivey ("There Goes the Neighborhood"), Craig T. Nelson ("I'm Not Rappaport"), Ruben Santiago-Hudson, Jeffrey Jones and Delroy Lindo (also "A Life Less Ordinary") co-star. Taylor Hackford ("Dolores Claiborne") directs; Jonathan Lemkin ("Demolition Man") and Tony Gilroy ("The Cutting Edge") script; Arnon Milchan ("A Time to Kill"), Anne Kopelson and Arnold Kopelson ("Eraser") produce for Kopelson Prods. (Warner, 10/17)

Exploitips: *With John Milton as a character, who might "Devil's Advocate" toll for? It could toll for thee, as exhibitors booking it expect the month's only pairing of superstars to outpace all comers. Part "The Firm," part "Dr. Faustus," the film reportedly doesn't emphasize the diabolic, so this will likely remain in the horror-tinged mainstream in which Hackford's "Dolores Claiborne" found critical, if not as much audience ($25 mil.), success—of course without those superstars.*

Dark Empire

Originally "Dark City" and a Fox project, this futuristic thriller stars Rufus Sewell ("Cold Comfort Farm") as a man who discovers he's wanted for murders he can't remember. He soon learns that his memories and his life as he knows it (and those of other people's) are artificial creations. William Hurt, Kiefer Sutherland and Jennifer Connelly also star. Alex Proyas ("The Crow") directs, and he scripts with Lem Dobbs ("Kafka") and David Goyer ("The Crow: City of Angels"); Andrew Mason produces. (New Line, 10/17 wide)

Exploitips: *The SF crowd is dependable and (for a sub-demo) big, but not big enough to support two wide releases on the same weekend. Expect this or "Gattaca" to move again ("Dark Empire" moved from September to August to here). If not, although one can't discount "Gattaca's" star advantage and datenight-friendly male/female teaming, the "Dark Empire" makers' various "Crow" credits could lend this greater genre authenticity.*

Bean

British TV comedy-series superstar Rowan Atkinson brings his Bean character to the bigscreen in this screwball comedy. Mr. Bean is a ne'er-do-well employee of a London museum; to get rid of him, his associates pass him off as an art expert to accompany the masterpiece "Whistler's Mother" to an L.A. gallery. Peter MacNicol and Harris Yulin (both "Ghostbusters II"), Pamela Reed ("Kindergarten Cop") and Burt Reynolds co-star. Mel Smith ("The Tall Guy") directs; Richard Curtis and Rowan Atkinson (both also "The Tall Guy") script with Robin Driscoll; "French Kiss" duo Tim Bevan and Eric Fellner produce for their Working Title label with Peter Bennett-Jones. (Gramercy, 10/17 wide)

Exploitips: *Like a Jackie Chan of comedy—world-famous elsewhere, virtually unknown stateside—Atkinson wins a 3 1/2-star review (see this issue) that calls "Bean" "an incredibly entertaining piece of comic mayhem." U.S. fans of his PBS series are likely ticketbuyers; to pull neophytes (an early poster with Bean stealing an O from the Hollywood sign should grab comic audiences), highlight the hijinks. Stage a Bean or Whistler's Mother lookalike contest—or go for media attention with a charity Whistler's Mother dunking throw. Some art-house support could be siphoned by Fox Searchlight's expanding "The Ice Storm," though it's a drama (see August-issue Trailers).*

Lilies

In this tale of love, betrayal and revenge, a Catholic bishop is locked in a prison and forced to watch the inmates stage a recreation of the four-decade-old events of a gay love triangle involving both the bishop and a confessor. Brent Carver, Marcel Sabourin and Aubert Pallascio star. John Greyson ("Zero Patience") directs; Michael Marc Bouchard adapts his play; Anna Stratton, Robin Cass and Arnie Gelbart produce. (Turbulent Arts, 10/17 NY, 10/24 LA)

Exploitips: *In a one-star review, our Sundance critic (April '97) called this Greyson's "most beautifully crafted movie" but added it was "pretty silly," using "all the same cliches that haunt purple melodramas of heterosexual love." Still, "Lilies" citably won the audience*

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LATE MOVIE MOVES...

NIGHTWATCH

In this Dimension suspenser, a law student ("Trainspotting's" Ewan McGregor) part-timing as a morgue night watchman is suspected of serial killings. Nick Nolte and Patricia Arquette also star. Director Ole Bornedal remakes his Danish-language original via a script by Steven Soderbergh; Michael Obel produces. (Miramax, 9/12)

Exploitips: *First set 10/25 and 11/22 of '96 and then for this past February and then summer, "Nightwatch" now has only the Steven Seagal starrer "Fire Down Below" as same-date demo competition.*

SEVEN NOTES IN BLACK

This re-release of the late '70s Italian thriller "Sette Note in Nero" (aka "The Psychic") stars Jennifer O'Neill. (Miramax, 9/19 NY/LA)

Exploitips: *This faces no genre or foreign-language competition, though it does battle art-housers "The Myth of Fingerprints," "Going All the Way," "Wide Awake" and...*

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF GARCIA LORCA

A Spanish writer (Esai Morales) uncovers the killer of poet/playwright Lorca (Andy Garcia). (Sony Releasing, 9/19 NY/LA)

Exploitips: *See our review in this issue.*

THE LONG WAY HOME

This Mark Jonathan Harris documentary focuses on the post-WWII plight of Jewish refugees. Rabbi Marvin Hier and Richard Trank produce. (Seventh Art, 9/19 NY/LA)

Exploitips: *See our review in this issue.*

MON HOMME

A French hooker recruits a pimp. Anouk Grinberg stars. Bertrand Blier directs and scripts. (Artificial Eye, Sept. undated)

Exploitips: *See our three-star review (3/97).*

I WAS A JEWISH SEX WORKER

Filmmaker Phillip B. Roth recounts his efforts to reconcile his family and his homosexuality. (Greycat, 9/1 LA)

Exploitips: *See our 4/97 2 1/2-star review.*

MARY JANE'S NOT A VIRGIN ANYMORE

A nerdy girl tries to be as hip as her older coworkers. Sara Jacobson directs, scripts and produces. (Movieworld, Sept. undated)

Exploitips: *The title should attract gals out on the town together, though the sex could pull males usually resistant to female stories.*

WITHNAIL & I

This re-release of the 1987 British comedy concerns two self-absorbed, unemployed actors who endure a disastrous vacation in the country. Richard E. Grant, Paul McGann and Richard Griffiths star. Bruce Robinson directs. (Northern Arts, Sept. undated)

Exploitips: *Emphasize the film's 10-year anniversary to lend this event status.*

Best Canadian Film Award at the Montreal fest and four Genies (Canadian Oscars).

Eye of God

In an Okie oil town, a woman marries a prison pen pal, only to learn he was in the slammer for brutally beating a woman. Martha Plimpton ("I'm Not Rappaport"), Kevin Anderson ("A Thousand Acres") and Hal Holbrook star in a tale of love, murder and fundamentalism. Tim Blake Nelson helms and adapts his play; Wendy Ettinger and Michael Nelson produce. (Castle Hill, 10/17 NY, 10/31 LA)

Exploitips: *Moved from September, "Eye of God" is the latest from an expanding Castle Hill. Look for positive East Coast notices to support later openings; midwestern small-town runs could also work with this.*

OCTOBER 24

A Life Less Ordinary

From the "Trainspotting"/"Shallow Grave" team comes this $12 million project about a spoiled girl ("My Best Friend's Wedding's" Cameron Diaz) who is kidnapped by a janitor at her father's company. Dad sends two hit men—actually angels—to rescue her and dispose of the kidnapper. Ewan McGregor (also "Trainspotting") co-stars with Holly Hunter and Delroy Lindo. Danny Boyle directs; John Hodge scripts; Andrew MacDonald produces for their Figment Films. (Fox, 10/24)

Exploitips: *This is the weekend's cool flick to see, so twentysomething response should be high. Expect critical interest also to be high, meaning gleanable quotes to draw the older crowd who might have missed the filmmakers' previous bigscreen efforts. Fox thought enough of this one's prospects going in to also acquire almost all world rights.*

I Know What You Did Last Summer

This psychological thriller stars Jennifer Love Hewitt ("Sister Act II"), Sarah Michelle Gellar (TV's "Buffy the Vampire Slayer"), Ryan Phillippe ("nowhere") and Freddie Prinze Jr. (also in "The House of Yes") as four friends who made a desperate pact to conceal a shocking secret but now discover that someone else knows it. Anne Heche ("Volcano") and Bridgette Wilson ("Mortal Kombat") co-star. Jim Gillespie directs; Kevin Williamson ("Scream") adapts a Lois Duncan novel; Neal Moritz (also "Volcano"), Stokely Chaffin and Eric Feig produce. (Columbia, 10/24 wide)

Exploitips: *Similar in demo to "A Life Less Ordinary," this has as its most salable element the Williamson "Scream" credit, though actress Gellar's new small-screen popularity should also be a positive factor. A shorter title (like "Dark Summer") would avoid images of school essays instead of scares.*

FairyTale: A True Story

Set in 1917, this drama pits good friends Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (Peter O'Toole, also in "Phantoms") against magician Harry Houdini (Harvey Keitel) in a debate over the authenticity of photographs taken by two young girls that could prove the existence of fairies. Florence Hoath, Elizabeth Earl, Paul McGann and Phoebe Nicholls also star. Charles Sturridge ("Where Angels Fear to Tread") directs; Ernie Contreras scripts; Wendy Finerman ("Forrest Gump") and Bruce Davey produce for Icon. *See photo on P. 22.* (Paramount, 10/24 wide)

Exploitips: *O'Toole and Keitel's are the star names, but their parts are supporting; the real story concerns the two girls. For the most part, this is superb filmmaking—why, it's just as good as "A Little Princess"! And that's the fear: That a fine family film, made in an era when social groups are calling for fine family films, could tank. "FairyTale" also has the non-Disney, girl-lead and period-film negatives. So emphasize the O'Toole and Keitel names to give this a chance to build in the marketplace.*

Phantoms

This Dimension supernatural thriller tells the story of a female doctor who finds all but four people in her small Colorado town killed by an evil force. Joanna Going ("Little City"), Liev Schreiber ("The Daytrippers"), Peter O'Toole, Rose McGowan ("Scream") and Ben Affleck ("Chasing Amy") star. Joe Chapelle directs; Dean Koontz adapts his novel with Joel Soisson, who produces with his "Infinity" partner Mike Leahy and with Steve Lane and Bob Pringle. (Miramax, 10/24 wide)

Exploitips: *This month's earlier "Wishmaster" and "An American Werewolf in Paris" might sate mainstream chiller interest, and 10/24's "I Know What You Did Last Summer" might grab some of the "boo!" crowd that regularly puts $10 million into opening-week coffers for such fare. But "Phantoms" can be touted as "from frightmeister Dean Koontz and the company that brought you 'Scream'," and the timing is perfect for Halloween.*

Chairman of the Board

The frenetic red-headed comedian Carrot Top plays a goofy inventor/surfer who helps a man who turns out to be a wealthy entrepreneur. When the businessman dies two weeks later and wills Carrot Top his company, corporate chaos ensues. (Trimark, 10/24 wide)

Exploitips: *Part "Heaven Can Wait" (1978), part "Melvin (and Howard)," this latest wide release from Trimark goes after the MTV crowd the distributor targeted for "Meet Wally Sparks," which resulted in a multimillion-dollar writeoff. Perhaps the young Carrot Top will connect where the septuagenarian Rodney Dangerfield didn't, as he's a campus favorite. To help, draw public (and media) attention by accoutering staff in Carrot Top wiggery.*

Hurricane Streets

Aka "Hurricane," this drama follows lower Manhattan boys who do small-time crime. Brendan Sexton III ("Welcome to the Dollhouse") stars as a 15-year-old living with his grandmother while his mother is in prison; he falls for a young Latina, who has an overprotective father, and dreams of escaping his world of despair. Isidra Vega, Jared Harris ("I Shot Andy Warhol") and L.M. Kit Carson ("Running on Empty") co-star; Morgan J. Freeman directs and scripts, and he produces with Galt Niederhoffer and Gill Holland. *See our Sneak Preview in this issue.* (UA, 10/24)

Exploitips: *This garnered three Sundance awards: best director, best cinematography, and audience. Our reviewer gave it three*


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stars, calling it "a boy's coming-of-age story on the order of '400 Blows'" and crediting Sexton with "a powerful authenticity that shines through in a complex performance." Freeman tells **BOXOFFICE** *he wants to see this at New York's Angelika, and indeed "Hurricane Streets" will likely play best at such art-house venues, though its "Romeo and Juliet" element could draw mainstream youths.*

Swept From the Sea

Aka "Amy Foster" and "To Love and Be Loved," this romantic drama is adapted from a Joseph Conrad novella. Vincent Perez ("The



Crow: City of Angels") stars as a Ukrainian emigrant trapped in England who falls for a young woman ("Chain Reaction's" Rachel Weisz) and is helped by a local doctor ("Richard III's" Ian McKellen). Kathy Bates ("Dolores Claiborne") co-stars. Beeban Kidron ("To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything, Julie Newmar") directs; Tim Willocks scripts; Polly Tapson, Charles Steel and Beeban Kidron produce for Phoenix. (TriStar, 10/24 ltd)

Exploitips: *If lacking A-list stars, this has the feel of a prestige production (TriStar is billing it as an "epic drama"); its best demo is literate females who like a romantic story and would know the Conrad name. A bookstore tie-in thus would help this one not be a "Foster" freeze, and the platformed release could let word-of-mouth build wider interest.*

Deconstructing Harry

In this Woody Allen comedy set in New York (now there's a change), Kirstie Alley, Richard Benjamin, Billy Crystal, Judy Davis ("Husbands and Wives"), Mariel Hemingway ("Manhattan"), Amy Irving, Julie Kavner ("Shadows and Fog"), Julia Louis-Dreyfus, Demi Moore, Elisabeth Shue, Stanley Tucci and Robin Williams star along with the Woodman, who plays a writer experiencing erotic-life turmoil (now there's a change). Allen directs and scripts; Jean Doumanian produces. (Fine Line, 10/24 NY/LA, 10/31 exp)

Exploitips: *Although Miramax handled Allen's last three films, Fine Line acquired North American rights to this at Cannes, with part of the $10.5 million pact being that the distributor would release Barbara Kopple's documentary about Allen's jazz band's European tour. In the '90s, Allen's seven films have averaged just $8.75 million domestically, but Fine Line is likely to toil extra hard here.*

The Twilight of the Golds

In this drama, pregnant mother Suzanne (Jennifer Beals), father Rob (John Tenney), grandparents-to-be Walter (Garry Marshall) and Phyllis (Faye Dunaway) and brother David (Brendan Fraser) learn the son Suzanne is carrying has a gene present in almost all gay men. Though the liberal folks have adjusted to David's homosexuality, the news throws all into turmoil. Ross Marks ("Homage") directs; apparent H.L. Mencken fan Jonathan Tolins and Seth Bass adapt Tolins' play. (CFP, 10/24)

Exploitips: *Although "The Twilight of the Golds" isn't a studio release, the subject matter could generate extra media attention, and both heterosexual and homosexual audiences could find this a specialized draw.*

Eve's Bayou

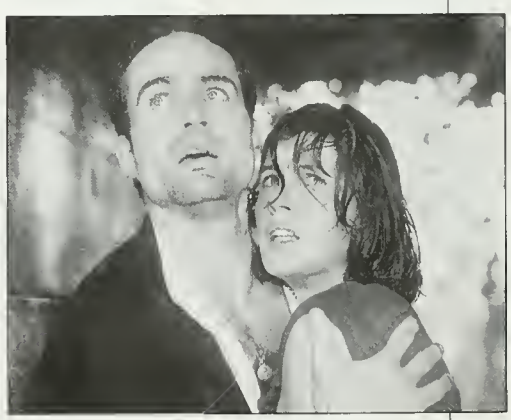
A 10-year-old tells the tale of her eccentric family in Louisiana in this drama. Samuel L. Jackson ("A Time to Kill") and Lynn Whitfield ("A Thin Line Between Love and Hate") star. Actress Kasi Lemmons ("Fear of a Black Hat") directs and scripts; Samuel L. Jackson produces with Caldecot Chubb ("The Crow"). (Trimark, 10/24 NY/LA, 11/7 exp)

Exploitips: *Although with "Meet Wally Sparks" and "Chairman of the Board" it's now a wide-release player, Trimark continues to handle specialized fare, and this one sounds promising. Expect the Jackson and Whitfield names to attract black auds, and (rating allowing) even urban families might give this a try.*

OCTOBER 31

Incognito

An art forger decides to make one final copy and then go straight. When his associates frame him for stealing the "original" artwork, he must flee for his life. Jason Patric ("Speed 2:



Cruise Control"), Irene Jacob ("Othello") and Rod Steiger star. John Badham directs; Jeannie Dominy (Warner's coming "Courtesan") scripts; Morgan Creek's James G. Robinson produces. (Warner Bros., 10/31 wide)

Exploitips: *"Incognito" has better ticket potential than last Halloween's Morgan Creek effort, "Bad Moon." Still, though it's a genre Morgan Creek likes ("White Sands," "Trial by Jury," "Diabolique"), it's one it hasn't cracked. Despite recent casting missteps, Patric and Jacob can deliver onscreen; the question is, can Badham? His 11/95 "Nick of Time" grossed barely $8 million, and his four films before that averaged just $26 million. Key plus: This is the date's only studio opener.*

OCTOBER UNDATED

Critical Care

In this satirical drama, director Sidney Lumet ("Night Falls on Manhattan") takes a darkly



comic look at the state of the health-care industry. James Spader, Kyra Sedgwick, Helen Mirren, Anne Bancroft and Albert Brooks star. Steven Schwartz scripts, and he produces with Lumet. (Live, Oct. wide undated)

Exploitips: *New distributor Live has advanced this from November, perhaps a good move to avoid the holiday crush. The cast is promising and should attract audience interest; given Lumet's recent track record—his four films in the '90s have averaged only a $14 million gross—highlight the Spader and Brooks names and this release's audience-friendly comedic underpinnings.*

Year of the Horse

This rockumentary chronicles the life and music of rocker Neil Young and his band, Crazy Horse. Live performances, behind-the-scenes footage and interviews from 1996's Europe and U.S. tour are featured. Jim Jarmusch ("Dead Man") directs; L.A. Johnson produces. (October Films, Oct. undated)

Exploitips: *New Universal subsidiary October acquired worldwide rights to this at Cannes and plans to show the film at several fests before it opens in theatres. That exploitable strategy gives stateside reviewers time to come on board, so look for positive notices. To pull Young fans, hold a drawing for a set of Young's recordings with Crazy Horse.*

Tokyo Fist

In this sweaty and kinetic Japanese-language actioner, a corporate executive ("Tetsuo: The Ironman" filmmaker Shinya

Tsukamoto, who also directs here) is unhappy to meet up with an old school friend (Kohji Tsukamoto), now a boxer. Their competitive jealousies increase when the exec's fiancee (Kahora Fujii) decides to move in with the pugilist. (Manga, Oct. undated)

Exploitips: *This played the '95 Toronto fest, meaning no one picked it up for two years. But Manga specializes in the genre it's named for: Its first, "Ghost in the Shell," grossed $500,000 in a 15-print run. Quotably, Tsukamoto has been called "the Asian answer to William Gibson, William Burroughs, David Cronenberg and David Lynch," and "Tokyo Fist" has been described as "an assault and battery of a movie."*

Nueba Yol II

In this Spanish-language continuation of the adventures of a Dominican man in America begun in "Nueba Yol," Balbuena has an obligation to remain in New York but knows a new immigration statute will become law on April 4, 1997. This comedy/drama deals with his efforts to become "legal" before that date. Actor Luisito Marti and writer/director/producer Angel Muniz return. (Kit Parker, Oct. undated)

Exploitips: *Released last year in the Dominican Republic, where the character of Balbuena is a TV favorite, "Nueba Yol" had a strong response—repeated in its New York opening and later U.S. rollout. Expect similar or even better numbers at least initially here from the underserved Hispanic audience.*

David Searching

In this comedy, David (Anthony Rapp) and Gwen (Camryn Manheim) are roommates, best friends and both searching for the perfect man. After a series of comically bad dates, David spots and pursues his ideal man only to end up with a big dose of reality. Leslie L. Smith directs and scripts; Smith produces with John P. Scholz. (Greycat, Oct. undated)

Exploitips: *This gay variant on the "If Lucy Fell"/"My Best Friend's Wedding" narrative could perform with gay audiences, but at least one Sydney gay fest review forecasts crossover business, especially of the distaff demo.*

Midaq Alley

Based on the Egyptian novel by Nobel winner Naguib Mahfouz, "Midaq Alley" moves the action from 1940s Cairo to modern Mexico City. This Mexican drama blends the stories of three characters on the same day: middle-aged family man Rutilio (Ernesto Gomez Cruż) who experiences first-time homosexual feelings that lead to domestic disaster; beautiful Alma ("Fools Rush In's" Salma Hayek) whose paramour goes off to America to make enough money to wed her; and a spinster landlady, Susanita (Margarita Sanz), who dreams of marriage. A final section picks up the stories two years later. Jorge Fons directs; Vincente Lenero scripts; Alfredo Ripstein Jr. produces. (Northern Arts, Oct. undated)

Exploitips: *The film's anthology nature and Egyptian heritage make it a specialized specialized film—but that's Northern Arts' specialty. Mahfouz's Nobel win is more citable for art-house auds than is the Hayek credit, though her presence sure can't hurt.*



Response No. 103

FOLLOW THE LEDER

TV Veteran Mimi Leder Helms Her — and DreamWorks'—Film Debut

by Wade Major



FIRSTBORN: *Debut director Mimi Leder (right) with actor George Clooney on the set of DreamWorks SKG's first release, "The Peacemaker."*

Why are you offering me an action movie?" Mimi Leder recalls asking Steven Spielberg. "What makes you think I can direct action?" Said Spielberg, "You're directing action every day on 'ER.'"

It's hard to imagine Mimi Leder, having helmed and produced some of TV's most honored shows (including that current NBC hit), being apprehensive about making the jump to films. Then again, "The Peacemaker" is no ordinary feature.

As the first release from DreamWorks SKG, the much-hyped fledgling studio created two years ago by Spielberg, Jeffrey Katzenberg and David Geffen, the film will be heavily scrutinized as an indicator of SKG slate strength. Even seasoned directors would likely shudder at the thought of carrying such a mantle, which is precisely why Leder simply chose not to think about it.

"When I took the film," she says, "I couldn't walk into it saying, 'I have all this pressure on my shoulders: It's the first DreamWorks movie, it's my first feature.' I just had to do it scene by scene, shot by shot."

As it was, Leder was busy enough managing the film's epic and international scale. A high-tech political action/thriller centering on hijacked Russian nuclear warheads, the September 26 release stars George Clooney ("Batman & Robin," "ER") as Col. Thomas Devoe, a devil-may-care intelligence expert who must track down and recover the weapons. Along on the ride, and to keep Devoe in check, is Nicole Kidman ("The Portrait of a Lady") as Dr. Julia Kelly, head of a White House nuclear anti-smuggling group. In their mad scramble to forestall global catastrophe, Devoe and Kelly trek from America to Austria to Russia to Iran to Bosnia and back to the U.S.

"I think people are very shocked to find out a woman directed this movie," Leder says. "But, thanks to people like Steven Spielberg and ["ER" producer] John Wells, who just hire good directors whether they're women or men, those stereotypes are changing. I know I've done my job when nobody knows the sex of the director."

Although Leder's talent for directing might not necessarily divulge her gender, it does suggest that there's something in the blood. The daughter of late independent filmmaker Paul Leder, she admits that she was literally raised on a movie set, acquiring an early love for the medium that led to her becoming the first woman ever accepted into the American Film Institute's cinematography program. Work as a script supervisor on "Hill Street Blues" followed, after which she segued into directing with acclaimed series like "Crime Story" and "L.A. Law." But it was with "China Beach" that Leder's stock really took off. As one of the show's producers and a regular director, she had her first two Emmy nominations. And then came "ER."



Resisting the trend of outlandish one-upmanship that has driven action/thrillers into the realm of the absurd, Leder and screenwriter Michael Schiffer ("Crimson Tide") sought to keep "The Peacemaker" firmly grounded in credible reality, adhering as closely as possible to an original treatment by husband-and-wife journalists and defense experts Andrew and Leslie Cockburn. "We were very aware of the fact that we were not trying to do the conventional action movie," Leder says. "What I tried to do was very much go against the grain and make it an honest portrayal of these circumstances so that audiences will hopefully be asking themselves, 'If we were in that situation, what would we do?'"

> ***"I couldn't walk into it saying, 'I have all this pressure on my shoulders: It's the first DreamWorks movie, it's my first feature.' I just had to do it scene by scene."***

Maintaining such a high level of emotional realism meant taking dramatic risks; most notable is the inclusion of a sympathetic antagonist, a Bosnian diplomat played by Romanian actor Marcel Iures. "You can't hate him," Leder says. "I think that moral ambiguity is what attracted me to the script and to his character."

Leder offers nothing but praise for her cast. "Ironically, George was attached to the project first," she adds of the coincidence of working with her "ER" star on her first feature. "It was very fortuitous," Leder says, "because we do have an unspoken rapport."

Such rapport came in handy. "Hanging off a train in the middle of Slovakia near the Polish border was quite memorable," she laughs. "But it was an even harder film to do emotionally because my father died right before I started shooting." Fortunately, Leder found comfort in the cooperation and professionalism of her international crew, an experience that proved "fortifying," she says. "Film has only one language."

DreamWorks has signed Leder for two more films. She's now making "Deep Impact," a DreamWorks/Paramount co-venture loosely based on "When Worlds Collide." It's the project after that, however, that strikes closest to home for her. Based on a script by her father, the World War II-era "Sentimental Journey" will tell the story of how Leder's father, a soldier in Patton's army, met her mother, an Auschwitz survivor. Leder's sister Geraldine is casting; brother Reuben is rewriting. "My father was going to direct the movie, but he never got the chance. So we feel it is our duty and obligation to bring their story to the screen."

All of which begs the inevitable question: What next? "A vacation!" Leder says, laughing. "And time with my daughter and husband. Because I am a mother and a wife as well." She pauses, then adds with a hint of satisfaction, "It's exhausting being me."

"The Peacemaker." Starring George Clooney, Nicole Kidman and Marcel Iures. Directed by Mimi Leder. Written by Michael Schiffer. Produced by Walter Parkes and Branko Lustig. A DreamWorks SKG release. Action/thriller. Opens Sept. 26.



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LIKE A "HURRICANE"

Indie Filmmaker Morgan J. Freeman Experiences a Rising Studio Barometer

by Alex Albanese



FOUR FRIENDS: *(from left) Morgan J. Freeman with "Hurricane Streets'" Brendan Sexton III, producer Gill Holland and exec producer L. M. Kit Carson.*

Relaxing amid the battered couches and caffeine vibe of an Avenue A hangout on the summer's first hot day in New York, Morgan J. Freeman has reached a heady point in his life. Freeman (no relation to the actor) is a young independent filmmaker whose first feature, "Hurricane," won three prizes at Sundance, including a best director nod, and was acquired soon after by MGM for its United Artists banner. Retitled "Hurricane Streets," the drama is set to bow mid-October.

Growing up in Long Beach, Calif., Freeman and friends "messed around" with video cameras for a ninth-grade assignment on Homer's "The Odyssey." The result, Freeman says, was "a cheesy video with everybody in togas basically just reading lines, but we thought we were making a movie." That led to "episodes" of "Miami Vice" with neighborhood car chases and Pillsbury flour stunt-doubling as cocaine. "But it never dawned on us that people did this professionally. I never thought about being a filmmaker."

During Freeman's days at the University of California, Santa Barbara, the then-biology major stumbled across a film studies course. It proved an epiphany. "I realized there were more possibilities than just doctor/lawyer/engineer," he says. Freeman graduated in 1992 with a film degree. A year in Paris to study film criticism followed, during which he also did low-budget film work and directed two shorts. Returning to America, he entered New York University's graduate program.

"At UCSB, Gregg Araki had made two $5,000 features a few years before, which inspired some other people to make films with $15,000 budgets while I was there. Later, when I came to New York, people talked about how difficult it was to make a movie, that you needed a million dollars and this and that—$1.3 million seemed to be the number. Well, because of my experiences at UCSB, I knew it didn't have to be that expensive if you have people that really want to do it. That ultra-low budget knowledge was incredibly important. Otherwise, I would have believed them, and 'Hurricane' never would have happened."

Two crucial elements in the film's making hearken back to his year abroad. The work Freeman did for Paris' Why Not Productions led to a New York film internship, and that in turn led to pre-production and second assistant director work on a low-budget feature called "Middle Child." Befriending several actors on the shoot, Freeman cast them in a short. He then began work on a second short script, tailored for Brendan Sexton III, the actor he'd enjoyed working with most.

While that script was growing into the feature-length draft of "Hurricane," "Middle Child's" title was changed to "Welcome to the Dollhouse." When it won the top prize at the '96 Sundance fest and was acquired by Sony Classics, Sexton became a commodity. Then the fates smiled again: After finishing his script, Freeman ran into a friend from Paris who invited him to a script reading. There, Freeman met producer Gill Holland, who had already seen "Welcome to the Dollhouse" in Toronto.



"I passed my script off to him, and he liked it. He knew some people who had financing who also loved Brendan's work in 'Dollhouse.' 'Hurricane' was never sent out to anybody to be made. I gave the script to only one person, and he got it financed. It was truly something that came from my head, straight onto the page, that actually rolled into getting financing and was made without ever being altered to get it made. Cast control, script control, crew control were all ours."

Money, always tight during the 30-day shoot, ebbed and flowed, but Freeman's 40-person crew stayed loyal. "It was never, 'Pay me or I'm gone,'" he says, "even if the checks weren't on time. The crew always worked and acted as if they were paying their bills and had money in their pockets from this, and there's no way anybody could have. I know, because I did it on 'Dollhouse.' I knew how tough it was. It's nice now," he adds, "to see ["Hurricane Streets"] pay off for many of them. People are getting jobs. The awards helped everybody."

Those Sundance honors included best cinematography and a shared audience award. Freeman describes the fest as "the worst and then the best experience of my life. I was terrified. The first screening was like drug withdrawal—all I did was shake, sweat and freak out. But there was a really good reaction from the audience." No distributor deal was struck until after the closing awards night, however, and during the fest's run he realized "lots of independent films made this year aren't going to come out. You always think it's going to happen for you, but what if it doesn't?"

Those worries evaporated with the awards. MGM had expressed interest during the fest, even though studio executives down in L.A. had been shown, due to screening-room error, the first 10 minutes of the 1977 Dino De Laurentiis "Hurricane." Yet an agreement was soon reached—and with it went Freeman's much-valued control. "It's suddenly different—now it's a business deal. The film's final cut, marketing, image, even my image to a certain extent, are all in their hands now. I just need to step back a bit, trust, and hope people respond well."

Freeman is fully aware that moviegoer reaction to "Hurricane Streets" will factor into how much control he has on his next project. But, right now, he's most eager to "walk down to the Angelika past a 'Hurricane' poster, buy a ticket, and see the film with a paying audience." Soon, Freeman will be doing just that.

"Lots of independent films made this year aren't going to come out. You always think it's going to happen for you, but what if it doesn't?"

"Hurricane Streets." Starring Brendan Sexton III. Directed and written by Morgan J. Freeman. Produced by Galt Niederhoffer, Gill Holland and Morgan J. Freeman. A United Artists release. Drama. Opens Oct. 10.

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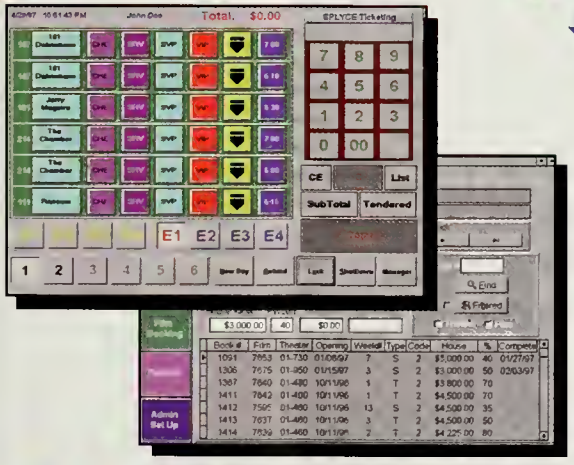
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A TASTE OF SUCCESS

At the Franks' Drexell Theatre, Audiences Come for the Movies, but They Stay for the Food

by Susan Lambert



ART DECO DREXELL: *Seven minutes from downtown Columbus, the Drexell Theatre and adjoining Radio Cafe offer an upscale version of small-town entertainment. Note the original neon marquee.*

When the phone rings at the Drexell Theatre in Columbus, Ohio, it's often a customer who needs to know not only what time the movie starts, but also what soup is on and what the sandwich specials are for the day. Ever since Jeff and Kathy Frank opened the Drexell Radio Cafe as an extension to their Drexell Theatre, customers have made a night out at the Drexell a staple of their entertainment diet.

Jeff started in exhibition in the '70s running the film program at the Columbus Museum of Art and developed it into such a successful program the museum director once complained that he couldn't get in due to sell-out crowds. Jeff then moved to the historic downtown Ohio Theatre as vice president of public relations and publicity, as which he was responsible for programming the classic movies and training tour guides of the historic 3,000-seat palace.

Kathy and Jeff had met at the museum. She was in charge of the education department. When their neighborhood theatre—the 1937 Drexell—became available in 1979, the obvious thing for the Franks was to try running a theatre on their own. "We noticed it was a really unique art deco theatre that was very streamlined and well-preserved," says Jeff. "However," adds Kathy, "it was covered up in plastic flowers." The Franks did a quick cleaning and simple restoration ("We got rid of the plastic flowers") to get it as close as possible to the 1937 look. The grand re-opening of the 737-seat Drexell had everything from borrowed Ohio Theatre ushers in tuxedos to real flowers and a bona fide movie star: The Franks had arranged for Ginger Rogers to appear in person. Despite the overwhelming opening-day success, the Franks received numerous complaints, for Jeff—coming from the classic Ohio Theatre which didn't allow concessions in the historic auditorium—had determined not to serve popcorn in his theatre. "By day two," explains Jeff, "we had popcorn. And we've been popping with the same vintage popcorn machine ever since." The Franks had learned a valuable—and exploitable—lesson: For most folks, a cinema without the right concessions is like a day without sunshine. In fact, the Franks have created many collaborations between cinema and food—combining America's two greatest social loves into one creative package.

In 1990, the Franks decided to turn the Drexell into a three-screen cinema. Jeff admits they were initially reluctant to triple the Drexell. "We had a gorgeous 700-plus seat art deco historic movie theatre. The question is, 'Are you going to change it and ruin it?'" Jeff adds, "But you know it was either triple it or we weren't going to be there because the movie business had changed. We needed to play films longer. We needed to take more risks and have the ability to play many smaller films. It's hard to play independent art films in a 737-seat house."

Working with an architect, the Franks figured out how to get their extra screens and still maintain the historic ambiance of the Drexell. "You walk into our 300-seat theatre and it's the same proscenium, all the same decorations." The secret to maintaining the integrity of the main auditorium? "We just shortened it." When the space next door to the theatre became available, Jeff and Kathy faced another important decision. "The obvious thought was, 'Let's put another theatre in,'" says Jeff. "But then we kept thinking. We really needed something to make the Drexell—in the long run—unique from multi-screen theatres. What can we do?"

Kathy realized from talking with their customers that they really lacked a place to go for coffee after the movie. "There weren't any places that were open that late," says Kathy, "especially on our side of town." Kathy and Jeff, hearing the needs of their customers, opted to put in a high-quality cafe so their clients could combine eating out with going to the movies. Kathy explains, "Our space was small, so it was a bit of a trick to figure out what we can offer with a very, very small kitchen. We came up with a kind of combination of

fresh salads, appetizers and then this panini grill [specialized sandwiches grilled on a distinctive Italian bread].

The Franks opened the cafe, which houses antique radios along with 1930s and '40s artifacts and pictures, in 1995 to great success. Not only did they win a local food award, but the Radio Cafe has created an opportunity to expand their special features. Kathy explains, "We started up a talk cinema series." Every third Thursday, a local professor leads discussions after a movie. "It starts in the auditorium," says Jeff, "and then adjourns to the cafe, where everyone can sit around and have—hopefully—dessert and coffee and talk about the movies." A singles group now uses the Drexell Radio Cafe and Theatre for a meeting place. "We don't encourage people after the movie to just leave," adds Jeff. "They can hang out here."



RECIPE FOR ENTERTAINMENT: *Kathy and Jeff encourage customers to feast on fine films.*

The Franks say the competitive Columbus metropolitan market (with about 1.4 million people) is continuously expanding. "There's not just one or two chains, but five or six chains, with more coming in. It's a challenge for us," Kathy says. But the Franks have always been up to the challenge. "Even when they opened this big 24-plex with stadium seating, it really has not affected either movie theatre," says Kathy, "because the experience that you have here is just so different from that. Our attendance has been really steady."

The Radio Cafe inspired a "Brunch with the Bard" program when they screened "Hamlet." Jeff explains, "We had a four-hour movie, so you can get only two shows a day." They wanted to try three shows on the weekend, but wondered how to get people into a theatre at 10 a.m. "Kathy said, 'Let's do a brunch at the cafe from nine to 10,'" Jeff says. It was a huge success and they plan on doing more. The Franks' own another cinema across town—the equally historical 1926 Drexell Grandview Theatre which plays host to their "CinemaFeasts" campaign: the Franks show a particularly appetizing movie and then, in cooperation with a caterer or nearby restaurant, the audience enjoys a matching gourmet meal. "We showed 'Babette's Feast' and then had a complete seven course French meal. We started with 'Big Night' and a fabulous Italian gourmet meal. We've done 'Tampopo.' Next week we're doing 'Like Water for Chocolate'—the movie and then an incredible Mexican meal: quail with rose petal sauce—and live musicians."

Jeff says the best thing about running the Drexell is the personal aspect of bringing a movie to a welcoming audience. When his schedule allows, he still introduces the Friday and Saturday night films. Jeff compares the Drexell experience to "going to a fine restaurant where the owner or maitre d' are there for you. And you can count on that." For Kathy, the addition of the Radio Cafe has only increased the theatre's appeal: "The Cafe just played up the very important social aspect of going to a movie theatre with your friends." She adds, "Certainly movies are some of the most compelling social stories about who we are and how we react and what the issues are, and they really need to be talked about. It's pretty exciting, in the talk cinema series, for example, to see people talk about them. You just see all this stuff pouring out and that's what it's about—that kind of interaction and sharing."

Jeff adds, "It really would be a shame to lose the Drexells and the Dobies [see Feb. 1996 issue] and the specialty theatres in this country to these megaplexes. I think there's a certain audience out there where the space they're sitting in—the kind of theatre it is and the people who run the theatre and the ambiance—matters as much as the movie they're watching. There's just some magic quality where the space matters." The space, and the food, maybe.

Drexell Theatre
Owners: Jeff & Kathy Frank
2256 1/2 E. Main Street
Columbus, OH 43209
(614) 231-1050

Earliest Movie Memory:
Jeff: Sitting through the triple-feature Saturday afternoon monster movies. That was the highlight of my childhood.
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Response No. 474

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Of Theatrical Motion Pictures (Includes Major Studios)

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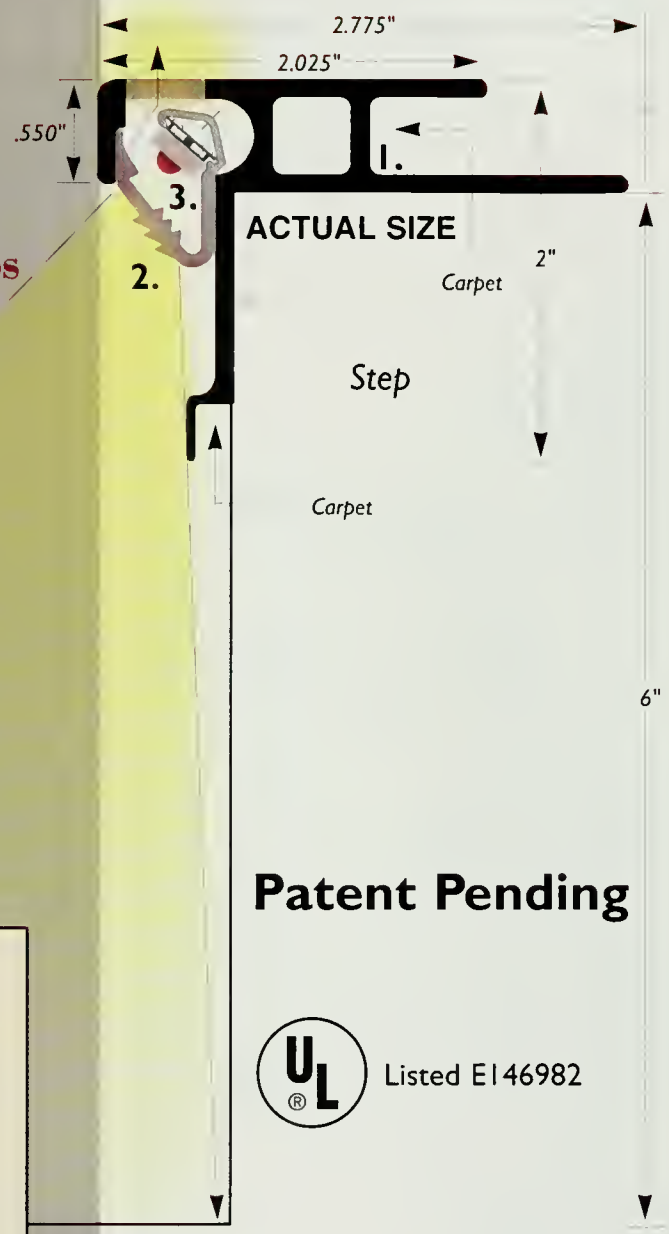
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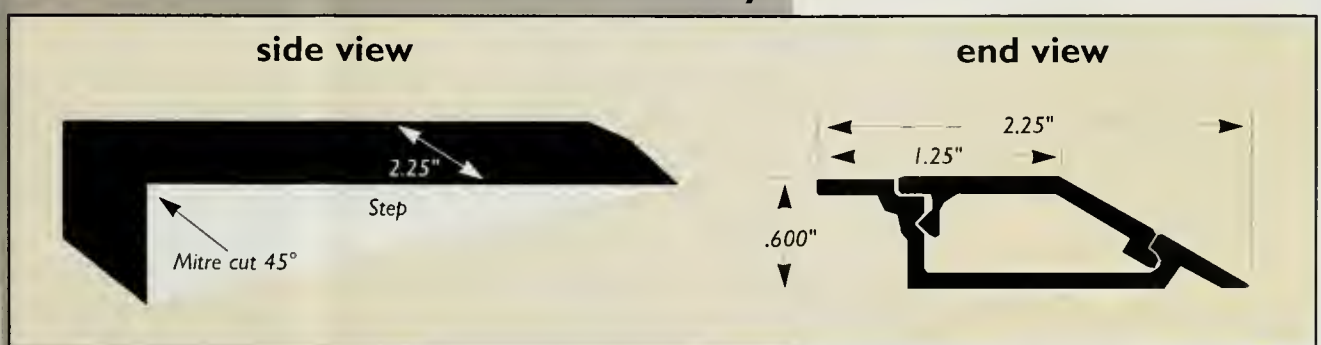
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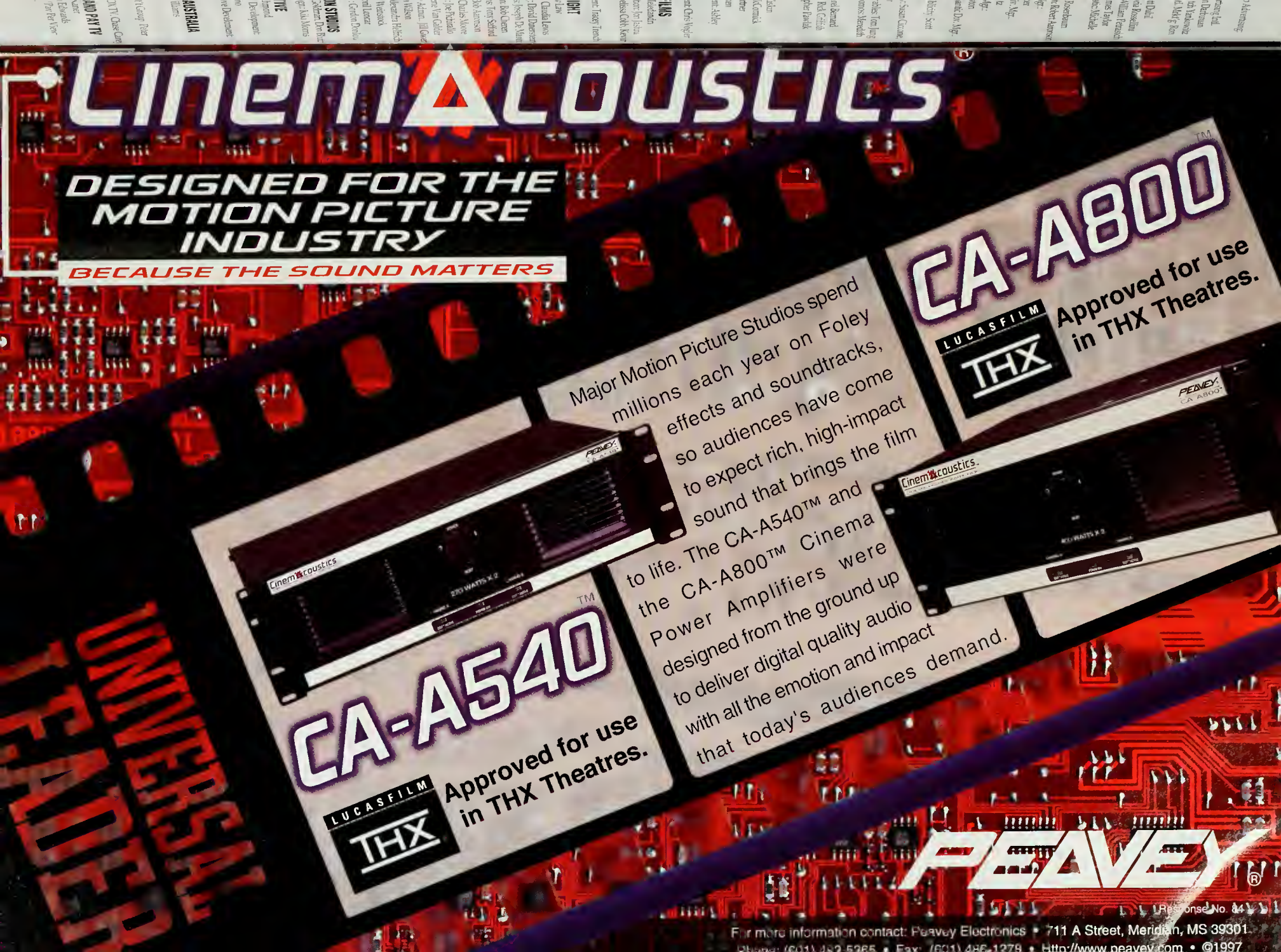
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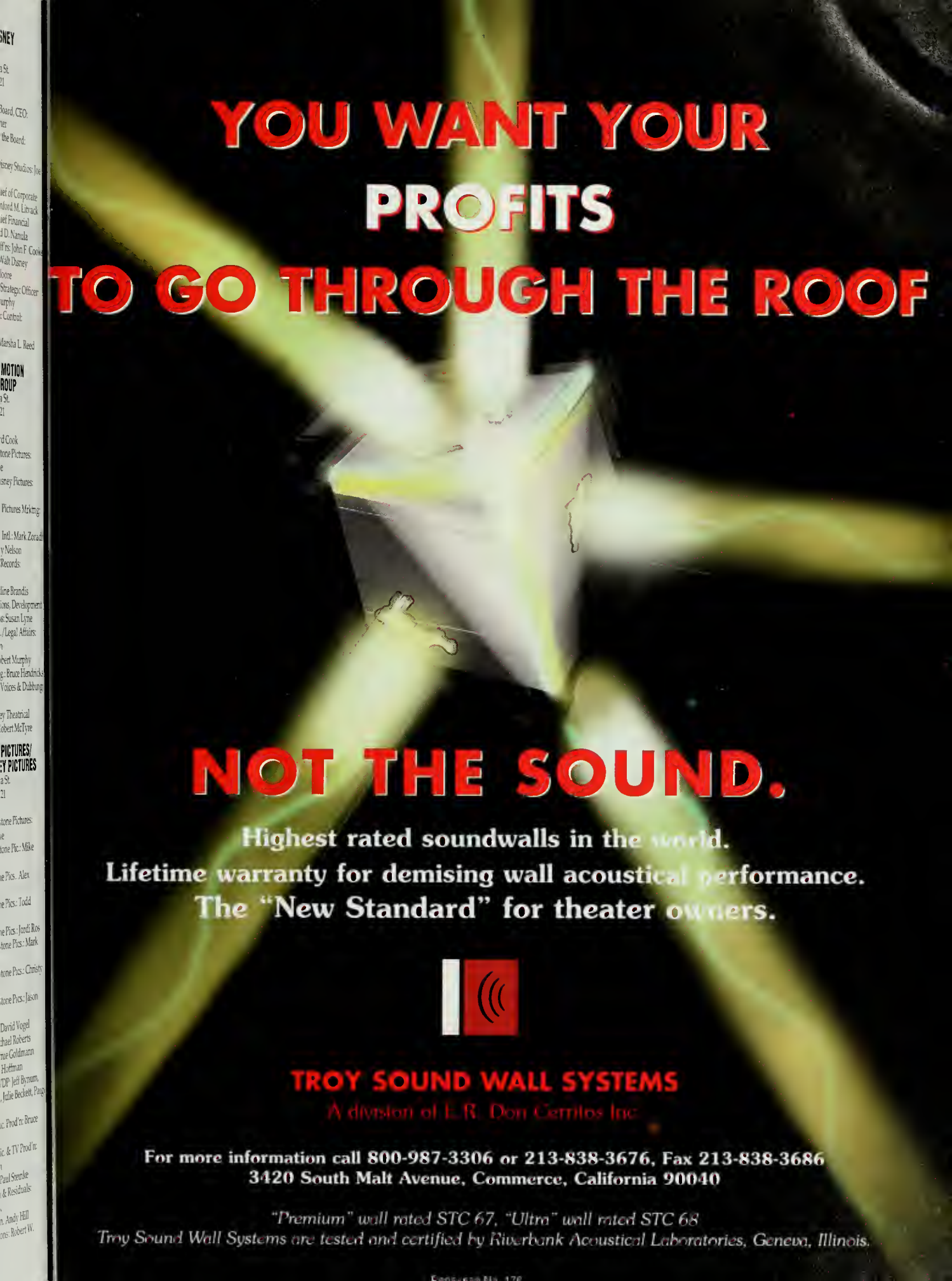
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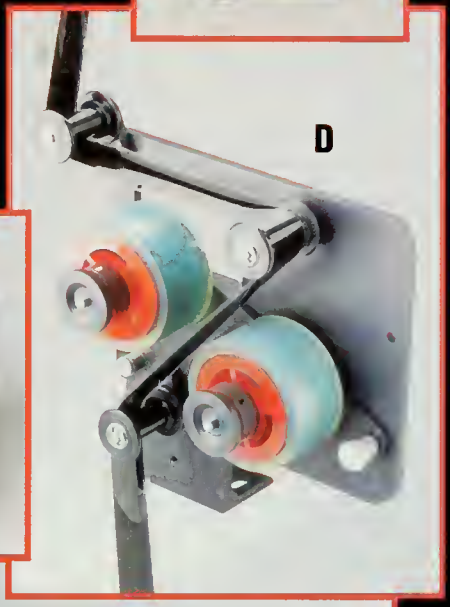
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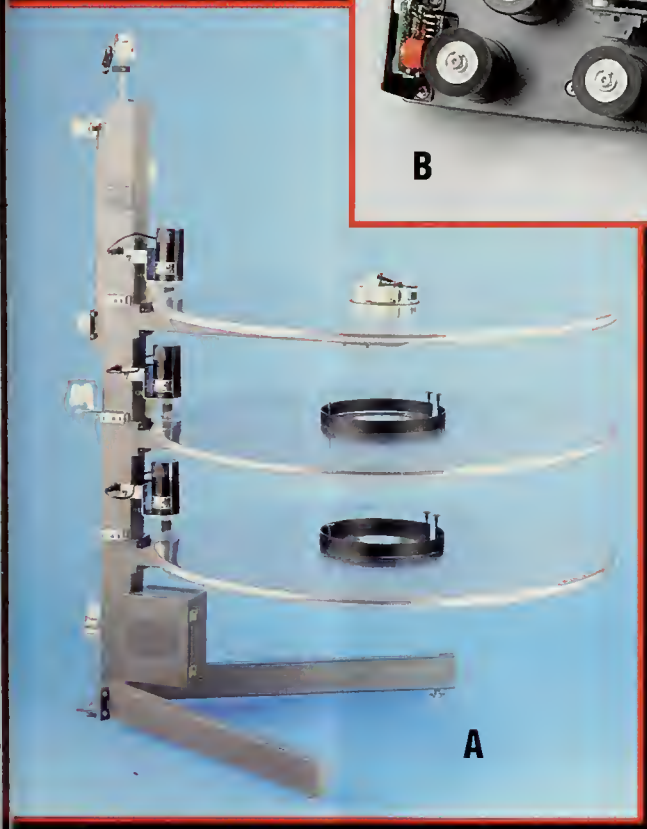
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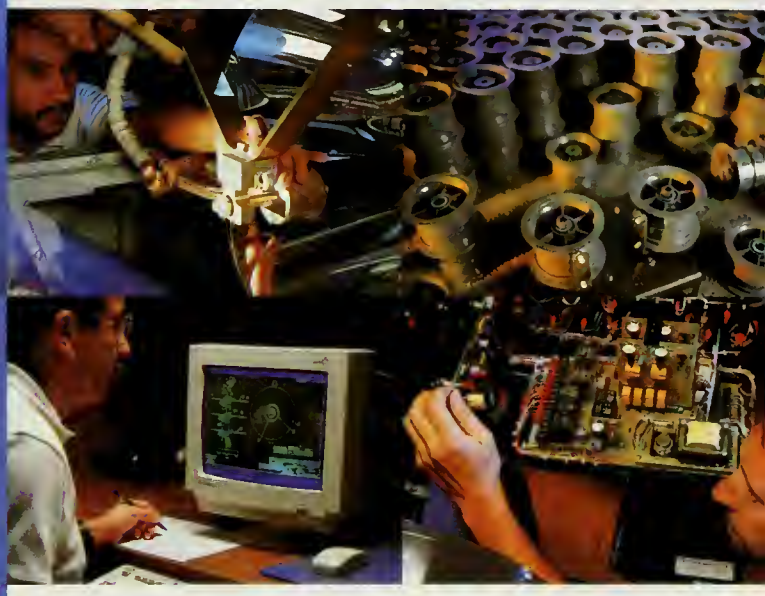
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Response No. 114

A new Technology 6-Channel Stereo Processor for under $2000?*



The new MOD VI Cinema Stereo Processor does not fit the mold of any previous product or any competitor's product. It is revolutionary in design. It features the new, patented "Circle Surround" ™ matrix that produces 6 channels from a conventional 4-channel optical stereo or SR soundtrack. The matrix is a full DSP (Digital Signal Processing) design. Split surround sound from your analog tracks!

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* suggested theatre net price of the MOD VI Stereo cessor is $1997 when purchased in lots of 6. Single t price is 10% higher. Contact your SMART dealer the best price on this exciting new product.

e Surround is a registered trademark of Rocktron Corp. Rochester Hills, MI
s a registered trademark of SRS Labs, Inc. Santa Ana, CA

Response No. 267

Manufacturers

Of Equipment and Supplies

The following companies are manufacturers of specialized theatre equipment and supplies, manufacturers' representatives and distributors. In order to make it easy for readers to find a particular company, this listing is alphabetical. A table listing these companies by product type appears under the heading "Manufacturers Index," beginning on Page 56.

A

AAMI/TDS (THEATRON MFG. LICENSEE)
P.O.Box 4142
Seal Beach, CA 90740
562-434-1627, 562-434-9947
FAX: 562-434-9948
R. B. Hoffman, Chairman
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AASC/TDS (THEATRON SERVICE LICENSEE)
1167 Lawrence Drive
Newbury Park, CA 91320
805-375-8408, 805-499-8513
FAX: 805-499-8206
Larry Benson, General Manager
Computer/intra-internet service support & repair, 24-hour hotline, concession pad & ticket printer refurbishment

AASI/TDS (THEATRON SYSTEMS LICENSEE)
P.O. Box 70575
Reno, NV 89570-0575
562-434-1627
FAX: 818-705-6878
Leonid Ratgauz, VP, Systems Development
Systems & software for boxoffice, payroll, reservations telecommunications, ticketing & snackbar management inventory

A BASIC SERVICE
501 West Highway 70
Cherokee Vlg., Suite 60
Ruidoso, NM 88345-8150
505-257-6600
FAX: 505-257-6600
J. Roy Propsner, Intl. Sales & Mktg.
Kevin Bickel, Designer
E-MAIL: abasicservice@usa.net
URL: www.abasicservice.com
Amusement park equipment; full line of games; concession equipment

AB INTERNATIONAL ELECTRONICS
1830-6 Vernon Street, P.O. Box 1105
Roseville, CA 95678
916-783-7800, FAX: 916-784-1050
Robert Bird, President
Irwin Laskey, Vice President
E-MAIL: ABINTL@aol.com
Professional and commercial audio power amplifiers

AB MUSIK
Klostergade 68
DK 8000 AArhus C, DENMARK
(45)86198733
FAX: (45)86198442
E-MAIL: ab_musik@post5.tele.dk
Design & turnkey installation of cinemas

ACORTO, INC.
1287 120th Avenue NE
Bellevue, WA 98005
425-453-2800
FAX: 425-453-2167
Kyle Anderson, Founder
URL: www.acorto.com
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Dan Korthas
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ALPRO ACOUSTICS
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New Orleans, LA 70121
888-733-3836, 504-733-3836
FAX: 504-733-3851
Maura D. Hawkins, President
Helen H. Shurtz, Dir. of Mktg.
Acoustical wall and ceiling panels

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516-420-1868
FAX: 516-420-4042
Paul Sciortino, President
Christopher Sciortino, VP, Sales
Peter Rooney, Dir., Operations
Barbara Gatto, Mgr., Cust. Service
Provider of candy, snack & drink products to the theatre and concession industries; candy packer & distributor

AMERICAN LICORICE CO.
2477 Liston Way
P.O. Box 826
Union City, CA 94587
510-487-5500, x202
FAX: 510-487-2517
James L.Kretchmer, President
Timothy Walsh, Exec. VP
John R. Kretchmer, VP
John R. Nelson, VP
Manufacturers of licorice confections

ANHEUSER-BUSCH INC.
One Busch Place
St. Louis, MO 63118
314-589-5650
FAX: 314-589-5682
Robert Fletcher, Sr. Dir., Retail/Trade Development
E-MAIL: bob.fletcher@anheuser-busch.com
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Dave Parse, Sr. Exec. VP
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URL: www.ashly.com
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818-333-4464
FAX: 818-968-5316
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E-MAIL: seatman1@earthlink.net
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FAX: 401-767-2081
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B

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Teri McClain, Secretary
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C

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909-931-9318
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Richard Crane, Sales
E-MAIL: cfsren@aol.com
URL: www.cfsren.com
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Wrenda Crain, President
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D

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David Tyson, President
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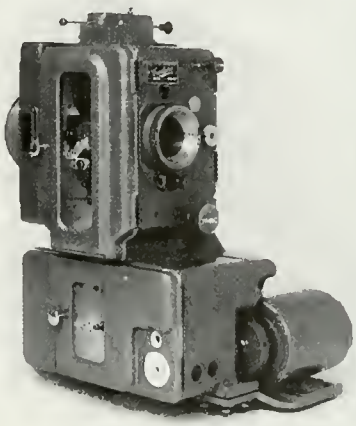
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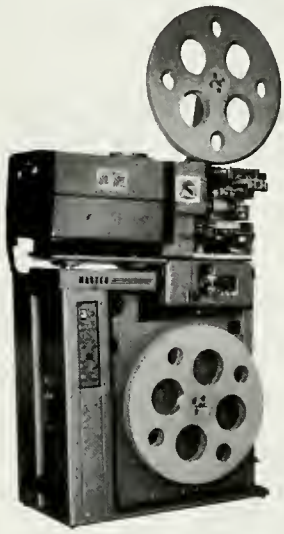
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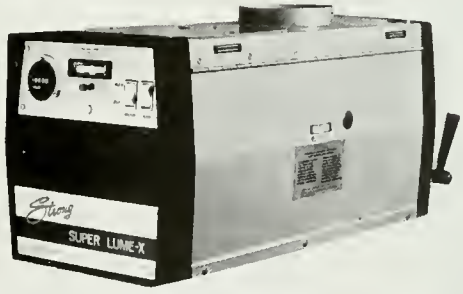
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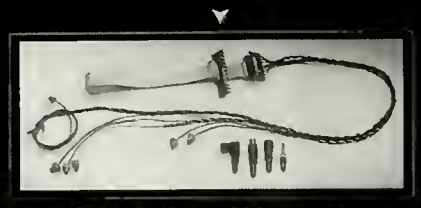
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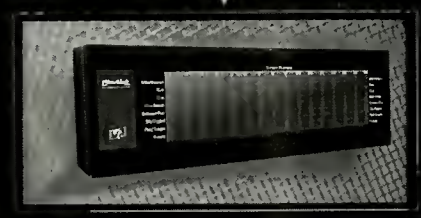
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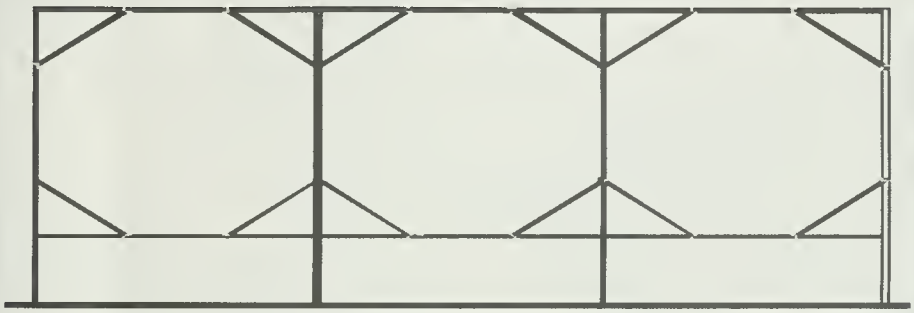
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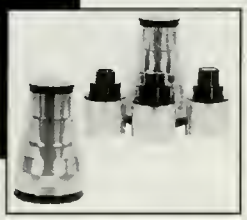
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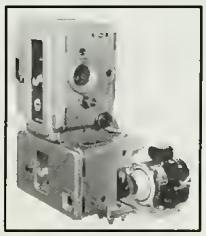
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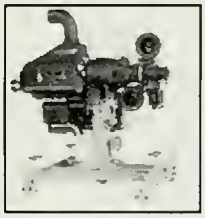
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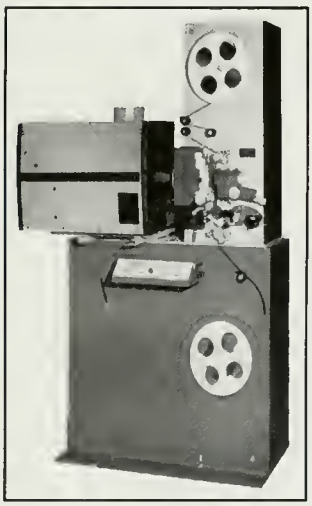


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Joe Macaluso, Division Business Mgr.
Doug Dent, Business Mgr.
Popcorn processors and oil

WELDON, WILLIAMS & LICK, INC
711 North A Street
P.O.Box 168
Fort Smith, AR 72902
800-242-4995
FAX: 501-783-7050
J.D. Walcott, Jr, President
Jerry P. Hendricks, VP, Sales
Robert Marion, VP, Production
Tracey Geren Secretary/Treasurer
David M. Kotarek, Sales Representative
URL: www.wwlinc.com
Roll & folded tickets, computerized box office forms & thermal stock, coupon books, discount cards and distribution

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100 NE 39th Street
Miami, FL 33137
305-573-7339
FAX: 305-573-8101
Steven Krams, President
Dara Reusch, Vice President
E-MAIL: iceco@aol.com or iceco@concentric.com
URL: www.iceco.com
Westar Projectors, splicers, stereo processors, lenses, xenon bulbs & distributors of Magna-Tech EQ

WESTERN ASSOCIATED MARKETING
5076 Moonstone Court
San Jose, CA 95136-2652
408-448-1535
FAX: 408-265-1347
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10399 West 70th Street
Eden Prairie, MN 55344-3459
612-943-2252
800-328-6190
FAX: 612-943-2174
Todd Bergum, National Sales Manager
URL: www.williamssound.com
FM and infrared hearing assistance systems for theatres

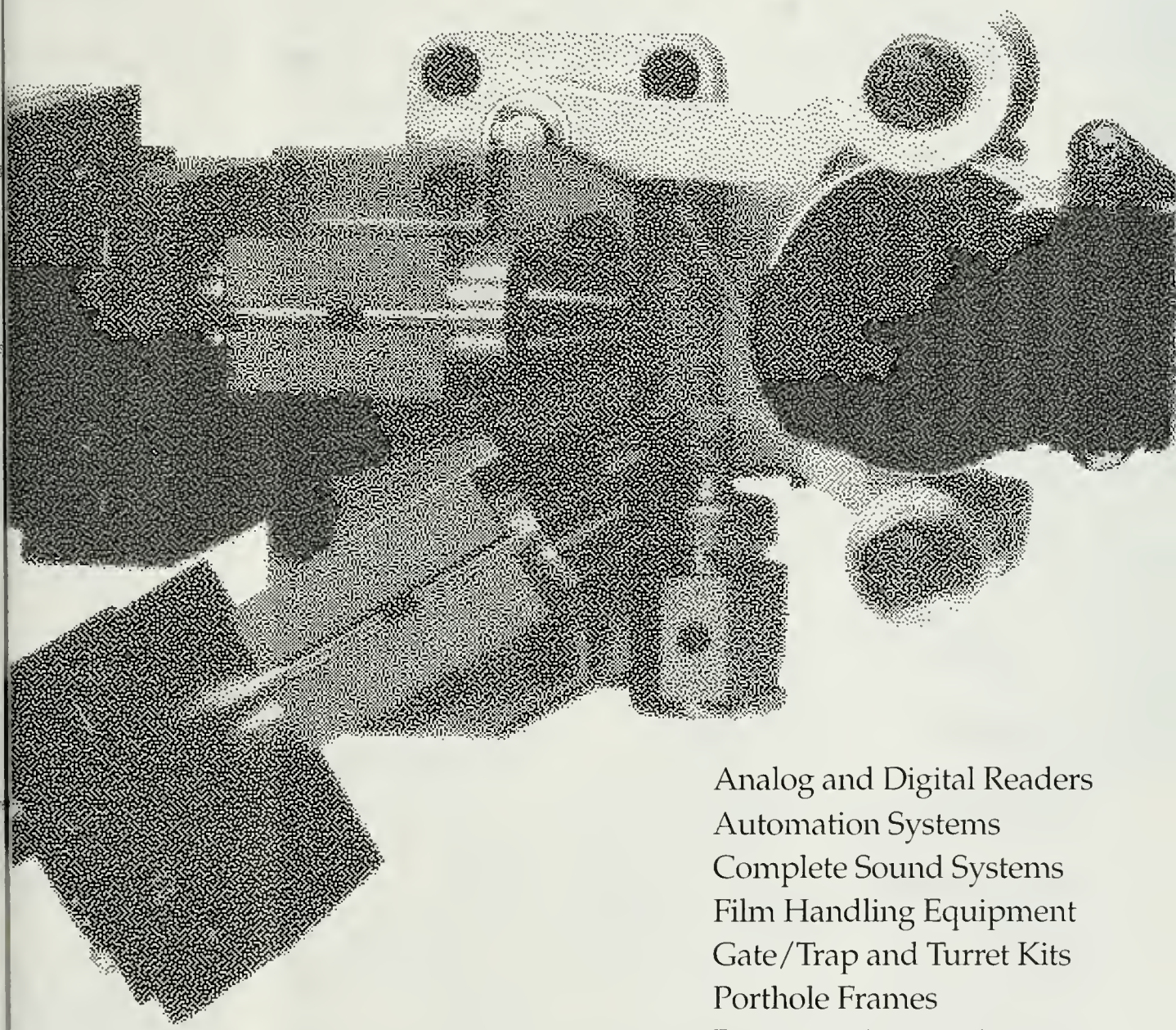
WOLK, EDW. H., INC.
921 S. Jefferson St.
Chicago, IL 60607-4422
312-939-2720
800-621-4424
FAX: 312-939-0654
Charles Wolk, President
Norman Lauterbach, General Manager
Carol Prescott Davern, Export Manager
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Y

YUMEX ILC CO., LTD.
399 Java Drive
Sunnyvale, CA 94089
408-745-7900, 800-347-2474
FAX: 408-744-0829
John Reilly, Director of Sales
URL: www.ilct.com
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Analog and Digital Readers
Automation Systems
Complete Sound Systems
Film Handling Equipment
Gate/Trap and Turret Kits
Porthole Frames
Projection Accessories

KELMAR SYSTEMS INC., 234 BROADWAY
HUNTINGTON STATION, NEW YORK 11747

Response No. 196

Dealers

Of Equipment and Supplies in the U.S. and Canada

The following companies are dealers in specialized equipment and supplies for theatrical exhibition. In order to make it easier for readers to locate the dealer of a particular product or service nearest them, these listings have been presented alphabetically by U.S. state. A separate Canadian index is provided on the last page of this section.

ALABAMA

CINEMA EQUIPMENT & SUPPLY
131 Second Ave. N.E. / Box 2044
Decatur, AL 35602
205-353-5928
FAX: 205-353-5928
J.A. Duncan, President
Cathy Wahl, Sec. & Treas.
Theatre equipment sales & installation

SMITH PROJECTION & SOUND THEATRE EQUIPMENT & SUPPLY
3922 Nolen Ave. S.E.
Huntsville, AL 35801
205-534-7008; FAX: 205-534-7008
E.H. Smith, Owner
Theatre equipment and supplies

ARIZONA

FESTIVAL CONCESSIONS
4038 E. Superior
Phoenix, AZ 85040
602-437-0466
FAX: 602-437-3256
Pascal Agosta, President
Popcorn/concession equipment/supplies

MASQUE SOUND & RECORDING
1606 W. 12th Place
Tempe, AZ 85281
602-829-8255
FAX: 602-829-8175
Scott H. Kalata, Mktg. Coordinator
Sound equipment sales/service/rental

METRO FUN FOODS
420 S. 53rd Ave.
Phoenix, AZ 85043
602-278-1010
FAX: 602-278-3232
Paul McClellan, Gen. Mgr.
Lyn Fortin, Dir./Sales
Concessions: foods, maintenance, equipment & sanitation

CALIFORNIA

ALAN GORDON ENTERPRISES
1430 N. Cahuenga Blvd.
Hollywood, CA 90028
213-466-3561
FAX: 213-871-2193
Grant Loucks, President
Wayne Loucks, Gen. Mgr.
Projection & sound equipment, spotlights & screens

BERLOC MFG./SIGN COMPANY
7405 Greenbush Ave.
North Hollywood, CA 91605
818-503-9823, 800-290-SIGN
FAX: 818-503-0934
Teri McClain, Secretary
Marquees, directories, bulletin boards & changeable letters

CINEMA EQUIPMENT SALES OF CALIFORNIA
23011 Moulton Pkwy., Suite I-5
Laguna Hills, CA 92653
714-470-0298
FAX: 714-470-0835
Carl Williams, President
Michael Smith, Gen. Mgr.
E-MAIL: 104024,2425 @compuserve.com
URL: www.cinema-equip.com
Worldwide sales, service, installation: equipment, furnishings & supplies

ENTERTAINMENT EQUIPMENT CORP.
6363 Santa Monica Blvd.
Hollywood, CA 90038
213-871-2194, 800-448-1656
FAX: 213-871-2196
James A. Lavorato, President
Gordon A. McLeod, Dir./Tech. Services
E-MAIL: entequip@aol.com
URL: www.entequip.com
Cinema equipment sales, service & design

JBL PROFESSIONAL
8500 Balboa Blvd.
Northridge, CA 91329
818-894-8850
FAX: 818-830-1220
URL: www.jblpro.com
Marc Spector, Cinema Market Mgr.
Cinema loudspeaker systems

METRO GOOD TIME FOODS
33508 Central Ave.
Union City, CA 94587
510-429-9800
FAX: 510-429-9828
Paul Lawson, Gen. Mgr.
Food: popcorn, candy & equipment

METROPOLITAN CONCESSIONS
9950 Mission Mill Rd.
Pico Rivera, CA 90601-4709
562-695-0541
FAX: 562-695-6796
Ron R. Naslund, Dir./Sales & Mktg.
E-MAIL: teammetro@aol.com
Concessions, foods, maintenance, equipment & sanitation

MILEN POPCORN— CONCESSION SALES
446 Queens Lane
San Jose, CA 95112
408-436-1615, 408-436-1623
FAX: 408-436-5563
E-MAIL: MILEN_SALES @compuserve.com
Concession & snack bar equipment & supplies, service & repair

MTS WEST
1802 Victory Blvd.
Glendale, CA 91201
818-247-8667
FAX: 818-247-3508
Jerry Van de Rydt, Vice Pres.
E-MAIL: mtsnws@aol.com
Theatre equipment

NCS CORP.
P.O. Box 206
Castaic, CA 91310-0206
888-900-1984, 805-257-1984
FAX: 805-257-1660
George A. Bruce Jr., Regional Sales Mgr.
URL: www.ncsco.com
Projection equipment, sound systems, cinema supplies, concession casework & products

PACIFIC CONCESSIONS
1250 Bayhill Dr.
Suite 301
San Bruno, CA 94066
415-871-8711
FAX: 415-871-7480
Dan Livak, Vice Pres.
Financing & concession services

QUALITY CONCESSIONS SUPPLY
6081 Rickenbacker Rd.
Commerce, CA 90040
310-721-1900, 310-488-3652
FAX: 213-721-6261
Kevin Fisher, Vice Pres.
Sandy Torres, Office Mgr.
Concessions supplies

R.J. ALLEN CO.
P.O. Box 4906
West Hills, CA 91308-4906
818-592-6033
FAX: 818-592-6467
Roy J. Allen III, Gen. Mgr.
E-MAIL: rjallen@pacbell.net
Candy, cheese & snacks

TEGTMEIER ASSOCIATES
P.O. Box 776
Menlo Park, CA 94026
415-324-4335
FAX: 415-324-4336
John Tegtmeier, President
Seating, crowd control, posts & rope

THEATRE SERVICE & SUPPLY
9582 Topanga Canyon Blvd.
Chatsworth, CA 91311
818-701-4475
FAX: 818-701-0394
Bill Miller, President
E-MAIL: theatreser@aol.com
Theatre design, equipment sales, installation & service

VANDERMARK ELECTRONICS
P.O. Box 3472
Santa Rosa, CA 95402
707-545-4068
James Vandermark, Owner
Surveying, developing & installing o sound systems & design equipme

ITAGE LIGHTING
Paul Dr.
Rafael, CA 94903
507-0402, 800-445-2677
: 415-507-0502
c Allsman, Gen. Mgr.
AIL: vanitg@aol.com
.: www.3000.com/vantage
lacement lamps; logo, hologram, nage & special effects projectors; -D laser systems

COLORADO

CTOR COMPANIES
7 Centennial Rd.
eton, CO 80127
973-8989
: 303-973-8884
e B. Proctor, President
AIL: proctorco@aol.com
cession stands & popcorn armers; boxoffice & lobby fixtures

KERSLEY ENTERPRISES
Stout St. / P.O. Box 2039
ver, CO 80201
298-8077
: 303-296-4080
ert K. Tankersley, CEO
e Tankersley, President
AIL: tatheco@aol.com
ntre equipment sales (new & sed) & service

CONNECTICUT

CORP.
Box 549
efield, CT 06877
438-3405, 203-438-1274
: 203-438-1419
er Beatty Jr., VP/Gen. Sales Mgr.
n Raymond, Mktg. Assistant
ection equipment, sound systems, nema supplies, concession stand sework & products

/ ENGLAND THEATRE SERVICE
Treadwell St.
iden, CT 06514
281-6583
: 203-288-6484
Peterson, President
Gelati, Engineer
s, installation & service of ojection & sound equipment

FLORIDA

EMA EQUIPMENT INC.
N.W. 97th Ave., Suite #12
mi, FL 33172
394-0570; FAX: 305-592-6970
ounger, President
Richards, Vice Pres.
AIL: GYOUNGER@orldnet.att.net
: www.miamicinema.com
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David Tyson, President
Janet Tyson, Vice Pres.
Long-life lighting products for the exhibition industry

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Hollywood, FL 33021
954-989-7964, 305-625-1185
FAX: 954-987-0367
Jerry Martin, President
E-MAIL: FCFpopcorn@aol.com
Theatre concession supplies & equipment; janitorial products

HOLLYWOOD THEATRE EQUIPMENT
3300 N. 29th Ave., Suite 104
Hollywood, FL 33020
954-920-2832; FAX: 954-925-3874
Don R. Gallagher, President
Debbie Gallagher Beans, Sec./Treas.
E-MAIL: hteinc@icanect.net
Equipment & supplies sales & service

INTL. CINEMA EQUIPMENT
100 N.E. 39th St.
Miami, FL 33137-3632
305-573-7339; FAX: 305-573-8101
Steven H. Krams, CEO
Dara Reusch, Exec. VP
E-MAIL: ICECO@aol.co
URL: www.iceco.com
Sales, service & repair

MASQUE SOUND & RECORDING
4221 S.W. 34th St.
Orlando, FL 32811
407-841-2371; FAX: 407-841-2421
Scott H. Kalata, Mktg. Coordinator
Sound equipment sales, service & rental

NCS / CONCESSION EQUIPMENT DIVISION
4897 W. Waters Ave., Suite I
Tampa, FL 33634
800-733-7278, 813-884-8304
FAX: 813-889-0859
Roy Loveland, Vice Pres.
Concession casework & food service equipment

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4100 N. Powerline Rd., Suite N-5
Pompano Beach, FL 33073
305-970-6710; FAX: 305-970-4313
Phil Weir, Distribution Mgr.
Confection distribution

NCS CORP.
8406 Sunstate St.
Tampa, FL 33634
800-776-6271, 813-884-7909
FAX: 813-884-0544
Syndi Tibbetts, Branch Mgr.
Projection equipment, concession stand casework & confections

NCS CORP. / CORPORATE OFFICE
14499 North Dale Hwy., Suite 201
Tampa, FL 33618
813-962-2772; FAX: 813-962-3402
Daniel P. Miller, President & CEO
Barney H. Bailey, Exec. VP & COO
Projection equipment, concession stands, seating, drapes, wall coverings, etc.

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305-754-9136
FAX: 305-759-0863
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John T. Gamble, Vice Pres.
E-MAIL: tvpmiami@webtv.net
Cinema equipment dealer; custom sound systems

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2140 B Jackson Pkwy.
P.O. Box 19937
Atlanta, GA 30325
404-792-8424
FAX: 404-792-1424
Donald G. Howell, President
Don Hudspeth, Vice Pres.
Theatre equipment and concession supplies

CINEVISION CORP.
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770-455-8988
FAX: 770-455-4066
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Saundra Conner, Vice Pres.
Sales, service & rentals of 16mm, 35mm & 70mm motion picture & sound equipment

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FAX: 208-536-5308
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Equipment dealer & emergency service for seven Midwest & Northwest states

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Bensenville, IL 60106
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630-860-2122
FAX: 630-860-5239
Harold Abbott Jr., President
Constantine A. Korose, Vice Pres.
Sales & service of most major concession equipment

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Chicago, IL 60645
773-764-6093, 773-764-7728
FAX: 773-274-9702
George Fukumizu, President
URL: www.123easy.com/gcn/cineway
Theatre equipment and accessories

MONARCH THEATRICAL EQUIPMENT
104 N. Sixth St.
Springfield, IL 62701
217-788-5200
FAX: 217-788-5207
Fred Walraven, Tech. Dir.
E-MAIL: FRED@kerasotes.com
URL: www.kerasotes.com
Theatre equipment sales, service & consultation

IOWA

MTS, INC.
423 S.W. Eighth St.
Des Moines, IA 50309
515-243-6520; FAX: 515-243-4987
Ted Bohemann, Branch Mgr.
Theatre equipment dealer & service company

KANSAS

NCS CORP.
8226 Marshall Dr.
Lenexa, KS 66215
913-492-0966, 800-457-3357
FAX: 913-492-1744
Rob M. Jaynes, Vice Pres.
Eugene J. Krull, Sr. VP
URL: www.ncsco.com
Projection equipment, sound systems, cinema supplies, concession stand casework & products

REGAL DISTRIBUTING
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913-894-8787; FAX: 913-894-4005
Lee G. Kopulos, President
Greg Kopulos, Chairman
Dean Kopulos, Exec. VP
E-MAIL: regaldist@worldnet.att.net
Concession: food service equipment & supplies

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HADDEN THEATRE SUPPLY
10201 Bunsen Way
Louisville, KY 40299
502-499-0050
FAX: 502-499-0052
Louis Bornwasser, Owner
Theatre supply dealer & designer

LOUISIANA

CINEMA CONCESSION AND SUPPLY
9810 Florida Blvd.
Baton Rouge, LA 70815
504-927-4820
J. Randolph Ogden, Owner
Theatre concession equipment & supplies

JON BAJON INC.
2611 N. Dumont St.
Baton Rouge, LA 70814
504-275-9914; FAX: 504-272-3841
Jon Bajon, President
Theatre equipment & concession supplies

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10219 Southard, Beltsville, MD 20705
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Cathy Rockman, Gen. Mgr.
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301-470-2142; FAX: 301-490-4749
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19334 Churubusco Lane
Germantown, MD 20874
301-404-9043; FAX 301-601-4307
Mike Marini, Owner
E-MAIL: mikem79810@aol.com
Equipment supplies & service: projection, sound, xenon lamps & seating

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BOSTON LIGHT AND SOUND
124 Brighton, Boston, MA 02134
617-787-3131; FAX: 617-787-4257
Tony Lazzaro, Mgr.
E-MAIL: tony@blsi.com
URL: www.blsi.com
Projection & sound equipment service & installation

CINEMA SERVICE & SUPPLY
271 Western, Lynn, MA 01904-3017
781-599-9353, 800-231-8849
FAX: 800-FAX-CSS5
Brian T. Vita, President
E-MAIL: sales@cssinc.com
URL: www.cssinc.com
Cinema equipment: sales, service & installation

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Hanson, MA 02341
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FAX: 617-871-0585
Leonard N. Miller, President
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Kevin Morrissey, Gen. Mgr.
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Gary Hitchens, President
Sales, service & installing of new & used theatre equipment & supplies

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Royal Oak, MI 48068-0654
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URL: www.ncsco.com
Projection equipment, sound systems, cinema supplies, concession stand casework & products

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7667 Cahill Rd.
Minneapolis, MN 55439-2749
new address as of fall:
10501 Florida Ave. South
Minneapolis, MN 55438
612-829-0161; FAX: 612-829-0166
Philip L. Rafnson, President
John P. Ayotte, Exec. VP
E-MAIL: 73363,2440 @compuserve.com
Theatre equipment (domestic & intl.) service; large screen video; specialty venues

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John Loehr, Dir./Sales
Theatre concessions

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J.R. Moran, Owner
Concession supplies & equipment

MISSOURI

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417-581-2602, 800-326-2022
FAX: 417-485-2609
Mike Braswell, Branch Mgr.
Janitorial/concession supplies/equipment

RINGOLD CINEMA EQUIPMENT
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St. Louis, MO 63123
314-487-3283, 314-487-3677
FAX: 314-487-3297
John M. Mattler, President
Mike Mattler, Vice Pres.
Sales/service of equipment & supplies

NEBRASKA

SLIPPER THEATRE SUPPLY
1502 Davenport St.
Omaha, NE 68102
402-341-5715, 800-228-9302
FAX: 402-341-7856
Mrs. C.A. Slipper, Owner
Gary Peterson, Purchasing
Theatre supply & service

NEW JERSEY

MASQUE SOUND & RECORDING
100 Redneck Ave.
Moonachie, NJ 07074
800-307-8666; FAX: 201-939-4704
Scott H. Kalata, Mktg. Coordinator
Sound equipment sales/service/rental

NEW YORK

ADVANCED SALES & MARKETING
39 Hancock Place
Valley Stream, NY 11580
516-823-9462
FAX: 516-872-9546
Melvin H. Golbert, President
Candy brokers

ALL CINEMA SALES AND SERVICE
8 Vernon Valley Rd.
East Northport, NY 11731
516-754-5655, 800-628-5788
FAX: 516-754-2213
James Kelly, President
Joseph Kelly, VP/Engineering
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AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL CONCESSION PRODUCTS
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Paul Sciortino, President
Christopher Sciortino, VP/Sales
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212-757-4510; FAX: 212-265-5648
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Larry Perse, Exec. VP
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8 Vernon Valley Rd.
East Northport, NY 11731
800-628-5788; FAX: 516-754-2213
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Tom Kelly, Vice Pres.
Distributor of general purpose & specialty bulbs, lighting fixtures & energy saving products

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712 Main St.
Buffalo, NY 14202
716-855-2162, 800-448-1656
FAX: 716-852-4330
James Lavorato, President
Gordon A. McLeod, Dir./Tech. Services
E-MAIL: entequip@aol.com
URL: www.entequip.com
Cinema equipment, sales, service & design

FREEMAN THEATRE SERVICE
5 Hudson Rd.
Garden City, NY 11530
516-488-2753
Omar Freeman, President
Carol Freeman, Vice Pres.
Sound & projection: consulting, sales & service

HAYES EQUIPMENT & SUPPLY
P.O. Box 29
Syracuse, NY 13211
315-432-8183
Jack Hayes, President
Theatre seating, seat covers, chair parts; installation

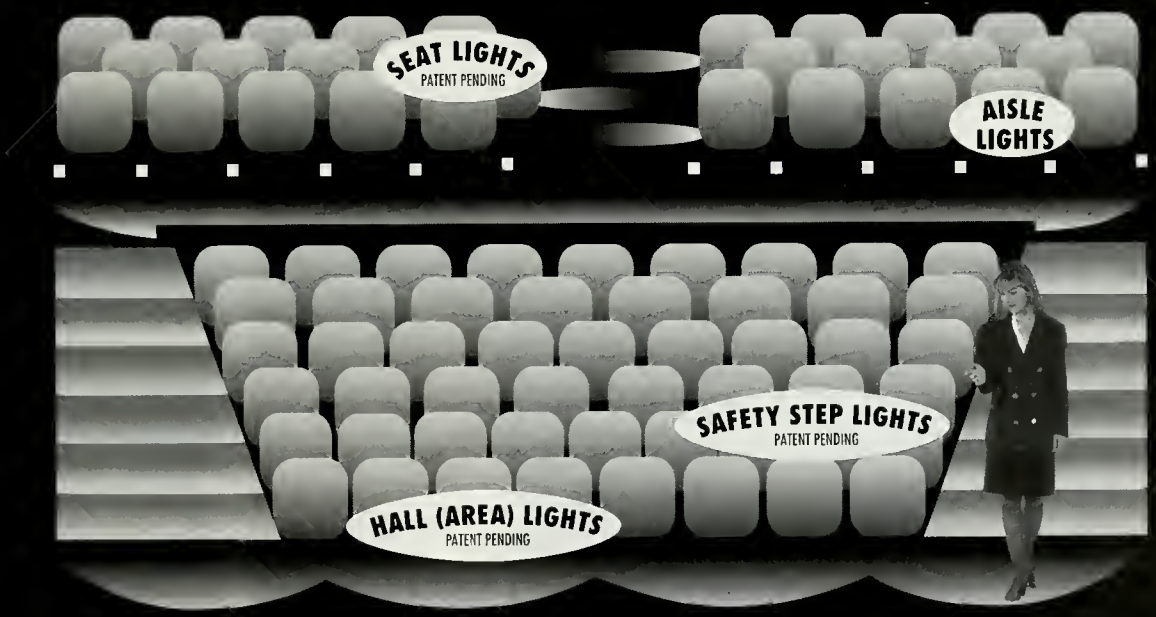
MASQUE SOUND & RECORDING
630 Ninth Ave., Suite 410
New York, NY 10036
212-245-4623; FAX: 212-262-4013
Scott H. Kalata, Mktg. Coordinato
Sound equipment sales/rental/servic

THEATRE CONFECTIONS
795 Monroe Ave.
Rochester, NY 14607
716-271-0858
David Kates, President
Jeff Dodge, VP/Sales
Richard McGlynn, Exec VP
Concession food & equipment sales & service

NORTH CAROLINA

AMERICAN THEATRE SUPPLY
4324 Barringer Dr., Suite 102
Charlotte, NC 28217
704-527-6077
FAX: 704-527-6078
Richard Cobb, Gen. Mgr.
Lee Helms, Asst. Mgr.
Theatre equipment & concession supplies

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Eden, NC 27288
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FAX: 910-627-7551
Bill Moore, Sales/Carolina Office
Theatre equipment & concession supplies

WORRELL SOUND & PROJECTION
The Landfall Center, Suite 199
1319 Military Cutoff
Wilmington, NC 28405
800-552-7502, 910-509-1506
FAX: 800-552-7501
Bruce Worrell, Owner
Diann Worrell, Mktg. Coordinator
Projectors, sound systems, booth supplies, screens, seating & lobby furnishings

OHIO

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Hilliard, OH 43026-2206
614-876-6262
FAX: 614-876-6262
John Williamson, President
Theatre supply: sales, service & rentals

FREMONT THEATRE SUPPLY
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Fremont, OH 43420
419-334-2758, 800-513-2939
FAX: 419-334-2758
Richard C. Smith Jr., Owner
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NCS CORP.
1150 W. Eighth St., Suite 110
Cincinnati, OH 45203
513-352-0606, 800-543-0418
FAX: 513-352-0701
Barbara Cammack, Branch Mgr.
Kathy Bass, Natl. Account Mgr.
Projection equipment, sound systems, cinema supplies, concession stand casework & products

WHEATON'S CONCESSION SUPPLY
231 N. Fourth St.
Columbus, OH 43215
614-228-1155
FAX: 614-224-3297
Robert J. Wheaton, President
Tom Carlson, Vice Pres.
Wholesale distributor of concession supplies & equipment

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FAX: 918-355-1452
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FAX: 717-692-3073
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Stowe, PA 19464
610-323-4847, 800-432-4847
FAX: 610-323-1664
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E-MAIL: cinetech@aol.com
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412-787-1030, 800-383-2356
FAX: 412-787-7295
Jeffrey Roth, Branch Mgr.
Concessions equipment, supplies, sales & repair

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Pittsburgh, PA 15220
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FAX: 412-481-1336
Ken Boyle, Vice Pres.
Concession wholesaler: popcorn, candy, paper products & janitorial supplies

ULTRATECH INC.
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E-MAIL: ultratech@ibm.net
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817-430-8282; FAX: 817-491-1059
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Mary Anderson
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214-688-0021; FAX: 214-637-6739
Deanie Jones, Sales Coordinator
Concession supplies & equipment

LIBERTO OF HARLINGEN
402 S. "F" St., Suite 100
Harligen, TX 78550
210-423-8770
FAX: 210-425-2607
Al Taylor, Manager
Concession supplies, equipment & service

LIBERTO OF HOUSTON
4321 Old Spanish Trail
Houston, TX 77021
713-747-7757
FAX: 713-747-4423
Lloyd Carmack, Division Mgr.
Concession supplies & equipment

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Houston, TX 77007
713-861-3344; FAX: 713-861-4298
R. S. Mortensen, President
Concession, janitorial, projection, sound, seating

TEXAS THEATRE SUPPLY
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San Antonio, TX 78216
210-344-3823, 210-340-5766
FAX: 210-344-2522
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R.O. Taylor, Gen. Mgr.
Theatre equipment & service

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CLACO EQUIPMENT AND SERVIC
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Salt Lake City, UT 84111
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FAX: 801-355-1259
Clayton Stauffer, President & Owr
Dennis Lunt, Sales Mgr.
Theatre equipment sales & service

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Salt Lake City, UT 84106
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Keith Perry, President
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Earl B. Barden, President
Mike M. Mercy, Sec. & Treas.
Theatre equipment sales, service & installation

CIN-TRONICS
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Everett, WA 98208
425-742-7486; FAX: 425-742-8254
Vernon Klingman, Owner
E-MAIL: VKlingman@prodigy.net
Projection, sound & concession equipment sales & service

AE THEATRE EQUIPMENT
Nickerson St., Suite 210
le, WA 98109
285-8393
206-285-8375
d McRae, President
s McRae, Sec. & Treas.
on picture & sound
rvice & sales

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leston, WV 25323
-744-4413, 304-744-4019
ld M. Moore, Owner
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ed & rebuilt equipment

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ne, WI 53408
38-1998
414-638-1989
Bose, President
C. Barber, Vice Pres.
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stom designs & installations

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BEST THEATRE SUPPLY
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Toronto, Ontario
Canada M4T 2Y9
416-323-7244
FAX: 416-323-6867
David Granger, Gen. Mgr.
Theatre supplies

CINEMATRONIX
14366 109th Ave.
Surrey, British Columbia
Canada V3R 0P6
604-585-2155
FAX: 604-585-2155
Kevin Eagle, President
David Moore, Service Mgr.
E-MAIL: kevinc@direct.ca
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Calgary, Alberta
Canada T2M 0L9
403-282-4282
403-691-1993
FAX: 403-282-4282
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Sound & projection equipment sales & service; new theatre equipment installations

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Vancouver, British Columbia
Canada V6A 1A4
604-682-1848, 604-254-2949
FAX: 604-682-1848
D.V.K. Fairleigh, Manager
Theatre equipment & service

ENTERTAINMENT EQUIPMENT CORP.
1000 Gerrard St. East, Suite 98021
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M4M 3L9
800-448-1656
James A. Lavorato, President
Gordon A. McLeod, Dir./Tech. Svcs.
E-MAIL: entequip@aol.com
URL: www.entequip.com
Cinema equipment dealer

G.A. McLEOD ENTERPRISES
75 Pape Ave.
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M4M 2V5
416-469-3235
FAX: 416-469-9811
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E-MAIL: gmcleod@direct.com
Sound systems design service & repair

INDEPENDENT THEATRE SUPPLY
P.O. Box 3707, Station D
Edmonton, Alberta
Canada T5L 4J7
403-482-1611
FAX: 403-482-3520
Tom Hutchinson, President
E-MAIL: its@compusmart.ab.ca
Cinema equipment, supplies & furnishings

KILCULLEN MARKETING
7 Watford St.
Brooklin, Ontario
Canada L0B 1C0
905-655-8633
FAX: 905-655-5873
John Kilcullen, President
Sales, service & installation of theatre equipment

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14566 Yellowhead Trail
Edmonton, Alberta
Canada T5L 3C5
403-455-1622, 800-561-3581
FAX: 403-455-0663
Terry Yushchyshyn
Theatre equipment & supplies

MARIPLEX CINEMA SUPPLY
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New Glasgow, Nova Scotia
Canada B2H 3S2
902-755-4864, 800-565-2727
FAX: 902-755-7640
Brian MacLeod, Gen. Mgr.
Cinema equipment & supplies; projection, sound & concession equipment

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FAX: 514-498-3335
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Alphabetized, by Subject Category

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ACCESSORIES/ TRAILERS/SHORTS

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Chicago, IL 60605-2574
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FAX: 312-427-4866
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Designers & producers of digital pic & sound theatre trailers & slides

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Willowbrook, IL 60514
630-654-0200
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Barbara Scheuren, Secretary
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5724 W. 3rd Street #400
Los Angeles, CA 90036-3043
213-932-0400; FAX: 213-932-8440
James W. Kristoff, President
E-MAIL: sales@metrolight.com
URL: www.metrolight.com
3-D computer graphics, special effects & 2-D animation

NATIONAL SCREEN SERVICE GROUP
NEW JERSEY
40 Rockwood Place
Englewood, NJ 07631
201-871-7900; FAX: 201-871-7914
Peter Koplik, President
Ronald Seitenbach, Treas.

CALIFORNIA:
3655 Lenawee Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90016
310-836-1505; FAX: 310-836-9878
Mitchell Wilen, VP Distribution
Mona Spicer, Dir. of Film Operations

MISSOURI:
1800 Baltimore Ave.
Kansas City, MO 64108-1931
816-842-5893; FAX: 816-842-4553
Eric Allen, Branch Manager
One sheets, trailers, ad slicks, other promotional materials

PIKE PRODUCTIONS, INC.
11 Clarke Street
P.O.B. 300
Newport, RI 02840
401-846-8890; FAX: 401-847-0070
James A. Pike, President
Cornelia M. Pike, VP
Pat Mooney, Sales
Neil Verzoni, Sales
Custom & generic policy trailers/headers/daters/3-D computer animation

SILVER SCREEN SPECIALTIES
P.O. Box 1223
Caldwell, ID 83606
208-454-9454
David Cornwell, President
Karen J. Cornwell, Vice President
Policy trailers

SMITHGROUP COMMUNICATIONS, INC.
614 SW 11th Ave.
Suite 405
Portland, OR 97205
503-224-1905; FAX: 503-224-5548
Phil Bevans, President/Producer
E-MAIL: smithgrp@smithgrp.com
Custom logo/policy trailers

WEST GLEN COMMUNICATIONS, INC.
1430 Broadway, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10018
212-921-2800; FAX: 212-944-9055
Jennifer Zeitlin, Mktg. Coordinator
URL: www.westglen.com
The Popcorn Report and other free short subjects

WILLMING REAMS ANIMATION, INC.
325 East Ramsey Road
San Antonio, TX 78216
800-972-6468, 210-342-2141
FAX: 210-342-1523
Denise M. Reams-White, Pres./Exec. Producer
Doug Willming, VP/Animation Dir.
E-MAIL: wranim8@aol.com
URL: www.zdepth.com/reams
Policy trailers, concessions, computer and character animation, video monitor program, studio trailers on tape

BOOKERS

CINEMA BOOKING SVC. OF N.E. INC.
P.O. Box 827, Needham, MA 02192
617-986-2122
Stanton H. Davis, President
E-MAIL: stadav@aol.com
Film buying & booking service

CINEMA SERVICE COMPANY
6060 N. Central, Suite 638
Dallas, TX 75206
214-692-7555; FAX: 214-692-7559
Tim Patton, President
E-MAIL: tim.csc@by-rite.com
Film buying & marketing agency

CINEMA SERVICES/ FILM BOOKING
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201-584-8160; FAX: 201-584-0586
Craig Zeltner
Mary Shefford

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P O.B. 610727
Port Huron, MI 48060
810-982-9935; FAX: 810-982-9947
Robert Hines, President

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707-523-1592; FAX: 707-523-4024
Richard Gambogi, President
Jeanette Gambogi, VP & Sec./Treas.

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Mayfield Heights, OH 44124
216-461-2700; FAX: 216-461-6411
John Knepp, President
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Keven Christy, Vice President

GREAT LAKES THEATRE SERVICE, LTD.
P.O. Box 861
Wheaton, IL 60189
630-510-9119; FAX: 630-510-9735
Lou Michael, President
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212-986-7488; FAX: 212-986-2524
Jeffrey Jacobs

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9801 Tribonian Dr.
Fort Washington, MD 20744-5713
301-567-1775; FAX: 301-567-1775
Jane M. Klotz, Owner/Operator
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M & N BOOKING SERVICE
2712 Evans
P.O. Box 20221
Cheyenne, WY 82003
307-634-3980; FAX: 307-634-9497
Mike Schwartz, Owner/Film Buy
E-MAIL: mandnbook@aol.com

MILGRAM THEATRES, INC.
GSB Bldg. # 412, One Belmont Av
Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004
610-664-3900; FAX: 610-664-3903
Robert Milgram, VP/Head Film Bu
Film buying & booking

MINI THEATRES
534 Broadhollow Road, Suite 430
Melville, NY 11747
516-293-3456; FAX: 516-293-3490
Harold Lager, Owner
Martin Goldman, Owner

MOTION PICTURE COUNSELING
301 Mt. Shasta Drive
San Rafael, CA 94903
415-491-1234; FAX: 415-491-1294
Ronald Litvin, President

Exhibitor Relations

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ank, CA 91521-1293
47-4887; FAX: 818-566-1050
acts: Nancy Klueter, Susan Levin
TERN:
35-5421; FAX: 212-735-5491
act: Michael Ricciardi
ADA:
63-2853 (Canada only);
64-9275; FAX: 416-964-8537
act: Greg Mason
TIIEAST:
41-0045; FAX: 770-246-8949
act: Chuck Cromer
WEST:
23-0134; 847-384-3955
847-384-3993
act: Mike Wozny
THWEST:
27-6851; 214-363-9494
214-363-9967
act: J.T. Capps
TERN:
47-3419; FAX: 818-972-9543
acts: Meiko Just, Christina Nedelec

'EAMWORKS

1E OFFICE:
) Ventura Blvd., Fourth Floor
no, CA 91436; FAX: 818-733-7775
acts: Pat Gonzales, 818-733-7755;
liet Fang, South, 818-733-7757;
ic Tabak, Central, 818-733-7758;
awnie Bilic, West, 818-733-7756
TERN: Crystal King,
2-588-6220; FAX 212-588-6266

'X

Box 900 #89-351
rly Hills, CA 90213
FOX-3295; FAX: 310-FOX-3823
acts: Branden Miller, Michelle Baert
earchlight: Shannon Simpson,
0-FOX-5707; FAX: 310-FOX-3823

GM/UA

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a Monica, CA 90404-3061
49-3331; FAX: 310-449-3008
acts: Nancy Seidman, 310-449-3331;
e Whitmore, 310-449-3328
ONTO:
703-9579 x104; FAX 416-504-3821
act: Marisa Contardi
T/CENTRAL:
708-0391; FAX: 212-245-1481
act: Ira Miller
TH/WEST:
44-1624; FAX 310-444-1698
act: Debbie Lasater

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udson St., Ninth Floor
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965-4719; FAX: 212-965-4790
act: Jeff Goldman

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1E OFFICE:
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ina Warner, 310-967-6913;
zanne Hansen, 310-967-6983
TERN: 212-649-6107
act: Anthony Laulette
THERN: 770-952-0056
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Contact: Sharon Malczewski
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212-654-7794; FAX 212-654-4722
Contacts: Joel Gajewski, Steve Barrett
SOUTHERN:
800-521-1995; FAX 972-701-8359
Contacts: Elvira Golden (x106),
Janice Talbert (x105)
MIDWEST/WEST:
800-285-3218; FAX 818-380-7853
Contacts: Bill Saugez (Midwest),
Sue Francis (West)

POLYGRAM

9333 Wilshire Blvd.
Beverly Hills, CA 90210
Polygram Contact: Suzanne LeRoy
310-385-4061; FAX: 310-385-4006
Gramercy Contact: Krissy Gray
310-385-4451; FAX: 310-385-4404

SONY

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Culver City, CA 90232
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Contacts: Ted Hatfield, Ed Clegg

UNIVERSAL

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Universal City, CA 91608
Contacts: Steve Ellman,
818-777-1768; FAX: 818-866-1481
Lisa Holland, 818-777-3817;
FAX: 818-866-3356
EASTERN: 212-605-2783
Contact: Paul Francis
NEW ENGLAND/
CENTRAL: 617-426-8760
Contact: Jack Kenn
SOUTH/MIDWEST:
214-360-0022 x223
Contact: John Hall
WESTERN: 818-777-0111
Contact: Scott Carson

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Burbank, CA 91522
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EASTERN:
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Contact: Tom Rosa
CANADA:
416-250-8384 x347; FAX: 416-250-8930
Contact: Susan Sharpe
SOUTHERN:
214-360-3065; FAX: 214-696-1154
Contact: Kay Lynn Teske
MIDWESTERN:
818-379-1805; FAX: 818-788-1678
Contact: Daniel Solomon
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Peter Francci, CEO/PR
Bookers and consultants

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Cincinnati, OH 45214
513-921-8266; FAX: 513-921-8206
Fred Schweitzer, Larry Thomas

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231 W. Cherry Hill Court/P.O.B. 1056
Reisterstown, MD 21136
410-526-4774; FAX: 410-526-6871
Irwin R. Cohen, President/CEO
Scott R. Cohen, Pres./Film Contracts
J. Wayne Anderson, Pres./Ops

SILVER SCREEN MANAGEMENT CORP.
2440 E. Tudor Rd., Suite 120
Anchorage, AK 99507
907-562-0089; FAX: 907-561-3299
Rand Thornsley, President/Gen Mgr.
E-MAIL: filmgallery@compuserve.com

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Mike Timko, Head Film Buyer
Independent theatres booking service

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Yorkville, IL 60560
630-553-0588; FAX: 630-553-0594
Buck Kolkmeyer, President
Steve Felperin, VP
E-MAIL: theatres@earthlink.net
URL:home.earthlink.net/theatres/

UNITED THEATRE SERVICE
P.O. Box 1649, Bothell, WA 98041
425-488-0944; FAX: 425-488-9318
Michael R. Forman, Chairman
Dorothea Mayes, Dir./Film Buyer

VONDERHAAR CINEMA
P.O. Box 222, Osseo, MN 55369
612-422-8535; FAX: 612-422-8236
Mike Vonderhaar, Owner
E-MAIL: vondymovie@aol.com

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James J. Becher, Mgr. Engineerin

CINEMA CONSULTANTS & SERVICES INTL. INC.
P.O. Box 9672, Pittsburgh, PA 152
412-343-3900; FAX: 412-343-2992
Ross Falvo, President
Construction, planning; concessior counters design & installation

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Irving, TX 75062
972-255-9039; FAX: 972-258-4993
Melissa Montague, President
Tina MacDonald, Interior Design
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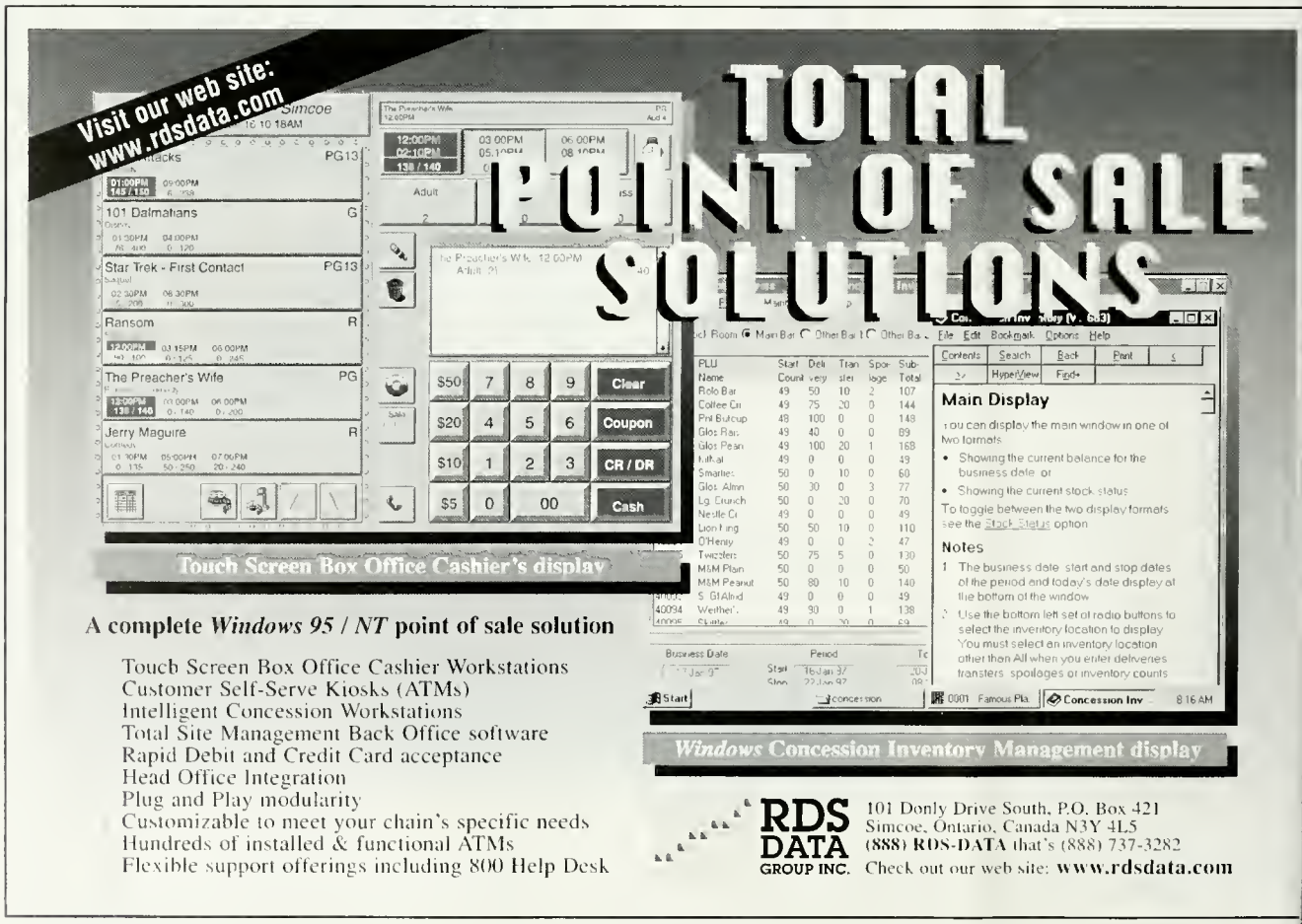
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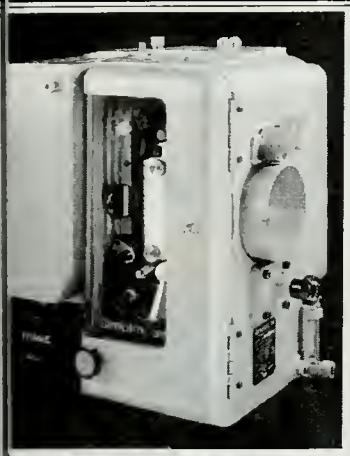
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Don Mills, Ontario M3C 2A2
416-445-0544; FAX: 416-445-2894
Sandy I. Stewart, President
Development & production of custom media & advertising for the entertainment industry

EXHIBITOR RELATIONS CO., INC.
116 N. Robertson
Suite 606
Los Angeles, CA 90048
310-657-2005; FAX: 310-657-7283
John N. Krier, President & Owner
Paul Dergarabedian, Exec. VP
Motion picture research & boxoffice tracking

HOLLYWOOD DREAM FACTORY
1842 Sylvania Ave.
Toledo, OH 43613
419-474-3065; FAX: 419-474-9740
Tom Martin
Hollywood memorabilia, posters, photos, filmmaking equipment

INDEPENDENT MARKETING EDGE
827 Blackmore Place
Bozeman, MT 59715
406-587-1251; FAX: 406-586-1571
Dan Klusmann, President
E-MAIL: movieinfo@aol.com
Bi-weekly newsletter for theatre managers

INTERNATIONAL FILM SERVICE, IN
130 Ferry Ave.
Collingswood, NJ 08104
609-962-6800, 609-962-8400
FAX: 609-962-6051
David Adleman, President
E-MAIL: pyrf68a@prodigy.com
National Film Service's PA branch. Special delivery of films from theatre to theatre in PA, NJ & DE

KIDS TRIBUTE
71 Barber Greene Rd.
Don Mills, Ontario M3C 2A2
416-445-0544; FAX: 416-445-2894
Sandy I. Stewart, President
In-theatre entertainment magazine

LEXIS-NEXIS
4520 East-West Highway, Suite 610
Bethesda, MD 20814
301-215-8111, 301-215-8100
FAX: 301-215-8128
Meg Hargreaves, Dir. of Marketing
EMAIL: margaret.hargreaves@lexis-nexis.co
URL: www.lexis-nexis.com
Online entertainment library w/industry info & Hollywood news

LOMMA GOLF CO.
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Scranton, PA 18505
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Gary Knight, Exec. VP
Portable, prefab miniature golf courses, indoor/outdoor

MODULAR HARDWARE
P.O. Box 35398, Tucson, AZ 85740
800-533-0042; FAX: 800-533-7942
Robert J. Hotch, President
E-MAIL: modhdwe@modhdwe.co
URL: www.modhdwe.com
Partition hardware/washroom accessor



Response No. 145

SCELLANEOUS
ntinued)

IVIEAD CORP.
10 N. Andrews Ave.
npano Beach, FL 33064
-329-4989; FAX: 954-784-0700
il T. Noah Jr., President
pply ad slicks, title art, concession
mylars & translites

UVIEFONE
LIFORNIA:
0 Sunset Blvd., Ste. 802
, Angeles, CA 90028
-461-4048, 212-504-7555
X: 213-461-0330
ussell Leatherman, President
drew Jarecki, Managing Director

W YORK:
'orld Trade Center, Suite 5280
w York, NY 10048
-504-7555
ephone movie guide and advance
icket sales

VIE-INFO.COM
Mercury Dr. SE
vrenceville, GA 30045
-682-5485; FAX: 770-682-8397
n W. Shaw, CEO
MAIL: web@movie-info.com
L: www.movie-info.com

VIE TUNES
56 Lake Encino Dr.
ino, CA 91316
-344-9896; FAX: 818-344-9897
ert G. Kardashian, President
sic for movie theatre lobbies and
uditoriums

NFS (NATIONAL FILM SERVICE)
16830 Ventura Blvd., Suite 202
Encino, CA 91436
818-386-6650, 800-664-4637
FAX: 818-386-6654
Terry Kierzek, President
E-MAIL: theatre@nationalfilm.com
URL: www.nationalfilm.com
Film storage and delivery warehouse service nationwide

NLNV CINEMAS
2301 Glenallen Ave., Suite 405
Silver Spring, MD 20906
301-962-0642
Steven D. Sharkey, President
Design, print and sell discount card promotions for first-run (non-discount) theatres

PACIFIC CONCESSIONS, INC.
1250 Bayhill Drive, Suite 301
San Bruno, CA 94066
415-871-8711; FAX: 415-871-7480
Alan Kates, President
Financing & concession services

POT O' GOLD PRODUCTIONS, INC.
2211 Rogero Road
Jacksonville, FL 32211-4099
800-446-5330, 904-744-7478
FAX: 904-744-7488
Clarke Mazza, President
Pre-show entertainment, concession & advertising programs

PREMIER DATEVISION, INC.
1536 Cole Blvd., Suite #340
Golden, CO 80401
303-232-1901; FAX: 303-232-1429
Blane O. Newton, President
Automated directory and co-op ad creation/delivery

PRE-VUE ENTERTAINMENT MAGAZINE
7825 Fay Ave., La Jolla, CA 92037
619-456-5577; FAX: 619-542-0114
Frank Lane, President
Penny Langford, Publisher
E-MAIL: prevuemag@aol.com
URL: www.pre-vuemagazine.com
In-lobby movie magazine (free to patrons)

S. BOSE
P.O. Box 081331, Racine, WI 53408
414-638-1998; FAX: 414-638-1989
Scott Bose, President
Scott Barber, Vice President
Patented MOVIE MOVER film shipping technology

THE SCREENING ROOM INC.
3131 Sheridan Drive, Century Mall
Amherst, NY 14226
716-837-0376; FAX: 716-837-0376
Bob Golibersuch, President
Network of resources & consulting services for video & laser theatres

SEAR SOUND
353 West 48th St.
New York, NY 10036
212-582-5380; FAX: 212-581-2731
Walter Sear, Owner
Roberta Findlay, Studio Mgr.
Music recording studio for films

S-H-O-W-T-I-M-E
1224 N. Beverly Glen Blvd.
Bel Air, CA 90077
310-474-3363, 213-Showtime
FAX: 310-474-2981
Allen Mostow, President
E-MAIL: synergysys@tvincars.com
URL: www.tvincars.com
Telephone movie showtimes/info

TRIBUTE MAGAZINE
71 Barber Greene Rd.
Don Mills, Ontario, M3C 2A2
416-445-0544; FAX: 416-445-2894
Sandy A. Stewart, President
E: 104362.1210@compuserve.com
URL: www.tribute.ca
In-theatre entertainment magazine

RENTALS

AUDIO RENTS, INC.
1541 N. Wilcox Ave.
Hollywood, CA 90028
213-874-1000; FAX: 213-460-2676
Robert Burton, Engineer
E-MAIL: audrnts@pacbell.net
Post-production audio equipment, Dolby SR for exhibition

BOSTON LIGHT & SOUND, INC.
124 Brighton Ave.
Boston, MA 02134
617-787-3131; FAX: 617-787-4257
David Dowling, Manager
E-MAIL: info@blsi.com
URL: www.blsi.com
Projection equipment, dailies

CARDINAL SOUND & MTN. PICS. SYSTEMS, INC.
10219 Southard Drive
Beltsville, MD 20705
301-595-8811; FAX: 301-595-5985
Neal Rockman, President
Cathy Rockman, General Manager
EMAIL: nrockman@cardinalsound.com
Sound and motion picture systems

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CHARTER FINANCIAL
153 East 53rd St.
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212-805-1000; FAX: 212-805-1050
Jerome Rosen
URL: www.chartfin.com
Leases and finances theatre equipment

HILL TOP PRODUCTIONS
309 Lomita St.
P.O. Box 4752
Santa Fe, NM 87501
505-982-3191, 505-984-4966
FAX: 505-982-3191
Bill Hill, CEO
E-MAIL: hilltop@sfol.com
Portable 35mm projection systems, Mag-optical, Interlock

SCREEN ADVERTISING

ADFILMS
250 Merton Street
Suite 403
Toronto, Ontario M4S 1B1
416-483-3551; FAX: 416-483-2401
Fred T. Stinson, President
Keith Stinson, Mktg. Mgr.
E-MAIL: adfilms@hookup.net
Screen ads in English and French including paid public service messages

C & A ADVERTISING, INC.
4725 Merle Hay Rd.
Suite 100
Des Moines, IA 50322
800-735-5748, 515-334-5222
FAX: 515-334-5226
Shirlee Ludemann, President
Complete on-screen slide advertising program

CAPTIVE COMMERCIALS, INC.
775 Kennesaw
Birmingham, MI 48009
248-647-4050; FAX: 248-647-4050
Jack Metzel, President
E-MAIL: issuespc@ix.netcom.com
URL: www.issuesprocon.org
Theatre screen advertising sales

FILMACK STUDIOS
1327 S. Wabash Ave.
Chicago, IL 60605-2574
800-345-6225, 800-FILMACK
FAX: 312-427-4866
Robert N. Mack, President
Designers & producers of digital pic & sound theatre trailers & slides

NATIONAL PRE-VUE NETWORK
7825 Fay Ave.
La Jolla, CA 92037
619-456-5577; FAX: 619-542-0114
Frank Lane, President
Penny Langford, VP of Operations
E-MAIL: prevuemag@aol.com
URL: www.pre-vuemagazine.com
Rolling stock commercial advertising on screens (military market)

POT O' GOLD PRODUCTIONS, INC.
2211 Rogero Rd.
Jacksonville, FL 32211-4099
904-744-7478, 800-446-5330
FAX: 904-744-7488
Clarke Mazza, President
Martha Mazza, CFO
Kim Magdalein, General Sales Mgr.
E-MAIL: comazza@aol.com
Pre-show entertainment & advertising programs

SILVER SCREEN ADVERTISING
6101 France Ave. South
Edina, MN 55410
612-920-7938; FAX: 612-338-3944
David Peterson
E-MAIL: ssaslide@aol.com
35mm slide entertainment/advertising programs for movie theatres; computer-based production house

TIESSO COMMUNICATIONS, INC.
110 Pacific Avenue
Suite 298
San Francisco, CA 94111
415-434-8722
William Schmeltzer, President
Trailers & animation

UNIQUE SCREEN AD
612 S. 2nd St.
P.O. Box 2165
St. Cloud, MN 56302-2165
320-654-6578, 800-358-1818
FAX: 320-202-2916
Eugene Schreder, President
E: mediapro@mediaproinc.com
www.mediaproinc.com/usa.html
Screen trailers

UNITED CINEMA MEDIA NETWORK
30799 Pinetree Road
P.O. Box 202
Cleveland, OH 44124-5952
888-277-UCMN; FAX: 216-442-6848
Russell J. Wintner, President
Screen advertising

VAL MORGAN CINEMA ADVERTISING (AMERICA)
247 N. Goodman St.
Rochester, NY 14607
800-724-6684; FAX: 716-244-8245
Adam Barone, President
John Schroth, VP & Dir. of Operations
E-MAIL: adam12b@aol.com
"Screen Seen At The Movies" slide program; in-house production

SERVICE

AMPAC THEATER CLEANING SERVICES
P.O. Box 421
Monterey, CA 93942
408-372-3728; FAX: 408-372-3728
Arnold Meltzer, Owner
Theatre cleaning services

BONDI ASSOCIATES
970 South 2nd St.
San Jose, CA 95112-5825
408-293-7006; FAX: 408-293-7006
John C. Bondi, Div. VP/Gen'l Mgr.
James J. Becher, Manager, Engineering

CALIFORNIA SEATING AND REPAIR
12455 Branford St., Unit 2
Arleta, CA 91331
818-890-SEAT; FAX: 805-581-0226
William (Tim) McMahan, Presider
Installation, rentals, seating repair & sales of used chairs



Response No. 202

ERVICE
ntinued)

RDINAL SOUND & MTN. PICS. SYSTEMS, INC.
219 Southard Drive
tsville, MD 20705
-595-8811; FAX: 301-595-5985
al Rockman, President
hy Rockman, General Manager
MAIL:
rockman@cardinalsound.com
tion picture systems, projectors, sound repair and maintenance

YOUNG INDUSTRIES, INC.
6 Jasper, N. Kansas City, MO 64116
-474-1776, 800-729-2610
X: 816-474-1900
n R. (Rick) Young, Sr., Pres./CEO
rie E. Young, VP/COO
herine L. Young, VP New Prod. Dev.
upholster seating, molded cushions

CLERCQ'S THEATRICAL SPECIALTIES, INC.
7 E. 7th Street
kland, CA 94601
-534-6587, 800-200-6873
X: 510-534-1472
DeClercq, President
l DeClercq, VP
MAIL: info@declercqs.com
L: www.declercqs.com
atre rigging, hardware, screen cleaning

NK BOLKOVAC
Sunset Drive
nroeville, PA 15146
-373-7968
nk Bolkovac, Owner
building, re-conditioning projector ntermittants; hard-to-get parts

MAG NORTH, INC.
764 Middle Country Rd., P.O.B. 309
Seldon, NY 11784
516-698-7911, 800-773-5852
FAX: 516-732-4577
George F. Greene, VP OPS
E-MAIL: MagNorth@aol.com
Theatre cleaning specialists

NATIONAL CINEMA SERVICE
1512 Edwards Ave., Suite 3
Harahan, LA 70123
504-734-0707; FAX: 504-734-0700
Charlie A. Achee, Jr., President
Chris Pierce, Controller
Sound & projection service, equipment & parts sales

SILVER SCREEN THEATRE SPECIALISTS
1109 Lincoln Ave.
Flint, MI 48507
313-233-6460
Tony Minca, President
Brian Minca, Vice President
Screen cleaning, screen/sound installation

ULTRAFLAT
20306 Sherman Way
Winnetka, CA 91306-3108
818-884-0184; FAX: 818-884-0184
Herbert Bammerlin, President
Robert Caspari, Sales/Technical
www.los-angeles-online.com/ultrflt
Xenon reflector & motion picture optics recoated, repolished & repaired

VANDEMARK ELECTRONICS
P.O. Box 3472
Santa Rosa, CA 95402
707-545-4068
James Vandemark, Owner
Design, build and install movie theatre sound systems

3-D

AMERICAN PAPER OPTICS INC.
3080 Bartlett Corporate Drive
Bartlett, TN 38133
901-381-1515, 800-767-8427
FAX: 901-381-1517
John Jerit, President
E-MAIL: optics3D@lunaweb.net
3-D glasses

DEEP VISION 3-D
6457 Santa Monica Blvd.
Box 38386
Hollywood, CA 90038
213-465-5819
Stephen Gibson, President
E-MAIL: post@3dglasses.com
URL: www.3dglasses.com
3-D glasses

DIMENSION 3
5240 Medina Rd.
Woodland Hills, CA 91364-1913
818-592-0999; FAX: 818-592-0987
Daniel Symmes, President
3-D consultation for theatrical motion pictures, television & print media

MARKS POLARIZED CORP.
275-D Marcus Blvd.
Hauppauge, NY 11788
516-273-8900; FAX: 516-273-1190
Ronald Miller, President
E-MAIL: mpc@iacsoft.com
URL: www.iacsoft.com/mpc
3-D viewers (anaglyphic or polarized), projectors and camera adapters

STEREOVISION INTERNATIONAL, INC.
3815 Burbank Blvd.
Burbank, CA 91505
760-431-2900, 818-769-7332
FAX: 818-843-8608
Christopher J. Condon, President
John Rupkalvis, Tech. Advisor
3-D screens, 3-D projection lenses

VIDEO/ADVERTISING

ALL PRO
124 West 60th St.
New York, NY 10023
212-582-4611; FAX: 212-582-5645
Sid Rubinstein, President
Arleen West, Production Director
Moviewall, video displays, complete video production services

GENERAL AMUSEMENT CORP.
23801 Calabasas Rd., Ste. 1002
Calabasas, CA 91302
818-222-1234; FAX: 818-222-5620
Lois P. Glezerman, President
E-MAIL: gacgames@aol.com

WILLMING REAMS ANIMATION
325 East Ramsey Road
San Antonio, TX 78216
800-972-6468, 210-342-2141
FAX: 210-342-1523
Denise M. Reams-White, Pres./EP
Doug Willming, VP/Animation Dir.
E-MAIL: wranim8@aol.com
URL: www.zdepth.com/reams
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Response No. 170

Exhibitor's Phonebook

A Directory of Important Organizations and Associations

What follows is a brief listing of significant organizations and associations which fall outside of the editorial parameters of the main body of the BOXOFFICE BUYERS DIRECTORY, but which BOXOFFICE feels are of great significance to film professionals. They have been alphabetized for your convenience.

ACADEMY OF INTERACTIVE ARTS AND SCIENCES
106353 Santa Monica Blvd., Ste 180
Los Angeles, CA 90025
310-441-2280
FAX: 310-441-2285
Chairman/President: Marc Teren
Serving as a bridge between entertainment & computer companies

ACADEMY OF MOTION PICTURE ARTS AND SCIENCES
8949 Wilshire Blvd.
Beverly Hills, CA 90211
310-247-3000
FAX: 310-859-9351
Sponsors annual Academy Awards, plus various other functions that seek to honor and celebrate film.

AMERICAN CINEMATHEQUE
7000 Hollywood Blvd., 3rd Floor
Hollywood, CA 90028
213-466-3456
FAX: 213-461-9737
Executive Director: Barbara Smith
Screenings: Dennis Bartok
A non-profit, viewer-supported cultural organization dedicated to the celebration of the moving picture in all its forms; publishes Cinegram newsletter.

AMERICAN FILM INSTITUTE
2021 N. Western Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90027
213-856-7600
FAX: 213-467-4578
Director: Jean Firstenberg

AFMA (AMERICAN FILM MARKETING ASSOCIATION)
10850 Wilshire Blvd., 9th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90024
310-446-1000
FAX: 310-446-1600
President: Jonas Rosenfield

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35 Avenue at 36 Street
Astoria, NY 11106
718-784-4520
FAX: 718-784-4681
Chief Curator of Film & Video: David Schwartz
Devoted to the art, history, promotion and technology of film, television and video.

BOXOFFICE MAGAZINE
6640 Sunset Blvd., Suite 100
Hollywood, CA 90028
213-465-1186
FAX: 213-465-5049
Editor-in-Chief: Ray Greene
Nat'l Ad Director: Bob Vale
Managing Editor: Kim Williamson
Senior Editor/Theatre Desk: Christine James
Associate Editor: Susan Lambert
Editorial Assistant: Linda Andrade
For 78 years and counting, BOXOFFICE has been the bible of the exhibition industry.

BOXOFFICE ONLINE
URL: http://www.boxoff.com
E-MAIL: boxoff@earthlink.net
Editor-in-Chief: Ray Greene
Nat'l Ad Director: Bob Vale
Managing Editor: Kim Williamson
Senior Editor/Theatre Desk: Christine James
Associate Editor: Susan Lambert
Editorial Assistant: Linda Andrade
Founded in June 1994, BOXOFFICE ONLINE is the oldest and most established website dedicated to the business of film.

CHICAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Corner of Clark and North Aves.
Chicago, IL 60614
312-642-4600
FAX: 312-266-2077

EARTH COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
12021 Wishire Blvd., Box 557
Los Angeles, CA 90025
310-656-0577
FAX: 310-656-1657
Chairman of the Board: Larry Kopald
Dedicated to serving the environmental communities by educating and inspiring the entertainment industries towards environmental action; provides PSAs to theatres.

ENVIRONMENTAL MEDIA ASSOCIATION
10780 Santa Monica Bl., Suite 205
Los Angeles, CA 90025
310-441-4EMA
FAX: 310-441-4FAX
Executive Director: Andy Goodman
Promotes awareness of environmental issues in the entertainment media.

FOUNDATION OF MOTION PICTURE PIONEERS, INC., THE
244 W. 49 St., Suite 200
New York, NY 10019
212-247-3178
FAX: 212-265-6428
A networking organization dedicated to the people and past of the movie medium. For the historically minded exhibitor, a priceless resource.

I.A.T.S.E. (INT'L ALLIANCE OF THEATRICAL STAGE EMPLOYEES)
1515 Broadway, Suite 601
New York, NY 10036
212-730-1770
FAX: 212-730-7809
Int'l President: Thomas C. Short
Labor union representing stagehands, technicians & craftpersons in the film, television and theatre industries.

INDEPENDENT FEATURE PROJE
104 West 29th St., 12th Floor
New York, NY 10001
212-465-8200
FAX: 212-465-8525
Executive Director: Michelle Byrd
Assistance to independent film projects. Publishes Filmmaker Magazine with IFP/West.

INDEPENDENT FEATURE PROJECT WEST
1964 Westwood Blvd., Ste 205
Los Angeles, CA 90025
310-441-5676
FAX: 310-475-4379
Director: Dawn Hudson
Co-publishes Filmmaker Magazine.

INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTAR ASSOCIATION
1551 S. Robertson, Suite 201
Los Angeles, CA 90035
310-284-8422
FAX: 310-785-9334
Executive Director: Betsy McLane
Promotes and supports non-fiction film and video. Publishes International Documentary magazine.

INTERNATIONAL THEATRE EQUIPMENT ASSOCIATION (ITE
(formerly THEATRE EQUIPMENT ASSOCIATION)
244 W. 49th Street, Suite 200
New York, NY 10019
212-246-6460
FAX: 212-265-6428
President: Ioan Allen

LEAGUE OF HISTORIC AMERIC THEATRES
34 Market Place, Ste 320
Baltimore, MD 21202
410-659-9533
FAX: 410-837-9664
Executive Director: TBA

TION PICTURE
OCIATION OF AMERICA
SHINGTON, D.C.
) Eye St., N.W.
hington, DC 20006
293-1966
.: 202-296-7410
ident: Jack Valenti

.IFORNIA:
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: 818-382-1798
'P: Bethlyn J. Hand
rman, Classification and
ating Administration:
ichard M. Mosk

TION PICTURE
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land, WA 98083
323-9456
: 206-823-2022
. Director: Bruce Gardner

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ago, IL 60601
236-3858
: 312-236-7809
dent: Norm Chesler
utive Dir.: Charles A. Winans
ctor of Communications:
isan Cross
e association; certification &
deo employee training aids,
iblications, regional seminars
annual trade show convention.

)ONAL ASSOCIATION OF
OUNT THEATRES
Greenville Ave., Suite 800
as, TX 75231
696-1644
214-369-9972
dent: Randy Hester

)ONAL ASSOCIATION OF
ATRE OWNERS (NATO)
Lankershim Blvd. Suite 340
h Hollywood, CA 91602
606-1778
818-506-0269
dent: William F. Kartozian
nd Exec. Director: Mary
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52-1093
310-657-4758

) OF GEORGIA
Box 18707
ta, GA 31126
55-8988

) OF IDAHO
Box T
Falls, ID 83301
34-2402
dent: Larry Roper

NATO OF KENTUCKY
P.O. Box 607
c/o Malco Theatres
Owensboro, KY 42302
502-683-2727
President: Don Burchett

NATO OF MARYLAND/VIRGINIA/ WASHINGTON, D.C.
P.O. Box 1830
Hampton, VA 23669-1830
757-722-5275
FAX: 757-722-5276
Executive Director: Jerome Gordon

NATO OF NEW YORK STATE
244 West 49th St., Suite 200
New York, NY 10019
212-246-6460
FAX: 212-265-6428
President: Jerry Siegel

NATO OF OHIO
1320 State Route 37 W.
Delaware, OH 43015
614-881-5541
FAX: 614-881-5390
President: Bill Duersen

NATO OF PENNSYLVANIA
111 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106
215-592-8326
FAX: 215-592-7061
President: H. Donald Busch

NATO OF WISCONSIN & UPPER MICHIGAN
759 N. Milwaukee St., Suite 421
Milwaukee, WI 53202
414-271-5935
FAX: 414-271-8819
President: Paul J. Rogers

MID-ATLANTIC NATO
P.O. Box 1830
Hampton, VA 23669-1830
757-722-5275
FAX: 757-722-5276
Executive Director: Jerome Gordon

PERMANENT CHARITIES COMMITTEE OF THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY
11132 Ventura Blvd., Suite 401
Studio City, CA 91604
818-760-7722
FAX: 818-760-7898

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614-387-4255
Director: George Brown
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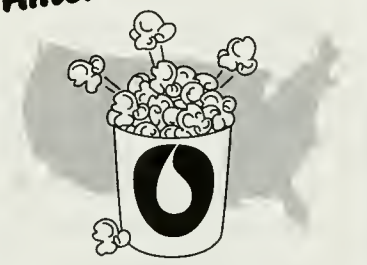
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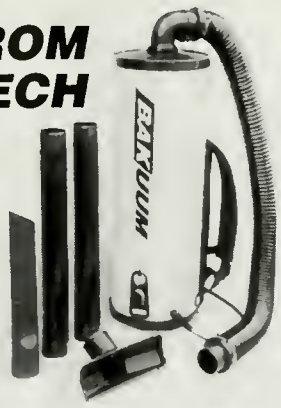
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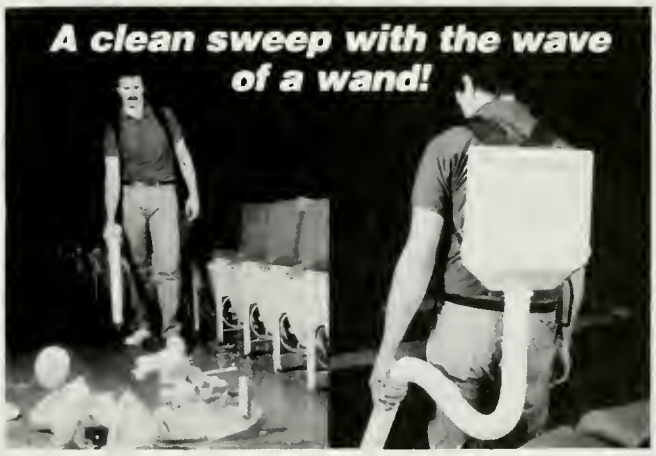
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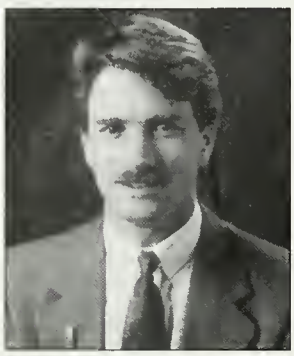
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"FROM WHERE I SIT..."

Our Forum For Readers Just Like You



SOUND 2001: THE FUTURE IS NOW

by Mark Mayfield

One would have to be living in a cave not to be aware that these are good times in the cinema industry. For those on the equipment side, these are also very challenging times. In the particular area of cinema sound, digital technology is a major impetus behind improvements in what moviegoers actually hear at their local multiplex. The most obvious case is the increasing conversion to one or more of the three digital sound formats (Dolby SR-D, DTS and SDDS). Digital technology is now also the standard in the pre- and post-production stages of the film industry, from the recording of production dialogue on DAT machines to sound editing on digital workstations.

The one link in the audio chain that might never become digital, however, is the last link: the loudspeakers. Because human hearing depends on being in the path of moving air molecules (sound waves), we still need to create that air movement in order to make sound. This is necessarily a physical/mechanical process and, until someone invents a digital brain interface (ouch!), the quality of sound we ultimately hear is dependent on how the loudspeaker systems convert the electrical signal to moving air molecules.

The primary improvements to sound quality that are created by digital processes are increased dynamic range, lower distortion, lower noise, and more channels. Performance advantages have removed many constraints faced by film soundtrack creators and mixers, because the limitations of optical and even magnetic sound do not exist with digital. The result: Soundtracks are becoming much more sophisticated in the subtle and sometimes not-so-subtle (think explosions) sounds that can be captured on the soundtrack. This makes the job of the loudspeaker system even more critical—and challenging.

The good news is that only the strong will survive; inferior equipment will quickly succumb to the demands of digital sound. The pervasiveness of digital soundtracks for feature films and the equipping of nearly 15,000 of the world's cinemas with the capability to play back digital has provided new motivation to increase research and development programs for advanced sound systems for motion picture sound mixing and playback. The aim of these R&D programs must to be provide systems that can take full advantage of everything that digital sound technology can offer to theatre exhibitors. In so doing, advanced cinema loudspeaker systems must provide the new "canvas" for sound artists to communicate their work to moviegoers, much the same way that new grades and formulations of film stock provide better color quality and clarity for the visual experience.

The good news is that only the strong will survive; inferior equipment will quickly succumb to the demands of digital sound.

Translating the benefits of digital soundtracks (increased dynamic range, lower distortion, lower noise, and more channels) into requirements for tomorrow's cinema sound systems requires a reexamination of every aspect of how sound is heard in the cinema. Dynamic range means the range from the quietest to the loudest section of the soundtrack—"from a whisper to a scream." It is important to note that this does not necessarily mean films will be played louder in theatres, although the higher dynamic range of digital does allow greater sound pressure levels to be delivered to the loudspeakers. The capability is often abused, and repeated abuse will lead to loudspeaker and hearing damage. This is not why digital sound is so great, and this is definitely not why loudspeaker manufacturers are developing improved systems. What is important is that the soundtrack and the loudspeaker system work together to allow the artist (director, sound editor, etc.) more freedom to create the sound environment that is necessary to support the film.

To be able to play back the additional dynamic range, a loudspeaker system requires sufficient "headroom." Headroom can be visualized as reserve power so that the system is not constantly working at its maximum. It is similar conceptually to driving a race car down a city street; it does not need to be driven at its maximum potential speed, and it is certainly not stressed at slower speeds. In sound system language, this means more amplifier power and speakers of higher power-handling capability. Because a system that has greater headroom is less often pushed to its limits, that system is also more reliable over many years of service in moviehouses.

Because the digital signal provided by the soundtrack is typically free from medium-induced distortion (such as tape saturation or optical overload), any distortion caused by the speaker system itself will become more noticeable. So an improved system for digital must also minimize distortion to fully translate the digital signal. The bad news is that distortion is inherent with any transducer (i.e., a device that converts energy from one form to another—electrical to acoustical, in the case of a loudspeaker), so the goal is to minimize it. The same is true with noise: Every electrical device in the signal path from the microphone to the loudspeaker induces some level of audible noise, but the medium itself provides a virtually noise-free transfer, so again the goal is to minimize it in the electronics associated with the loudspeaker system.

Digital soundtracks also offer the capability for more channels of sound, such as stereo or "split surrounds," or the addition of Left-Extra and Right-Extra screen channels with the eight-channel SDDS process. This new capability does not directly affect loudspeaker design as much as it affects the implementation of loudspeakers in the actual cinema.

To achieve the goal of designing a cinema loudspeaker system capable of delivering the potential of digital soundtracks requires reexamining conventional speaker system design—keeping what works and developing new approaches to exceed old limitations. Two-way speaker system design has been with us since the 1920s, and it has served well until the sound source (digital soundtracks) outstripped the two-way concept's ability to meet

ıe dynamic range, power handling and distortion levels of digi-l. As with other areas of pro-:ssional sound, the time has come) consider the three-way system ɔncept for cinema sound.

With a three-way system, the job of reproducing the entire audio spec-um is divided among three, in-tead of two, sections. Each ection now 'orks a little ess hard, so verall system eadroom can e increased, long with reater overall ystem reliabil-y. In addition, ach section can e optimized for hat part of the udio spectrum is reproduc-ıg—rather like iring a special-t for each job. more vivid nage is that of three-person triathlon team, 'here a swimmer, a runner and a yclist each contribute to the over-ll goal of the race, yet each is a pecialist in his event. With a ree-way system, each compo-ent is designed specifically for ɔw-, mid- or high-frequency udio reproduction, and the entire ystem faces far fewer compro-ises as a result.

Conceptually, the three-way ɔncept offers all of the necessary erformance advantages that digi-l soundtracks demand, but there ; the added complexity of two rossover points (the parts of the 'equency response at which the ɔw-frequency section stops 'orking and the midsection takes ver, and at which the mid-frequency section gives way to the high-frequency section). Also, the three different devices must be "time aligned" in the vertical plane so that signals from all three sections reach the listeners "in phase," or at the same time. Fortunately, digital technology provides a simply implemented solution for these and other system complexities. Because each system will be installed in a different cinema environment, and each cinema has its own acoustic characteristics, attention must be paid to the speaker/room interaction if the three-way system is to be fully optimized. All these functions (crossovers, time alignment and equalization) can be easily addressed using digital technology.

It is worth making the necessary investments [so] the improvements offered by digital sound can be realized.

There is no doubt that digital film sound technology places extra demands on the last remaining "analog" link in the audio chain. But it also offers amazingly powerful tools for getting the most out of tomorrow's cinema loudspeaker systems. For the future of our industry, it is worth making the necessary investments to make sure that the improvements offered by digital sound can be realized in movie theatres. This necessarily dictates a change in the way that we think about cinema sound—and a change in the way we implement sound in theatres.

Mark Mayfield was director of cinema marketing for Northridge, Calif.-based JBL Professional.

A NOTE TO OUR READERS: Our "From Where I Sit" section is designed to provide professionals working in the motion picture business and allied industries a forum for the free exchange of ideas. Think of it as a space in which you can unveil a new idea or approach, or discuss how traditional methods might best evolve as moviemaking and moviegoing enter their second century.

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September 1997

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★★★★ VERY GOOD
★★★ GOOD
★★ FAIR
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DAY AND DATE: SEPTEMBER 19

WIDE AWAKE ★★★

Starring Joseph Cross, Dana Delany, Denis Leary, Robert Loggia and Rosie O'Donnell. Directed and written by M. Night Shyamalan. Produced by Cary Woods and Cathy Konrad. A Miramax release. Comedy/drama. Rated PG for language and thematic elements. Running time: 88 min.

"My grandpa and me, we always watched out for each other," new fifth-grader Joshua (newcomer Joseph Cross) says by way of introducing this story about a young boy's coming of (religious) age. Raised in a contemporary but devout Catholic family, Joshua experiences a crisis of faith when dear Grandpa Beal (Robert Loggia, playing effectively against type) passes away; how could such misery happen if a supreme being exists? "I'm going on a mission," Joshua tells best friend Dave (Timothy Reifsnyder) at the Waldron Academy for boys. "What are you going to look for?" Dave asks. Joshua's reply: "God."



AWAKENINGS: *Joseph Cross and Rosie O'Donnell in Miramax's "Wide Awake."*

In a usually deft weaving of narrative and subnarratives, writer/director M. Night Shyamalan ("Praying With Anger") takes Joshua on a journey not commonly seen in today's cinema: one into faith. Divided into three chapters (The Questions, The Signs and The Answers) and featuring fine character turns from Dana Delany ("Exit to Eden") as Joshua's caring obstetrician mom, Denis Leary ("The Ref") as his concerned physician dad and Rosie O'Donnell (also "Exit to Eden") as a sports-loving nun, "Wide Awake" avoids most of the bathos (and his acting) that marred Shyamalan's "Praying With Anger," leaving more room for the filmmaker's dexterity with the simpler emotions. Fine family fare, "Wide Awake" still gives its theological concerns more than modest authenticity.

Yet "Wide Awake" hardly delves to Rilkean levels of religious discourse, the family's sure wealth works against the sense of crisis, and recurring appearances of an angelic little boy (Michael Craig Bigwood) are obvious in import. Yet "Wide Awake" profits from heartfelt and sensitive telling and from its structured symbolism; as Joshua interacts with people and nature, he advances toward his goal. Cross does a nice job, though the anguish delivered by Ciaran Fitzgerald in Mike Newell's "Into the West" seems beyond him (and Shyamalan); matters never get too uncomfortable. Still, in a moviemaking world dominated by attention to secular matters, the parochial "Wide Awake" is a refreshing change of pace.—***Kim Williamson***

FEST REVIEWS

FESTIVITIES

BOXOFFICE brings you critical coverage from across the seas

KARLOVY VARY

Outgoing European correspondent MELISSA MORRISON reports on the Karlovy Vary fest from Prague.

CHRISTMAS ORATORIO ★★

Starring Johan Widerberg and Lena Endre. Directed by Kjell-Ake Andersson. Written by Kjell Sundstedt and Kjell-Ake Andersson. Produced by Katinka Farago and Anita Hallgren. A Sandrews Film production; no stateside distributor set. Drama. Swedish-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 124 min. Won best actress prize (Lena Endre).

"Christmas Oratorio" ("Juloratoriet") takes some odd twists, most of them unconvincing, in its tale of a young family surviving the death of its mother. The title, for example, refers to the demanding Bach composition that Solveig (Julie Christie lookalike Lena Endre), a radiant mother and music lover, persuades her village choir to attempt. Solveig dies in a horrible accident before she can see the piece performed. Although the introduction of the "Christmas Oratorio" heralds a major metaphor if ever there was one, it isn't really touched upon again until the movie's final scene, when Solveig's grandson, now an eminent conductor, realizes her dream.

Instead, most of the film is devoted to the separate torments of Solveig's husband (Peter Haber), who strikes up an unlikely pen-pal romance with a New Zealand farm girl and who sees the ghost of his now mocking wife everywhere; and of her teenaged son, Sidner (Johan Widerberg), who is set upon by the town's silly middle-age seductress (Viveka Seldahl), who bears his love-child and drives Sidner to an asylum and...well, the plot gets even more convoluted, so it's probably best to leave it at that. The rest of the story—suicide, reconciliation, long journeys—sails along with the audience left scratching their heads back on the dock. An improbable conclusion is particularly stilted and odd.

The film has a chilly elegance as well as a deliberate "this is a drama" tone that make it hard to warm to, despite the beauty of its Swedish setting and the plaintiveness of actor Widerberg. It does, however, feature in a completely unironic role a legless man as a character who formerly worked as a human cannonball (Tomas von Bromssen), which gives the film a kind of distinction, though what exactly is hard to specify.

EAST SIDE STORY ★★★1/2

Directed by Dana Ranga. Written by Andrew Horn and Dana Ranga. Produced by Andrew Horn. A Kino Intl. release. Documentary. English, Russian and other languages; English subtitles. Unrated. Running time: 77 min.

Chorines in overalls, wheat-sheaving choreography, and lyrics like "Harvest, harvest! Our quota has been obtained!": Who'd have thought socialist culture could be so cheesy.

And so entertaining. With this Anda Films production, writer/producer Andrew Horn and co-writer/director Dana Ranga have unearthed some gems from the musical archives of the former Soviet Union, the former East Germany, the former Czechoslovakia and other

A LIFE IN REVIEW

Jesse Shlyen, Whose Work at BOXOFFICE *Always Merited Five Stars, Passes Away*

BOXOFFICE MAGAZINE lost a piece of its history with the recent passing of Jesse Shlyen at age 87. Jesse—who with our founder, his older brother Ben Shlyen, and our advertising consultant Morrie Schlozman formed the indispensable troika that built **BOXOFFICE** into the journalistic institution it is today—spent his entire working life with the magozine, rising up the ranks all the way to the Managing Editor's slot.



HATS OFF: *Jesse Shlyen.*

"Jessie Shlyen was not only a close friend," Morrie says. "We were like brothers. Jessie and I were teenage buddies, doing the town in my 1927 Essex. In 1931, during the Great Depression, when the company where I was working folded, it was Jessie who introduced me to Ben.

"Jessie was a loyal, kind friend, a great editor and writer, and a powerful force in the success of **BOXOFFICE**," Morrie says. "I shall never forget him."

Jesse's involvement with **BOXOFFICE** began with the very first issue, published more than 77 years ago when he was just 11 years old. The magazine was called The Reel Journal back then; it would be 13 more years before Ben Shlyen assembled the elements to take **BOXOFFICE** national, and the rechristening took place at that time. Jesse helped get the word out from day one; when Ben needed assistance delivering the premiere issue of his original exhibitor newsletter to the colorful inhabitants of Kansas City's film exchange (known as Film Row), Jesse hopped on his bike and delivered copies by hand.

The Shlyen family were exhibitors themselves, and Jesse learned about exhibition at their family-owned Maple Theater, where during his teenage years Jesse would serve variously as cashier, ticket taker, bill poster, popcorn vendor and publicist. The whole time, Jesse also held down regular duties at The Reel Journal, first as a print-shop worker and later as a staff writer.

From 1929 to 1932, Jesse was editor of The Reel Journal and contributed news from the Kansas City market. Brother Ben was off about the business of building a publication empire through the acquisition of various regional exhibitor newsletters, which were united under the **BOXOFFICE** name with the publication of our first national edition on May 4, 1933. By that point, Jesse had moved into the circulation department—a post later passed to Morrie Schlozman who, like Jesse, would wear many hats at the magazine. During Jesse's and Morrie's watch, **BOXOFFICE** rose to a position of pre-eminence, becoming the magazine with the largest verified circulation of any publication for exhibitors—a title it holds to this day.

Jesse's unprecedented run as managing editor began in 1936 and lasted more than four decades, right up until his retirement. It was interrupted only by two years of military service during World War II. His contributions to **BOXOFFICE** just cannot be calculated; his last appearance in our pages occurred in 1995, when he was a profile subject for an issue dedicated to the 75th anniversary of the first issue of The Reel Journal that Jesse had helped hand deliver.

It's fitting, then, that we pay tribute to Jesse in our 1997 Buyers' directory—the 59th annual edition of an industry classic that Jesse himself toiled to launch. Along with Ben and Morrie, Jesse helped light, tend and feed the flame of the torch that has been passed to those of us who work here today. What we hope it illuminates is that which Jesse was instrumental in bequeathing to us: the best, most timely, most entertaining and above all most informative publication for exhibition professionals available anywhere, at any price.

Sleep well, Jesse. Sleep well.—***Ray Greene***

Jesse Shlyen is survived by sons Sanford and Stephen, daughter Nancy Dorfman, sister Estaire Nelson, and grandson Brian Dorfman. Jesse's wife of 40 years, Bertha, died in 1980.

FEST REVIEWS: GALWAY, IRELAND

Incoming European correspondent TONY DEANE reports on the Galway fest from Ireland.

THE BUTCHER BOY ★★★★

Starring Eamonn Owens, Alan Boyle, Stephen Rea, Aisling O'Sullivan, Fiona Shaw, Brendan Gleeson and Ian Hart. Directed and produced by Neil Jordan. Written by Patrick McCable and Neil Jordan. A Warner Bros. release. Drama. Rated R for language and violence. Running time: 109 min.

This may be an Irish-made movie with local surroundings, but it could be set anywhere in the world. Based on a best-selling novel by Patrick McCabe, "The Butcher Boy" is set in a small Irish town in the 1960s. The cinema and radio are what keep the locals going, and young Francie Brady is no different than anyone else. A boy with a fertile imagination, he listens to the adults as they argue the ways of the world, in particular the Cuban missile crisis.

Coming from a dysfunctional family (his father is an alcoholic, his mother is a suicidal manic-depressive), Francie is closest to his school chum Joe. Life is best for him when they act out the cowboy and Indian games based on what they've read in comic books. Living with a drunken father and a mother who is forever preparing cakes for the imminent arrival of "Uncle Alo" from London does not deter the cheerful lad. Life gets cruel, however, and he loses his father, mother and friend, which leaves him insecure and threatened by his adult surroundings. In order to get his own back on the world, he takes his anger out on a snobbish neighbor who won't let her son play with him; the fact that she dresses in shock green makes him think she's like one of the aliens in his comics.

Neil Jordan's 10th film is an extraordinary piece of cinema. It features almost an entire Irish cast, including Stephen Rea as the father and Aisling O'Sullivan as the mother; pop singer Sinead O'Connor appears in the film's apparition sequences as the Virgin Mary. Perhaps the most astounding performer in the film is a youngster named Eamonn Owens, who plays the young boy. With no acting experience, he was picked from 2,000 other hopefuls for the part; Alan Boyle, who comes from the same school, plays his pal Joe to perfection. This film gives life to the screen, capturing an era long forgotten. And not only are the performances stunning; so is Jordan's direction, of the caliber that says "Oscar."

BOGWOMAN ★★★

Starring Peter Mullan and Sean McGinley. Directed and written by Tom Collins. Produced by Martha O'Neill and Tom Collins. A De Facto production; no stateside distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 80 min.

The Bogside in Derry, Northern Ireland is the setting for this striking movie about the women of the area known worldwide for "the troubles." The film goes a long way to explain the origins of the civil rights movement: The setting is right before Bloody Sunday, when many marchers for Irish freedom were shot by British troops.

A woman goes back to her old home in the country to see the last of it as it's being pulled down. Safe for the moment and away from the troubled place in which she now must live, she picks up a bulb from the ground to bring back home with her the feeling of having "roots."

A lot of the Irish question makes its way into the plot as the old woman tells her story; in between, the film shows different aspects of life up north. Well made and acted, "Bogwoman" is a strong look at the political situation and the human condition in Northern Ireland.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF FINBAR ★1/2

Starring Jonathan Rhys-Myers, Luke Griffin and Sean McGinley. Directed by Sue Clayton. Written by Sue Clayton and Dermot Bolger. Produced by Martin Bruce-Clayton, David Collins, Bertil Ohisson and Soren Staemose. A Samson production; no stateside distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated.

Young Finbar comes from a dilapidiated housing estate in the south of the city; his father had little success with his singing career, so he invests his energies into his son. The lad gets a chance at becoming a footballer and is given a hero's send-off by the community. Within a month, he's back. He calls on his friend Danny, who has always been there for him, and in a moment of self-pity Finbar falls from a bridge. Friends search for him, but there is no trace of a body. After months pass, a garbled phone call from Stockholm to Danny gives the first clue as to Finbar's whereabouts. Danny sets off to find him, meeting up with all sorts of eccentric characters who eventually lead him to Lapland, where he finds our hero.

For almost an hour, moviegoers are treated to the culture of Lapland and Stockholm. Yet this could have been a silent film; there is very little dialogue (most of what there is in Scandinavian languages and isn't subtitled, in any case), so audiences are left with little explanation why a local girl beds Danny while all the men in the village snigger. The film is beautiful, but there's so much of that beauty and so little going on plotwise that the movie almost disappears like Finbar. Luke Griffin as Danny holds the film together with his facial expressions, and Jonathan Rhys-Myers as Finbar lights up the screen with his presence. Except for that, however, "The Disappearance of Finbar" has little to keep patrons from making a similar exit.

parts of a world that no longer exists to make a documentary that manages to illuminate a fascinating corner of humanity while remaining witty fun.

Using film clips and interviews with the era's technicians and stars (including two identified as the Elvis and the Doris Day of the East), "East Side Story" shows how these musicals acted as both propaganda and escapism for their audiences. Despite the fact that the genre originated in Hollywood, Stalin, it turns out, was its biggest booster, supporting films that portrayed cheerful workers harmonizing about the good life, while in reality his purges were diminishing the flocks. Meanwhile, films like the 1958 East German hit "My Wife Wants to Sing," in which a Mrs. Cleaver-ish hausfrau becomes a glamorous performer, thrilled audiences while offending communist censors. The filmmakers parallel such movies with Hollywood's lush-life musicals of the Depression era, depicting a fantasy world when reality was anything but.

The best part of "East Side Story" is that it is copiously illustrated with kitschy excerpts from films such as "Tractor Drivers" (USSR, 1939), "I Don't Want to Marry" (Romania, 1961) and "No Cheating Darling" (East Germany, 1973), which give the documentary its humor and energy. Seeing a scene from East Germany's version of "Beach Blanket Bingo"—1968's "Hot Summer"—with its Frankie and Annette doppelgangers is kind of like climbing through the looking glass. It's this delicious sense of the bizarre that makes "East Side Story" as suited to a midnight-movie marquee as to an art-house.

FORGOTTEN LIGHT ★★1/2

Starring Boleslav Polivka and Veronika Zilkova. Directed by Vladimir Michalek. Written by Milena Jelinek. Produced by Alice Nemanska, Jana Tomsova and Ivana Kacirkova. A Studia Fama 92 production; no stateside distributor set. Drama. Czech-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 101 min. Won best actor (Boleslav Polivka) and an audience award.

The makers of "Forgotten Light" ("Zapomenute svetlo") deal with recent Czech past in this story of a beleaguered village priest and a small group of parishioners struggling to save their church in 1987, two years before the communists, with their repressive religious policies, fell. Considering its elements—a dying mother, a crisis of faith, plus a flood and some fire—the movie has surprisingly little power.

What it does have is a somber steadiness and a cohesiveness. It also has the calmly magnetic presence of Boleslav Polivka, who (in a best-actor-winning performance) plays denim-and-leather-clad Father Holy. The film touches on the issue of members of the Catholic hierarchy who collaborated with the communists. The film's making must be a release of sorts, given that its story couldn't be told even a decade ago. Still, the main question "Forgotten Light" raises is: Why this film now?

FESTIVAL REVIEWS

THE GOOD LIFE ★★★

Starring Fernando Ramallo and Lucia Jimenez. Directed and written by David Trueba. Produced by Ana Huete and Cristina Huete. A Fernando Trueba, Kaplan & Olmo Films production; no stateside distributor set. Drama. Spanish-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 108 min. Won a special jury prize.

A kind of Spanish "Wonder Years," "The Good Life" ("La buena vida") is about how 15-year-old Tristan (a very natural Fernando Ramallo) copes when both mortality and sex hit him in the face. When the film begins, he's just another smart-ass kid, good-humoredly recounting his parents' foibles (including his own conception the night Franco died) by inserting himself into the retelling. Then tragedy strikes: Tristan's parents are killed in a car accident. He is left with his doddering grandfather (Luis Cuenca), a sympathetic teacher (Isabell Otero) and a sexy firebug of a cousin (Lucia Jimenez) to comfort him.

In recounting the painful adjustments Tristan must make, the film manages not to wallow in the tragic, instead leavening the proceedings with realistic humor. It also manages the tricky act of putting Tristan's sexual explorations against such a woeful backdrop without trivializing the situation: he's grieving and trying to score at the same time.

That said, the film doesn't take its audience to any great heights, although it elicits a few lumps in the throat. Most of the time, "The Good Life" unreels in that comfort zone between close-to-the-bone truthfulness and too-clever artificiality. It's a relief for a filmgoer who doesn't want to be wrung dry, but it also leaves one with the nagging feeling that if it had taken a few risks it would have been harder to watch but a better film for the sacrifice.

LATE FULL MOON 1/2

Starring Icchak Finci and Nikolaj Urumov. Directed and written by Eduard Zachariev. Produced by Edi Yahariev. A Bulgarian National Television and Budapest Filmstudio production; no stateside distributor set. Drama. Bulgarian-language; French subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 120 min.

It's nice to hear a voice from Bulgaria, but did it have to be this film? "Late Full Moon" ("Zakasnialo palnolunie") examines the generational breach wrought by the fall of communism in Europe, leaving a Wild East of mafia capitalists among the young and deepening poverty among the old. The Old Man (Icchak Finci) is one of the latter. He tsk-tsks the shallow life of his son (Nikolaj Urumov): nude-model wife, thieving son, twittering cell phone. Soon he's spiraling into Sofia's dregs: first a prison-like old folks' home, then a garbage dump lorded over by a trash-palace Gypsy.

Some bad performances, jarring transitions, teen-age villains from the "Saved by the Bell" school of subtlety, a busload of old-people cliches and, finally, spelling mistakes in the French subtitles make "Late Full Moon" a tedious experience.

ORBIS PICTUS ★★★

Starring Dorotka Nvotova and Marian Labuda. Directed by Martin Sulik. Written by Martin Sulik, Marek Lescak and Ondrej Sulaj. Produced by Rudolf Biermann. An In Film production; no stateside distributor set. Drama. Slovak-language; French subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 105 min.

"Orbis Pictus" is inscrutable yet curiously satisfying. Sixteen-year-old Tereza (Dorotka Nvotova) leaves her wayward-girls home to find the mother who put her there. She tramps across Slovakia, ablaze in fall colors; as in a Middle Europe fairy tale, she suffers the perils of forest and city, meeting odd characters along the way.

An old woman buried to her neck in soil, a May-September couple celebrating their folk wedding, a distinguished man hiding in a restaurant kitchen: Their stories are nominally explained, but whatever they're meant to symbolize hovers above the scene like a ghost refusing to be acknowledged. Perhaps it's a parable of a girl facing precarious womanhood: Tereza's encounters have an undertone of sexual menace.

UNDER THE BRIDGE ★★1/2

Starring Damien Leake and Melissa Leo. Directed and written by Charles Weinstein. Produced by Charles Weinstein and Andy Clark. A Soho Partnership production; no stateside distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 90 min.

"Under the Bridge" might have seemed fresh a decade ago because of its from-within portrayal of a homeless community as well as its vivid, if romanticized, performances. Today, though, that's not enough.

The catalyst for looking at this particular collection of roof-challenged individuals is the appearance of Eddie, an eight-year-old runaway orphan who appears at their squat under New York's Williamsburg Bridge. He joins a familiar group: There's the black sage (Damien Leake); the junkie prostitute with fabulous hair (Melissa Leo); the crusty but kind-hearted overseer (Zach Grenier). The kid (Matthew Weathers) is cute but personality-free. It's easy to forecast the movie's plot: Junkies overdose, dreams are shattered, some people die, others get a shot at redemption. It's really not a bad story, just a too-familiar one.

FEST: MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

COURTING COURTNEY ★★★★

Starring Dana Gould, Eliza Coyle, Taylor Negron and Sean Masterson. Directed and written by Paul Tarantino. Produced by Hadeel Reda, Serge Rodnunsky and Paul Tarantino. A Toasted Films production; no stateside distributor set. Romantic comedy. Not yet rated. Running time: 84 min.

Perhaps the most original romantic comedy of its kind since "When Harry Met Sally...," this deceptively clever debut by writer/director Paul Tarantino (no relation to Quentin) emerges as both a genuine crowd-pleaser and a surprisingly poignant look at the chaos of modern courtship.



COURTERS: *Dana Gould and Eliza Coyle in Paul Tarantino's "Courting Courtney."*

An inventive faux documentary structure focuses on the ongoing romantic crises of 29-year-old Courtney Baker (Eliza Coyle) as recorded by her best friend and aspiring filmmaker Nick Hastings (Dana Gould). As Courtney finds herself on the verge of her 30th birthday and no closer to finding a suitable mate than when she and Nick were unsuccessful high school sweethearts, Nick looks for an explanation. Interviews with ex-boyfriends, family members, friends and acquaintances are interspersed with flashbacks and real-time intrusions into Courtney's private life, slowly and steadily building a portrait of romantic dysfunctionality as funny as it is touching. Episodes centering around a misfit singles support group and its less-than-ethical patron, Doctor Phelps (veteran comic Taylor Negron), are priceless.

Unlike such popular mockumentaries as "This Is Spinal Tap" and "Bob Roberts," however, "Courting Courtney" is neither cynical nor satirical. Even at their most bizarre, the emotions and relationships always ring true, a credit not only to Tarantino's writing but to an eclectic and able cast. Gould's breezy affability and Coyle's homespun charms anchor the picture solidly among such familiar comic faces as Kathy Griffin, Ryan Stiles, "Saturday Night Live" alum Julia Sweeney and Negron, who proves to be a scene-stealer. Technically, the film is similarly polished, exhibiting no traces of its rumored five-figure budget. Deftly edited and crisply photographed, "Courting Courtney" is currently seeking a stateside distributor, but European audiences in Holland and Belgium will see the film released, respectively, during this September and October.

Tarantino's skillful blending of unabashed honesty and romantic optimism is a feat that's almost as impressive as true love itself.—***Wade Major***

FESTIVAL REVIEWS

CANNES

A, B, C... MANHATTAN ★★1/2

Starring Lucy Knight and Erin Norris. Directed by Amir Naderi. Written by Ben Edlund and Jessica Gholke with Maryam Dalan, Tracy McMillan and Amir Naderi. Produced by Amir Naderi and William Rexer II. No stateside distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 90 min.

Iranian-born director Amir Naderi has set this film in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, where he now resides; its title comes from Avenues A, B and C. Its central characters are three young woman who share an apartment. Colleen (Lucy Knight) is a single mother and photographer. Kacey (Erin Norris) has lost both her boyfriend and girlfriend, but is most concerned with retrieving her pet dog. Kate (Sara Paul) is an aspiring musician who has come to New York to escape a troubled relationship.

"A, B, C... Manhattan" is most successful in establishing a vivid atmosphere of life on the edge. Naderi, who also edits, combines long takes with tight spaces to emphasize the constricted feeling of the characters and their lack of options. Not much happens in the thin screenplay, co-written by Naderi. For a large part of the film, people are "making time" in a neighborhood bar. The characters are dominated by the movie's setting, although Knight does convey Colleen's pain as she realizes she may have to give up her daughter.—*Ed Scheid*

THE BROTHER ★★★

Starring Serguei Bodorov, Viktor Soukhoroukov and Svetlana Pismitchenko. Directed and written by Alexei Balabanov. Produced by STW Film Co. No stateside distributor set. Drama. Russian-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 99 min.

"The Brother" ("Brat") is set in contemporary Russia, but both the story and style of the film have outside influences. Danila (Serguei Bodorov) returns home after serving two years in the army. Bored by small-town life, Danila decides to visit his older brother, who has a prosperous life in St. Petersburg. The brother has never given the details of how he's made his fortune, and Danila discovers that his brother (Viktor Soukhoroukov) is a contract killer for one of the city's mob factions.

Danila encounters the worst effects of Westernization. The mean streets of post-Soviet Union St. Petersburg are full of violence and drugs. He saves an old man from an extortionist and steals a gun. Urban Russian life is also dominated by American culture in less dangerous ways: Danila is constantly trying to find the latest CD of his favorite rock band and eventually attends one of their concerts.

Putting his military training to good use, Danila becomes a member of his brother's mob and is assigned to kill a rival gangster. He successfully carries out his assignment but ends up running for his life, although along the way he does find time for romance with both a pretty trolley conductor (Svetlana Pismitchenko) and a drug addict.

"The Brother" has the gritty look typical of Soviet films. But, like the events and details of the story, the style is influenced by American films. It's very fast-paced, with some last-minute escapes from danger. Bodorov, who played the young recruit in "Prisoner of the Mountains," again has a strong screen presence. In the end, the film is engrossing, but it doesn't take the time to go beneath the surface of its characterizations. And there's enough violence and gunfire for a Hollywood summer movie.—*Ed Scheid*

THE BRAVE ★1/2

Starring Johnny Depp, Marlon Brando, Marshall Bell, Elpidia Carrillo and Clarence Williams III. Directed by Johnny Depp. Written by Johnny Depp, D.P. Depp and Paul McCudden. Produced by Charles Evans Jr. and Carroll Kemp. No stateside distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 123 min.

As if the story of a man selling himself to a snuff production to help support his family weren't gruesome enough, a horrific murder/suicide involving the film's original director has long kept the "The Brave" atop Hollywood's "least wanted" list. Had a star of Johnny Depp's stature not entered the picture, it's likely the project would have remained stalled, and rightfully so.

As the film starts, a young Native American man named Raphael (Depp) walks, strolls and meanders his way through a Southwestern wasteland for a meeting with a mysterious, wheelchair-bound Mr. McCarthy (Marlon Brando). Down in the bowels of some kind of abandoned factory, McCarthy appears before him, rambles incoherently for several minutes about a "job," and then dismisses Raphael with a hefty "down payment."

Subsequent scenes focus on Raphael's relationship with wife and children, the abject poverty in which they live, and the friction created by his sudden and unexplained increase in wealth. Eventually, it becomes clear that this "job" involves sacrificing his life, although the notion that this is in the service of a snuff film is hinted at only in the vaguest possible terms.

As an exercise in how a wafer-thin concept can be stretched past the two-hour mark, "The Brave" is a resounding success. As an attempt at communicating a message about Native American poverty, it's a disaster. Shots of Depp walking, walking, walking, walking and walking obliterate any sense of pace or focus, instead serving only to prolong transition time between a handful of dialogue scenes that are neither interesting nor enlightening.

As credited co-writer, director and star, it's hard to lay blame for the film's failure on anyone but Depp, however harsh that verdict might seem. With protracted, lingering shots of himself in various states of distress peppered throughout the film, it would be easy to accuse Depp of narcissism if not for the fact that there's simply nothing else in the film worth photographing.

"The Brave" is still without an American distributor and is likely to remain so until its producers resign themselves to a lower asking price. At that time, the film will be able to move on and promptly find itself without an audience.—*Wade Major*

EAST PALACE, WEST PALACE ★★★1/2

Starring Si Han and Hu Jun. Directed and produced by Zhang Yuan. Written by Wang Xiaobo and Zhang Yuan. No stateside distributor set. Drama. Mandarin-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 94 min.

What kind of 50th-anniversary Cannes fest would it be if the Chinese failed to cause a brouhaha? Thanks to bad-boy filmmaker Zhang Yuan's gay-themed "East Palace, West Palace," no one will ever know.

So furious were the powers within the Chinese government with the film's inclusion in Un Certain Regard that Zhang's passport was confiscated and Zhang Yimou's "Keep Cool" was pulled from the competition. And yet, by comparison to the fest's other gay-themed Chinese film (Hong Kong filmmaker Wong Kar-Wai's "Happy Together"), "East Palace, West Palace" seems downright prudish.

What distinguishes "East Palace, West Palace" ultimately has less to do with its politics than its dramatics. Arguably the most compelling new Chinese film since the rise of the Fifth Generation, Zhang's mostly self-financed chamber piece is something of a small miracle, a film that makes an audacious frontal assault on traditional Chinese sensibilities and taboos even as it nevertheless clings steadfastly to a meticulous aesthetic tradition.

Focusing almost exclusively on a night-long conversation between a Tianenmen park police officer and a gay man he has detained for lewd conduct, "East Palace, West Palace" is structured as a mental tango, a dance of wits wherein deep inhibitions and hidden desires are methodically laid bare. As the gay A-Lan, actor Si Han creates a heart-rending portrait of a man wholly at peace with his lifestyle, despite the inevitability of persecution. Alternating ambiguously between episodes of torment and bliss, his "confession" unfolds like a mystery novel, drawing policeman Shi Xiaohua (Hu Jun) unwittingly into a carefully crafted emotional trap.

Had the film succeeded on a purely psychological level, it would be impressive enough. But Zhang extends his attention to detail to every aspect of the film's technical execution as well, marking a giant step forward from such earlier, rougher works as the notorious "Beijing Bastards." Whether or not Zhang will be allowed to continue making films, or under what conditions that might happen, remains to be seen. Either way, the mere existence of "East Palace, West Palace" bodes well not just for the future of Chinese filmmaking but for Chinese society itself.—*Wade Major*

FESTIVAL REVIEWS

HAPPY TOGETHER ★★

Starring Leslie Cheung and Tony Leung Chiu-Wai. Directed, written and produced by Wong Kar-Wai. A Kino release. Romance. Cantonese-, Mandarin- and Spanish-language; English subtitles. Unrated. Running time: 94 min. Won best director.

Yet another (over)extended rock video masquerading as an Asian art film from Hong Kong's shades-laden king of cool, Wong Kar-Wai's "Happy Together" is noteworthy for not much else than the casting of sex symbols Leslie Cheung ("Farewell My Concubine") and Tony Leung Chiu-Wai ("Chungking Express," "Hard-Boiled") as its story's gay lovers.

Shock value and the Cannes fest's best director prize aside, Wong's follow-up to the lavishly overpraised "Chungking Express" offers little in the way of stylistic or narrative progress, although it should please his core fans. As with previous efforts, Wong's "style" here consists primarily of random experimentation with film stocks, exposures, frame rates and other assorted laboratory tricks. Had such tinkering been in the service of a story! But a near-total absence of narrative very quickly makes even the most minute excesses in style almost unbearably tedious. As music and imagery splash, audiences are treated to nothing more exciting than boy meets boy, boy loses boy, boy gets boy back, boy loses boy, boy gets boy back, boy loses boy, *und so weiter.*

The affair isn't as tedious as it might have been, thanks primarily to a beguiling Argentinean setting, nicely photographed by Christopher Doyle whenever Wong's meddling is kept to a minimum. But such interludes are outnumbered by an endless parade of closeups revealing the lead actors in various states of angst and contemplation. By the time the credits roll to a blithe cover of the '60s rock ditty "Happy Together," audiences might not be so appreciative of the titular irony.—*Wade Major*

JOURNEY TO THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD ★★1/2

Starring Marcello Mastroianni, Jean Yves Gautier and Leonor Silveira. Directed and written by Manoel de Oliveira. Produced by Paulo Branco. No stateside distributor set. Drama. French- and Portuguese-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 93 min.

"Journey to the Beginning of the World" ("Viagem Ao Principio Do Mundo") contains the 171st film appearance by Marcello Mastroianni, notable because it's the last of his many memorable performances before his death in December of last year. Mastroianni's character here is very similar to Manoel de Oliveira, the film's 88-year-old writer/director. Both have the same profession, the same first name and wear a similar floppy-brimmed hat.

Alfonso (Jean Yves Gautier) is a French actor with a role in a Franco-Portuguese co-production. His dead father was from Portugal. He decides to visit his dad's home village and to meet a surviving aunt. Because Alfonso does not speak Portuguese, the film's director, Manoel (Mastroianni), and two other actors accompany him to translate. As their car drives through the rural roads, the sights trigger the director's reminiscences of his early life. At journey's end, the travelers find a village full of harsh conditions and unhappy memories.

Providing a depth the rest of the film lacks, Mastroianni's performance shows his remarkable range. He's full of charm while bantering with a young actress (Leonor Silveira); closeups show Mastroianni's face full of emotion and warmth as the director recalls events from his past. He even makes a face full of childish delight at a stuffed cat. But the main storyline, of the actor investigating his Portuguese roots, is too slight to maintain much interest when Mastroianni is not onscreen. Part of the reason is that the script doesn't develop the other characters on the journey, and much of de Oliveira's directorial style consists of a repetitious combination of conversations in the car and shots of the road as if viewed from the back window.—*Ed Scheid*

LA FEMME DEFENDUE ★★

Starring Isabelle Carre and Philippe Harel. Directed by Philippe Harel. Written by Eric Assous. Produced by Les Productions Lazennec. No stateside distributor set. Drama. French-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 102 min.

This film is a cinematic exercise on adultery in which the camera literally becomes the eyes of the man: Only his field of vision is seen on the screen. Francois (director Philippe Harel) is 39 and married. He has met the unmarried Muriel (Isabelle Carre), age 22, at a party. He persuades her to meet him at a bar. Later, they begin an affair.

Because "La Femme Defendue" is told from the man's point of view, Harel is only briefly seen reflected in a mirror. Most of the screen time focuses on Carre as her character speaks with her lover. She has a captivating presence, but not enough to sustain this film, which seems too drawn out at feature length. The dialogue is routine and without any insight, and the screenplay has too many repetitious scenes in which Francois persuades Muriel to continue the affair when she wants to end it.—*Ed Scheid*

POST COITUM: ANIMAL TRISTE ★★★1/2

Starring Brigitte Rouan, Patrick Chesnais, Boris Terral and Nils Tavernier. Directed by Brigitte Rouan. Written by Brigitte Rouan, Santiago Amigorena, Jean-Louis Richard, Guy Zilberstein and Philippe Le Guay. Produced by Humbert Balsan. No stateside distributor set. Drama. French-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 99 min.

This film's title is a quotation from the Roman poet Ovid about unhappiness following lovemaking; it's an apt expression of the movie's theme of a love affair's painful effects. Diane (director/co-writer Brigitte Rouan) is 40ish and comfortable in her relationships with her lawyer husband (Patrick Chesnais) and two teenage sons. She is a successful editor in a publishing house. Yet Diane begins an affair with Emilio (Boris Terral), a hydraulic engineer 20 years younger, and her overwhelming passion for Emilio starts to dominate her life—to the point she risks losing both her family and her career. She misses important meetings after she secretly brings Emilio along on a crucial business trip. Ironically, as her husband finds out about the affair, he is defending an old woman who killed her unfaithful husband with a dinner fork.

As in "Overseas," Rouan's previous acting/directing/co-writing effort, "Post Coitum: Animal Triste" develops a diverse group of characters. The script examines the effects Diane's affair has on people in her life, making the film more intriguing than are conventional films about romantic triangles that focus only on the lovers. Rouan's direction seamlessly combines a variety of moods that correspond to Diane's volatile emotional state, skillfully including an imaginative fantasy of the euphoric Diane as she begins her involvement with Emilio.

The film is dominated by the raw intensity of Rouan's performance. Rouan's unflinching camera reveals both Diane's intimate feelings as well as the hysteria that eventually develops as the affair ends. Rouan's efforts are also supported by a fine cast: Chesnais makes the husband a sympathetic figure who hopes his wife will return to the stability of her family, and Nils Tavernier is particularly good as a novelist who gets over his writer's block by fictionalizing Diane's story.—*Ed Scheid*

WESTERN ★★★1/2

Starring Sergi Lopez, Sacha Bourdo and Elisabeth Vitali. Directed by Manuel Poirier. Written by Manuel Poirier and Jean-Francois Goyet. Produced by Maurice Bernart. No stateside distributor set. Comedy. French-language; English subtitles. Running time: 136 min. Won a special jury prize.

Not a western, "Western" is a road movie set in western France. Owing to its clever script and slightly bittersweet tone, "Western" earned a special jury prize at Cannes. A story of two impossibly opposite men bonding, of love lost and friendship found, it takes a number of elements of American road movies and gives them a decidedly French twist.

A handsome, confident Spaniard named Paco (Sergi Lopez), and a shy, diminutive Russian, Nino (Sacha Bourdo), are each traveling through Brittany in search of love. With nothing in common, a chance encounter brings them together: Nino steals Paco's car. Looking for the unlikely thief, Paco finds love instead, in the form of Marinette (Elisabeth Vitali), a lovely antiques dealer. When she insists they take time apart to discover if their love is solid, a dejected Paco heads for the road again, again by chance encountering Nino—and his car. Despite their differences, they join forces and eventually become close, sharing bizarre meetings with, among others, an angry farmer, a pair of sexually liberated models, and a lusty single mother of eight.

FESTIVAL REVIEWS

The road movie is nothing new, as fans of Hope and Crosby know well. But what makes "Western" so uniquely French is its preoccupation with love, emotions and human psychology. Nonetheless, funny, touching, familiar yet original, "Western" seems like it could be a natural hit for stateside audiences.—*Lael Loewenstein*

THE SERPENT'S KISS ★★

Starring Ewan McGregor, Greta Scacchi, Pete Postlethwaite and Richard E. Grant. Directed by Philippe Rousselot. Written by Tim Rose Price. Produced by Robert Jones, John Battsek and Tim Rose Price. No stateside distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 110 min.

"The Serpent's Kiss" is the directorial debut of French cinematographer Philippe Rousselot, Oscar winner for "A River Runs Through It." In 1699, Meneer Chrome ("Trainspotting's" Ewan McGregor) is hired by Thomas Smithers ("The Lost World's" Pete Postlethwaite) to design an elaborate estate garden as a present for wife Juliana ("Emma's" Greta Scacchi). Bored by country solitude, she has little interest in husband or garden. Daughter Thea (Carmen Chaplin, Charlie's granddaughter) is so uncomfortable in the formal environment that her father believes she is disturbed.

Juliana's scheming cousin Lord Warburton ("Twelfth Night's" Richard E. Grant) is secretly using the garden to bankrupt Thomas, hoping that Juliana will turn her attentions to him. Nothing goes as planned; The garden is destroyed by storm, Juliana is attracted to the young Chrome, but Chrome is drawn to Thea.

The premise is similar to that of "The Draughtsman's Contract," but this film is more concerned with the feelings of its characters than was Greenaway's chilly tale. The theme of manipulation in "The Serpent's Kiss" is not original, but the film is made entertaining by the accomplished cast, particularly Scacchi, who is adept in whatever period her films are set, and she aptly conveys that her character is the one most constricted by the conventions of the time from revealing her emotions directly. Grant's flamboyance is always amusing. Also, the painterly images of the cast in 17th-century costumes in the unusual garden add to the film's visual appeal.—*Ed Scheid*

PREVIOUSLY REVIEWED: *AUGUST/SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER FILMS*

"Bandwagon" ★★★1/2: CFP, 9/12 ltd; see April 1997.
"Box of Moonlight" ★★1/2: Trimark, 8/1 LA, exp 8/22 & 8/29; see Nov. 1996.
"Career Girls" ★★★★: October, 8/8 NY/LA, 8/15 exp; see Aug. 1997.
"Coffy" ★★★: Kit Parker, 8/29 reissue; see May 28, 1973 issue.
"Deep Crimson" ★★★★: New Yorker, 10/8; see April 1997.
"The Delta" ★: Strand, 8/1 NY, 8/15 LA; see July 1997.
"Different for Girls" ★★: First Look, 9/12 NY/LA; see March 1997.
"Dogs" ★★: Phaedra, Aug. undated; see April 1997.
"The End of Violence" ★★★: MGM, 9/12; see Aug. 1997.
"Fast, Cheap & Out of Control" ★★★: Sony Classics, 10/3 NY/LA; see April 1997.
"Fire" ★★★1/2: Zeitgeist, 8/22 NY; see July 1997.
"The Full Monty" ★★★★: Fox Searchlight, 8/13 NY/LA, 8/29 exp; see April 1997.
"Going All the Way" ★★★: Gramercy, 9/19 ltd, 9/26 exp; see April 1997.
"Hamsun" ★★★1/2: First Run, 8/6 NY; see March 1997.
"The House of Yes" ★★★1/2: Miramax, 10/10 NY/LA; see April 1997.
"Hurricane Streets" ★★★: UA, 10/24; see April 1997.
"The Ice Storm" ★★1/2: Fox Searchlight, 9/26 NY, 10/3 exp; see July 1997.
"In a Strange City" ★★★1/2: Filmopolis, Sept. undated; see July 1996.
"In the Company of Men" ★★1/2: Sony Classics, 8/1 NY/LA; see Apr. 1997.
"Intimate Relations" ★★: Fox Searchlight, 9/5; see Sept. 1996.
"I Was a Jewish Sex Worker" ★★1/2: Greycat, 9/1 LA; see April 1997.
"Kicked in the Head" ★★: October, 9/12 NY/LA, 9/19 exp; see Aug. 1997.
"L.A. Confidential" ★★★1/2: Warner Bros., 9/19; see Aug. 1997.
"Lilies" ★: Turbulent Arts, 10/17 NY, 10/24 LA; see April 1997.
"Love Always" ★1/2: Legacy, 9/26 ltd; see April 1997.
"love jones" ★★★1/2: New Line, 8/8 reissue; see May 1997.
"Love Serenade" ★★1/2: Miramax, 8/1 exp; see Aug. 1996.
"Mimic" ★★1/2: Miramax, 8/22 wide; see Aug. 1997.
"Mon Homme" ★★★: Artificial Eye, 8/15 NY; see March 1997.
"Mouth to Mouth" ★★★1/2: Miramax, 9/5 NY/LA; see Sept. 1996.
"My Sex Life..." ★★★: Zeitgeist, 9/17 NY; see Aug. 1996.
"The Myth of Fingerprints" ★★★1/2: Sony Classics, 9/19 NY; see Apr. 1997.
"Nenette et Boni" ★★★: Strand, mid-Sept.; see April 1997.
"Omaha: the movie" ★★1/2: Movieworld, 9/26; see April 1996.
"Paperback Romance" ★★1/2: Goldwyn, 8/1 ltd; see May 1997.
"Parallel Sons" ★★★: Greycat, 10/10 NY; see May 1997.
"Self Made Hero" ★★★★: Strand, 9/26; see March 1997.
"Shall We Dance?" ★★★1/2: Miramax, 8/1 exp; see May 1997.
"She's So Lovely" ★★: Miramax, 8/15; see Aug. 1997.
"Sunday" ★★★★: CFP, 8/22 NY/LA; see July 1997.
"The Sweet Hereafter" ★★★★: Fine Line, 10/10; see Aug. 1997.
"Timeless" ★★★: Phaedra, Sept. undated; see April 1996.
"Trojan Eddie" ★★: Castle Hill, Sept. LA; see April 1997.

TORONTO

PORTRAITS CHINOIS ★★★★

Starring Helena Bonham Carter, Romane Bohringer and Jean-Claude Brialy. Directed by Martine Dugowson. Written by Martine Dugowson and Peter Chase. Produced by Georges Benayoun. No stateside distributor set. Drama. French-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 138 min.

A group of artistically inclined French friends fall in love and out of love in traditional romantic manner in "Portraits Chinois" ("Shadow Play"), but everything old here feels new again. Set in Paris (of course), "Portraits Chinois" is as intricately developed and lovingly crafted as the photos to which its title refers. It begins with a couple, English fashion designer Ada (Helena Bonham Carter) and screenwriter Paul (Jean Philippe Ecoffey) moving into a new home. They've been together for a while, but they're not really happy or communicating their dissatisfaction to each other. Guido (Sergio Castellito), Paul's writing partner, is having severe relationship problems but can only mope around Ada and Paul's kitchen. Enter Lise ("Mina Tannenbaum's" Romane Bohringer), an up-and-coming fashion designer who finds herself in the middle of Ada and Paul's marriage.

"Portraits Chinois" sounds like a glib Woody Allen film, but it cuts much deeper. Director/co-writer Martine Dugowson (also "Mina Tannenbaum") follows these four and their friends as they laugh, bicker and lie to each other—in short, as they live their lives of not-so-quiet desperation. She even allows the audience to hear her characters' thoughts, an effective device in that it allows the filmmaker to contradict the words that are coming from their mouths.

Her whole cast is excellent, but standouts are Bonham Carter (who, impressively, learned to speak fluent French for her role) as the somewhat cold Ada, and Castellito as the hilariously hapless Guido. Jean-Claude Brialy as Sandre, Ada's domineering fashion mentor, is also fine. With a sublime soundtrack (including the ubiquitous Leonard Cohen tune), "Portraits Chinois" contrasts romantic musical stereotypes with the less-than-flattering reality of people's ordinary love lives. But the movie allows for a smart and happy ending that nicely twists the fiction/reality conundrum of the cinema. Happiest of all should be those movie buffs who venture out to see this unheralded gem.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

SWANN ★

Starring Miranda Richardson, Brenda Fricker and Michael Ontkean. Directed by Anna Benson Gyles. Written by David Young. Produced by Ann Scott and Christina Jennings. No stateside distributor set. Mystery. Not yet rated. Running time: 96 min.

This tepid and innocuous story about a best-selling writer, Sarah Maloney ("Kansas City's" Miranda Richardson), who's

trying to pen a biography of Mary Swann, a murdered farm wife and obscure Canadian poet, has all the ingredients needed to be a clever little mystery. Unfortunately, the only real mystery is why anyone wanted to make "Swann" in the first place.

The drama, based on a novel by Carol Shields, should spring to life when Sarah comes to Canada to research her book and meets the last woman to see Mary Swann alive—the local librarian, Rose ("A Time to Kill's" Brenda Fricker). Rose distrusts Sarah's celebrity status, wishing to do her own modest tribute to the rural scribe. Yet nothing comic, or remotely dramatic, is done to develop and explore their competing purposes. It even remains unclear why Swann maintains such a haunting presence in their lives. Instead, contrived circumstances involving a jealous boyfriend (David Cubitt) and a potential romance for Sarah with the dimply Stephen (Michael Ontkean) clutter the film just so Sarah and Rose can reconcile, and Sarah can finally find herself.

Richardson gives the kind of pinched performance to which she's proved prone in dramas like "Dance With a Stranger" and "Damage" (as opposed to the expansiveness she displayed in the lighter "Enchanted April" and "The Evening Star"). Fricker, who usually displays a noble integrity, comes across here as merely earnest. Also, lacking dramatic tension to cover such faults, "Swann" allows audiences to see lapses of logic in its story. For example, when Sarah's house is broken into and her book materials are stolen, she doesn't call the police or set out on the culprit's trail; she decides she'd rather have intercourse with Stephen. And how many writers would find the theft of their work the perfect aphrodisiac?—*Kevin Courrier*

GONE, GONE, FOREVER GONE ★★

Starring Phuong Dung, Le Tuan Anh and Hoang Phuc. Directed by Ho Quang Minh. Written by Nguy Ngu and Ho Quang Minh. Produced by Tran Thanh Hung. No stateside distributor set. Drama. Vietnamese-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 85 min.

Vietnamese history is given the full treatment in this epic tale spanning the country's last 50 years, including its disastrous split before Vietnam was reunified. Two brothers whose lives were torn asunder by the war—one went to the North, one to the South—come together afterward through the good offices of their sister, a Buddhist nun.

"Gone, Gone, Forever Gone" is a beautifully shot movie, with much emphasis on the changes of the seasons and Vietnam's natural beauty, but the film doesn't have much impact. Whether it's because of a low budget or director/co-scripter Ho Quang Minh's deficiencies as a filmmaker, the delineation of different time periods in the story is never very clear. Nor are the film's many flashbacks deftly inserted into the structure. What characterizations there are in "Gone, Gone, Forever Gone" are perfunctory at best. Reverence for history is fine, but this dry movie needs more flesh and blood.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

STRANGLED LIVES ★★

Starring Vincent Linden, Sabrina Ferilli and Luca Zingaretti. Directed by Ricky Tognazzi. Written by Simona Izzo, Graziana Diana and Gniseppe Manfridi. Produced by Vittorio Cecchi Gori and Rita Cecchi Gori. No stateside distributor set. Thriller. Italian-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 108 min.

"Strangled Lives" is a thriller that aims to equal the work of the great Francesco Rosi ("The Mattei Affair," "Illustrious Corpses"), but it's a slick, empty work. The film concerns Francesco (Vincent Linden), an architect running his late father-in-law's construction firm who's besieged by financial and personnel problems at work. Despite the doubts of his loving wife, Miriam (Sabrina Ferilli), he is cajoled by an old acquaintance, Sergio (Luca Zingaretti), into involving him in the family business, a decision that becomes potentially fatal when Sergio's evil nature is revealed.

Director Ricky Tognazzi and his scripting trio might have serious concerns about the corruption infecting virtually every aspect of Italian life, but "Strangled Lives'" melodramatic approach to its subject doesn't make for gripping drama. And a subplot involving Sergio's designs on Miriam borders on the exploitative. In the end, the film seems well made but strangles itself, leaving no lasting traces. It's the perfect murder.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

SPECIAL FORMATS

THRILL RIDE—THE SCIENCE OF FUN ★★

Narrated by Harry Shearer. Directed by Ben Stassen. Produced by Charlotte Huggins. A Sony Classics release. Documentary. Rated G. Running time: 38 min.
Format: IMAX.

Opening with a bang, "Thrill Ride—The Science of Fun" takes viewers on an animated, hair-raising ride through a dark, falling-down mineshaft using computer-generated imagery to bring to life the hard turns and tummy-pitching sensations of a real roller coaster. Despite this colorful and highly imaginative intro, the rest of this New Wave International production fails to provide the same momentum.

The film opens by documenting the history of roller coasters from their origin in Paris in 1804 to the peak of the rides' fame at the turn of the century to today's daredevil amusement park diversions. By mounting cameras on both the front and back of a coaster, director Ben Stassen allows viewers to vicariously experience the same sensations as those aboard, queasy stomachs and all. But the real focuses of Stassen, a CGI expert, are the history of ride simulators, starting with their development by NASA and the military, and the ways computer-generated imagery is used to create special effects in film. To demonstrate, "Thrill Ride" uses footage from popular ride films "Secrets of the Lost Temple," "The Devil's Mine Ride" and "Asteroid Adventure."

Although the overall affect of these simulated rides is pretty close to the experience of the "real thing," the thrill of a CGI ride still can't compare to plunging down a roller coaster's steep wooden track, wind in your face, and hearing the clacking of the rails and the sighs of straining wood beneath you. Given the film's concerted attentions to the technical aspects of today's "virtual reality" rides and ride films, "Thrill Ride" doesn't quite earn the E-ticket status it promises.—***Pat Kramer***

ALASKA: SPIRIT OF THE WILD ★★★1/2

Narrated by Charlton Heston. Directed by George Casey. Written by George Casey and Mose Richards. Produced by George Casey and Paul Novros. Narrated by Charlton Heston. A Graphic Films Corp. release. Documentary. Unrated. Running time: 40 min.
Format: IMAX.

"Alaska: Spirit of the Wild" is the latest IMAX film by the celebrated team of George Casey, a three-time Oscar-nominated director ("Africa: The Serengeti," "Ring of Fire") and Paul Novros, who shares production credits with Casey on the former and several other critically acclaimed IMAX-format films ("The Great Barrier Reef," "Planet Ocean").

Like their many other colorful, in-depth films, "Alaska" provides a wealth of intriguing footage celebrating and unveiling the mystique surrounding the rugged territory. At the same time, it pays homage to Alaska's native inhabitants and the scores of settlers who lost their lives trying to tame this wild land where extreme weather conditions, glaciers and impassable mountain ranges dominate the landscape.

"Alaska" is a beautiful movie. In one scene, a herd of stampeding caribou fly over the camera in a shot for which director of photography Rodney Taylor literally risked his life. Other scenes depict close-up footage of great walls of ice, a hundred or more feet in height, splintering away from a massive motherlode and violently exploding into the ocean. In yet others, the camera travels over woodlands and rivers, perilously close to the sides of approaching mountains. Best of all, though, are the closeups of Alaska's most numerous residents—its wildlife—with captivating shots of polar bear, black bear, sea lions, wolves, moose, caribou and (just offshore) humpback whales. The film provides the excitement "Thrill Ride—The Science of Fun" should have.—***Pat Kramer***

FLASHBACK: *AUGUST 17, 1946*
What BOXOFFICE *said about...*

THE BIG SLEEP

[The latest noir entry, "L.A. Confidential," comes from the studio that released this mystery on August 31, 1946. Here's what BOXOFFICE *had to say.]*



Fast-moving murder mystery without time for a yawn, except the title. It's Bogart from action start to gun-blazing finish, with excellent support from Lauren Bacall and all others of the cast. Plenty of high-wire suspense and unexpected situations that call for nail-nibbling or chair-arm twisting. Bogart is a two-fisted, many-gunned private detective who meets the strange Sternwood family, and odd events pop off like firecrackers as he tries to solve the difficulties of two charming but erratic daughters. Toss in half a dozen assorted murders, flavor well with realistic fistics, stir with revolvers, automatics and tommyguns, and you've got a first-rate thriller. Excellently produced and directed by Howard Hawks, with equal plaudits to Sid Hickox for photography. Highly recommended for fans who like their whodunits highly seasoned, and for those troubled with somnolence. Starring Humphrey Bogart, Lauren Bacall, John Ridgely, Martha Vickers, Dorothy Malone, Peggy Knudsen and Regis Toomey.

SELLING ANGLES:

Outstanding bet is more plugging of the established names of Bogart and Bacall on marquees, on fronts and in lobbies. Here's another bookstore tie-in with a sales drive for Raymond Chandler's novels and similar murder mysteries. As blackmail features in the plot, use mailing lists in various ways. Get cooperation of photo stores, as a camera plays a big part in the story. Furniture stores could cooperate with bed displays in windows.

CATCHLINES:

Don't Be Found Asleep When Bogart and Bacall Are in Town...The Show With a Sock and a Kiss...'Snews of The Big Snooze...When the Latchstring Doesn't Mean Welcome...Putting All the Yeggs in One Basket.

Riddled With Red Lead and Peppered With Hot Shot...Bigger, Better, Bogart, Bacall...Mystery History of a Strange Family...Trading Slugs and Socks for Love...Solving Sudden Death With a Punch.

REVIEWS

BEAN ★★★1/2

Starring Rowan Atkinson, Peter MacNicol, Harris Yulin, Pamela Reed and Burt Reynolds. Directed by Mel Smith. Written by Richard Curtis, Robin Driscoll and Rowan Atkinson. Produced by Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner and Peter Bennett-Jones. A Gramercy release. Comedy. Not yet rated. Running time: 80 min. Opens 10/17.

Mr. Bean, deftly played and created by British thesp Rowan Atkinson, and his antics are at home on PBS in the States, but globally they know no bounds. For most people around the world, just mention the name "Bean" and you hear instant laughter. His 30-minute sketches—in which he usually wreaks havoc on just about anyone, leaving a trail of chaos behind him—are prime-time fare. "Bean" marks his full-feature debut. It was indeed a task to transform his TV character into a full-fledged, three-dimensional personage, but the finished product is well worth seeing—it's an incredibly entertaining piece of comic mayhem.

The story: Bean, never without his true-friend teddy, is the most inept and detested employee at the British Royal National Gallery; the staff can't wait to dump him. When a rich benefactor (Burt Reynolds) donates $50,000,000 to the Grierson Gallery of California to bring America's greatest painting, "Whistler's Mother," back home, the Brits see their chance. The folks at the Royal National are asked to send their finest academician to oversee travel proceedings. They decide to send not their greatest scholar but the abhorred Bean in their desperate hope of getting rid of him forever. Within days of arriving in Los Angeles, Bean has almost totally destroyed the marriage, career and life of his host. Then the gallery's chairman (Harris Yulin) leaves Bean alone in the room with the painting—another disastrous scenario.

"Bean" is truly a gag-a-minute film, even if a few of those border on the sophomoric. Thanks to Atkinson's ability to weave true emotion into his character, the audience senses that underneath that sadistic and egomaniacal shell Mr. Bean does have real feelings. Watch his eyes: When he's told that he's nothing but a klutz and everything is his fault, one can feel only compassion.

The film earlier opened in Holland and Australia to fantastic results, and much of the world followed this summer; it finally reaches American screens on October 17. None too soon: "Bean" is a clever mixture of slapstick, British humor and L.A. sunshine. In the end, after almost ruining everybody's life—and then ultimately saving the day—and with teddy safe at home, Bean cruises down Sunset Boulevard (the Randy Newman ditty "I Love L.A." blaring in the background), savoring every moment. What more could you wish for the man? Well, how about a sequel?—*PKay Krieg*

BREAKING UP ★★★

Starring Russell Crowe and Salma Hayek. Directed by Robert Greenwald. Written by Michael Cristofer. Produced by Robert Greenwald and George Moffly. A Warner Bros. release. Romantic comedy. Rated R for language and sexuality. Running time: 89 min. Screened at the Seattle fest. Opens 9/26 NY/LA/Tor.

Steve and Monica fall into a love so fulfilling that he stops smoking and she no longer watches her weight. But wait a minute: If this relationship is so great, why is Steve ("L.A. Confidential's" Russell Crowe) gasping for air and Monica ("Fools Rush In's" Salma Hayek) feeling so burdened? Therein lies the contradiction that comprises "Breaking Up," the story of an affair that—depending on the hour—is so perfect it's doomed or so terrible it works. As Monica says, "It's a failure, but it's ours."

Written by Michael Cristofer ("The Witches of Eastwick"),"Breaking Up" is constructed like a patchwork quilt, with a variety of vignettes sewn together into a multi-textured conglomerate of ideas and emotions. Some scenes are pithy monologues in which a character discusses Freud directly with the audience. In others, notably a funny segment at Monica's gym, the movie evokes sketch comedy found on late-night TV. Director Robert Greenwald is adept with each of his film's ambiences and able to bundle diverse scenes into a continuous story. Overall, he employs tight shots and cramped sets to create a sense of claustrophobia that reflects Steve and Monica's relationship as it progresses through several years of breakups and makeups.

In addition, Steve, a photographer, and Monica, a teacher, are "Breaking Up's" only characters, which means Crowe and Hayek must double-handedly carry the entire film. For the most part, they're up to the

REVIEWS

ask. From the moment Steve meets Monca, the pair's attraction seems genuine, and both characters conduct themselves like eal people, even when their dialogue suggests acting more than living. This New Regency acquisition is a good movie, but it doesn't have enough zingy lines or story nnovations to rise above the level of prootypical romantic comedy. Steve and Monca can't live with or without each other, but noviegoers in search of chuckles and romantic insight can take or leave this inematic coupling.—*Ian Hodder*

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF GARCIA LORCA ★★1/2

Starring Andy Garcia, Esai Morales, eroen Krabbe, Marcela Walerstein, Giancarlo Giannini and Edward James Olmos. Directed by Marcos Zurinaga. Written by Marcos Zurinaga & Juan Antonio Ramos and Neil Cohen. Produced by Marcos Zurinaga, Moctesuma Esparza nd Robert Katz. A Sony Pictures release. Drama. Rated R for bloody violence and a cene of sexuality. Running time: 108 min. Opens 9/12 NY/LA.

Films in which political intrigue is played or political commentary and not for narrative xcitement are among the most difficult to nake successful. The last great political film nay have been 1969's "Z"; though it's in that radition, "The Disappearance of Garcia orca" (aka "Lorca," "Death in Granada" and Blood of a Poet") is only modestly effective.



LORCA-LIKE: *Andy Garcia.*

ased on two Ian Gibson books about the olitical killing of the Spanish poet Garcia orca, the film boasts a number of interestg characterizations and some compelling cting. But it has two themes—the inhuanity of fascism, and relationship of faer to son—and, paired together, the two ake an incongruent mix.

Filmmaker Marcos Zurinaga ("Tango") early is passionate about his subject, but rhaps too much. At key moments, his hite-hatted characters declaim more than eak; their fervency forestalls audience npathy against the blackguards, and an fputting score is simple-minded in its suport. On the positive side, most of the play- s give interesting rhythms to their aracters that overcome the freneticism of e film's tendency toward back-and-forng in time.—*Kim Williamson*

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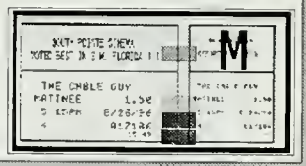
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A SMILE LIKE YOURS ★1/2

Starring Greg Kinnear, Lauren Holly, Joan Cusack, Jay Thomas and Jill Hennessy. Directed by Keith Samples. Written by Keith Samples and Kevin Meyer. Produced by David Kirkpatrick and Tony Amatullo. A Paramount release. Romantic comedy. Rated R for sex-related material (rating being appealed to CARA board). Running time: 93 min. Screened at the American Film Market.

Former Rysher head and veteran producer Keith Samples ("2 Days in the Valley," "The Evening Star") makes a forgettable writing/directing debut with "A Smile Like Yours," a mostly formulaic romantic comedy that's neither romantic enough nor comedic enough to sustain much interest in an already tired premise. Greg Kinnear and Lauren Holly star as Danny and Jennifer Robertson, a blissfully happy couple with everything any blissfully happy couple could want—except children. After much unsuccessful effort, they finally seek professional help and discover that Danny suffers from "lazy swimmers." An obstacle course of humiliating fertility therapies ensues, introducing elements of stress and strife into the once blissfully happy relationship that eventually threaten to tear it asunder. In the end, of course, the difficulties are ironed out and the Robertsons become blissfully happy once more.

Engaging supporting turns by Jay Thomas and Joan Cusack as the obligatory buddies/confidants and Jill Hennessy as the "almost other woman" make up somewhat for the lackluster leads, but the film still suffers under the hefty weight of its own self-importance. The movie seems all too blithely positive that there's something on the subject of having babies that a decade's worth of baby-boomer "baby" movies hasn't already drilled into the ground.

What ultimately discredits the entire premise of the film, however, has more to do with the sheer contrivance of its plot, which assumes that two such blissfully happy people would still choose to keep secrets from each other, even when their

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REVIEWS

blissful happiness gives them no legitimat cause to do so. Family planning clinics, o the other hand, are likely to find the film useful tool in discouraging people fror having children altogether, much less get ting married, lest they turn out like th Robertsons.—*Wade Major*

COP LAND ★★★

Starring Sylvester Stallone, Ra Liotta, Harvey Keitel, Michael Rapa port, Annabella Sciorra and Robert D Niro. Directed and written by Jame Mangold. Produced by Cary Woods an Cathy Kourad. A Miramax release Drama. Rated R for violence, strong lan guage and brief nudity.

Combining big-city cop intrigue wit small-town routine, this latest from filmma ker James Mangold ("Heavy") satisfies th palates of those craving a drama withou special effects, aliens or explosions but wit story and characters. Although the cast con tent here suggests major tough-guy actio is on hand, the reality is that the players roles are pretty much equal; no one receive superstar treatment, which might be a dis appointment for other audiences (specific ally, the male action demo).

The setting is a small New Jersey bur that has become a new hometown for number of NYPD officers. Garrison's she riff (Sylvester Stallone) is half-deaf, slow moving (because of his waistline girth) an very passive. Stallone, who gained 4 pounds for the role, isn't his usual tone action hunk, but nonetheless as the Sherif of Copland he once again is the law.

The story focuses on a cop ("Metro's" Mi chael Rapaport), an alleged shooting, a ca crash and the deaths of two people. Then i quick order come a suicide, lies, coverup jealousies and missed opportunities in thi story about exposing a burg full of corru people sharing a large secret. In the end, th quiet sheriff must decide between his friend or doing what is right.—*Dwayne E. Leslie*

G.I. JANE ★★1/2

Starring Demi Moore, Viggo Mortense and Anne Bancroft. Directed by Ridle Scott. Written by David Twohy. Produce by Ridley Scott, Roger Birnbaum, Dem Moore and Suzanne Todd. A Buena Vist release. Drama. Rated R for language an combat violence. Running time: 125 min

Aka "In Pursuit of Honor," "G.I. Jane bursts off the screen with a take-no-prison ers opening: At a Senate hearing, a Nav honcho is grilled by a tough Texas senato (Anne Bancroft); moments later, the scen has switched to deep-in-the-bowels nava intelligence headquarters, with officer Lt Jordan O'Neil (Demi Moore) going out o a limb to suggest alternate strategy to ge some Seals safely home. The work of direc tor Ridley Scott and scripter David Twoh is by the numbers but forcefully presented

Would that the midsection of "G.I. Jane be as forceful. It's certainly as by the num bers: O'Neil becomes the senator's pet proj ect as the first female candidate for th

REVIEWS

Navy's elite Seals. Scenes of her training—climb the ropes, crawl the ground—are just what audiences might expect, if higher than usual on the machismo level; so is the reaction of her male mates, as evidenced by her tough boot-camp commandant (Viggo Mortensen). Yet it's not till the narrative takes an odd byway—the unstoppable O'Neil suddenly folds when phony charges of fraternization with non-elisted women (i.e., lesbian activity) arise, and the senator's supposedly true nature is revealed—that "G.I. Jane" becomes just plain bad; both the senator's and O'Neil's decisions come out of nowhere.

Fortunately, the narrative resuscitates when O'Neil goes on her first mission in a finale that would have been even more rousing had it been more believable (the body counts on the two warring sides is hardly balanced, with the "bad" guys—Arabs, of course—apparently unable to shoot straight even at close range). Still, what gives this Caravan/Scott Free/Moving Pictures production its power for contemporary audiences is its straight-from-the-headlines attentions to the question of women in the military, and on this Scott & co. are right on target.—*Kim Williamson*

DEF JAM'S HOW TO BE A PLAYER ★★1/2

Starring Bill Bellamy, Natalie Desselle, Mari Morrow and Pierre. Directed by Lionel C. Martin. Written by Mark Brown and Deetria Johnson. Produced by Mark Burg, Todd Baker, Russell Simmons, Preston Holmes and Stan Lathan. A Granery release. Comedy. Rated R for strong sexual content and language.

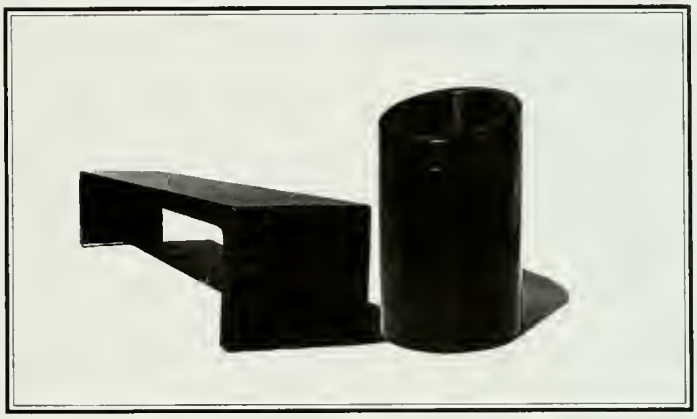
In a time in which monogamy is used as a spelling bee word, "Def Jam's How to Be a Player" isn't going to have a lot of people openly praising the movie in mixed company. A person just saying he liked it could be enough to spark agitated discussions: The title refers to someone who has one main mate and yet intimately socializes with several others; a Player knows when to say the right things and when to bluff. For date-night moviegoers, one of the film's target demos, the best strategy might be to cheer for the same gender as one's companion.

Sensitized because she was dropped like a bad habit by her boyfriend, Jenny ("B.A.P.S.") Natalie Desselle) targets her brother Dray (Bill Bellamy, best known from cable's "MTV Jams"), who she feels is a womanizer who treats his women like whores. She concocts a scheme to put a kink in his game(plan). With the help of her friend Katrina ("Virtuosity's" Mari Morrow), she hacks his organizer's access code and proceeds to invite Dray's multiracial collection of femmes to the same party, with the aim of creating a hostile environment that will make this Player repent and be reborn.

Ballamy plays Dray in a way that isn't likely to seem overly offensive, thanks to knowing nods to the audience. A supporting cast humorously blend in their characters to make the tale's multiple scenarios flow. One who perpetrates Playerism (Pierre) and two

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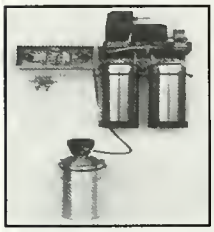
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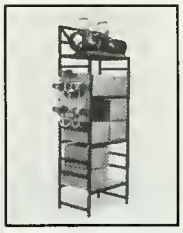
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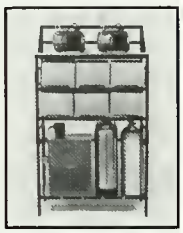


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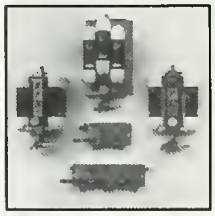




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learning to be Players (A.J. Johnson and Jermaine Big Hugg Hopkins) are comically depicted. The film is funny and of course appeals more to men, but women who've done a little Playing themselves will enjoy it just as much as the ones who want Dray to be caught.—*Dwayne E. Leslie*

TALK OF ANGELS ★★★

Starring Polly Walker, Frances McDormand, Vincent Perez and Franco Nero. Directed by Nick Hamm. Written by Ann Guedes & Frank McGuinness. Produced by Patrick Cassavetti. A Miramax release. Romance. Rated PG for some politically motivated violence. Running time: 97 min.

If Miramax learned one thing from "The English Patient," it was that romance and war make compelling cinematic bedfellows (a lesson that seemed to have become lost since the days of "Gone With the Wind," "Doctor Zhivago" and "The Sound of Music"). Unfortunately for the brothers Weinstein, the formula doesn't work to that extent in "Talk of Angels." Lovingly adapted by Ann Guedes and Frank McGuinness from Kate O'Brien's novel "Mary Lavelle" and ably directed by veteran West End stage director Nick Hamm, "Talk of Angels" is an undeniably beautiful and often seductive tale of colliding cultural sensibilities and ferocious passions, all set to the backdrop of an impending Spanish Civil War. Sadly, the passions depicted on-screen are fairly tepid ones, playing more like a dime novel than the meaningful epic the filmmakers intended.

Its notion of a reserved English-speaking woman liberated by Latin passions is nothing new to the movies. In this instance, though, the Polly Walker/Vincent Perez pairing doesn't quite click. At times, the filmmakers almost seem to expect the sheer beauty of the two actors to substitute for chemistry. What ultimately salvages the film from mediocrity is nothing less than the craft of its execution, a credit to first-time helmer Hamm and an excellent supporting cast that includes Frances McDormand ("Fargo") as one of Mary's fellow Irish governesses.—*Wade Major*

PICTURE PERFECT ★★

Starring Jennifer Aniston, Kevin Bacon, Jay Mohr and Illeana Douglas. Directed by Glenn Gordon Caron. Written by Arlene Sorkin, Paul Slansky and Glenn Gordon Caron. Produced by Erwin Stoff. A Fox release. Romantic comedy. Rated PG-13 for sensuality and related dialogue. Running time: 102 min.

Jennifer Aniston ("She's the One") stars in this slight and contrived romantic comedy as Kate, an ambitious advertising executive who in order to "dress the part" lets her bosses believe she is engaged to a random man in a photo, Nick ("Jerry Maguire's" Jay Mohr), that she met only briefly at a friend's wedding. Having the fictitional fiance wins her a promotion, but Kate's bosses want to meet the man. Kate persuades Nick to help her out of her predicament. Nick, who's been looking for a excuse to see Kate again, is glad to oblige

The actors share a few cute moments and try to make the most of obvious situations The script has interesting comments t make about the expectations people plac on love, marriage and commitment, but fails to follow through; its structure disinte grates just at the point when it should tak off, when Kate faces actually wanting to b with Nick, now against the wishes of he bosses. Of course, the problem here as wit most romantic comedies is that there is ver little to draw these two people togethe Particularly, Nick has many more reasons t dislike Kate than to like her. Yet it's easy t forgive these movies, given enough funn sidekicks, interesting situations and cleve lines—all of which, unfortunately, "Pictur Perfect" has too few.—*Susan Lambert*

SPAWN ★★★

Starring Michael Jai White, John Leguizamo, Theresa Randle, D.B Sweeney and Martin Sheen. Directed by Mark A.Z. Dippe. Written by Alan McElroy. Produced by Clint Goldman A New Line release. SF/action. Rated PG-13 for thematic elements involving the demonic underworld, violence, in tense fantasy action and crude humor Running time: 95 min.

"Spawn" opens with a spectacular se quence that creates a living comic book lik no other, and issues a warning: All roads lea to heaven or hell, depending on ones' choice life is the test. Twisted between his ow slowly remembered nature and the fantasti powers of the Devil Malebolgia is blac superhero Spawn, played by Michael Ja White ("City of Industry"). Once human, nov a creature born from hell to do its bidding Spawn can't be what he was (human) yet can be what he was created to be (evil).

"Spawn" is the feature version of a mega successful comic book series (also calle "Spawn") created by writer/artist Tod McFarlane. The screen "Spawn" terrorize its namesake/hero less than the comic serie (a rough cut was edited after getting an R rating for pervasive violent content an menace), slows down some character reve lations and is less literal a translation tha the HBO series. Yet it delivers a satisfyin rendition of the comic's essence, as super naturals battle to destroy or protect mortals

The movie belongs to Jai White, whos eyes, voice and movements lock the audienc into his heart and struggle. Playing Clown, a agent of the Devil, John Leguizamo ("Rome and Juliet") delights by delivering wickedl funny lines throughout and moving nimbl despite a heavy costume. A Dippe Goldma Williams production, "Spawn" uses 375 visua effects shots to create a dark and comple world. Those effects are well integrated an cleverly active; the best, if too sparingly used is Spawn in the kinetic red cape of his ful costume. Also good are church and city sets What're missing are pieces of story logic and clear climax, but perhaps the latter holds prom ise of more to come.—*Karen Achenbach*

REVIEWS

187 ★★

Starring Samuel L. Jackson, Kelly Rowan and John Heard. Directed by Kevin Reynolds. Written by Scott Yagemann. Produced by Bruce Davey and Steve McEveety. A Warner Bros. release. Drama. Rated R for violence, strong language, drug usage and brief nudity. Running time: 120 min.

There have been several good teacher/bad student films in the past few years, standouts among them "Dangerous Minds" and "The Substitute." This drama isn't quite in that class. In "187" (the California penal code for murder), Trevor (Samuel L. Jackson) is a teacher whose career is changed by a student attack. After recovery, he returns as a substitute at a different school—a school that has metal detectors and a disrespectful student body. In genre tradition, he is assigned to the worst class on campus. When the rules don't work, he decides that extreme discipline is needed.

Written by a former teacher (Scott Yagemann) for seven years in the Los Angeles public school system, "187" shows evidence of all-too-real-life events and built-up frustrations. Though filled with insights, the film's episodic nature means "187" falls short: Its intent seems to be to leave beneficial impressions on a school-age audience, but it makes its points too intellectually. It's a pyrrhic victory, benefiting the high-minded filmmakers but leaving the audience a casualty.—*Dwayne E. Leslie*

THE WINNER ★★★

Starring Vincent D'Onofrio, Rebecca DeMornay, Delroy Lindo and Michael Madsen. Directed by Alex Cox. Written by Wendy Riss. Produced by Kenneth Schwenker. A Live release. Drama. Rated R for strong language, along with some violence and sexuality. Running time: 90 min.

Quirky and stylish, "The Winner" is yet another entry in the neo-noir genre. What distinguishes it from its brethren is its emphasis on character and leisurely pacing, rather than a labyrinthine plot or visual pyrotechnics. It's a highly stylized film; making the most of its Vegas locations, it nonetheless makes the city look unreal. Philip ("The Whole Wide World's" Vincent D'Onofrio), the story's man on a winning streak, lives in a so-new-it's-raw housing development, creepy in its suburban banality. It's not a vision of Las Vegas audiences have seen before. The strong cast—all character actors par excellence—breathe life into nightlife types that could easily have been cliches.

D'Onofrio is fine playing a man so decent and unassuming he seems like a dimwit, and Rebecca DeMornay makes a compelling lowlife. In the last act, "The Winner" takes an odd left turn into surrealism, a move that perhaps played better on stage (the film is based on Wendy Riss' play). Still, the movie is well worth a look for its coherent and original vision of the American obsession with luck, glamor, riches, violence and true love.—*Cathy Thompson-Georges*

GOOD BURGER ★★★1/2

Starring Kenan Thompson, Kel Mitchel, Abe Vigoda and Sinbad. Directed by Brian Robbins. Written by Dan Schneider and Kevin Kopelow & Heath Seifert. Produced by Mike Tollin and Brian Robbins. A Paramount release. Comedy. Rated PG for language, some comic violence and mild sex-related humor. Running time: 95 min.

"Good Burger" is fat with laughs, good for your heart, and the film introduction of cable network Nickelodeon's two most popular young stars: Kenan Thompson and Kel Mitchel (of "All That" and "Kenan & Kel"), a sensational comedy duo the likes of which haven't been seen since Abbott and Costello. As directed by Brian Robbins, in big, bright close-ups, Kenan and Kel breathe heart and soul into this tale of virtue winning over all, and false friendship becoming real.

Presented in association with Nickelodeon Movies, "Good Burger," a Tollin/Robbins production, is a tasty serving of quality family fare. Jokes are built on Ed's wild leaps of mind: When offered a bribe, "How does $10 sound?", Ed crinkles a tenspot to his ear. Tender moments with Shaquille O'Neal and an exceptional dance sequence with George Clinton stand out, and the score jams. —*Karen Achenbach*

AIR FORCE ONE ★★1/2

Starring Harrison Ford, Gary Oldman, Wendy Crewson, William H. Macy and Glenn Close. Directed by Wolfgang Petersen. Written by Andrew W. Marlowe. Produced by Wolfgang Petersen, Gail Katz, Armyan Bernstein and Jon Shestack. A Columbia release. Action. Rated R for violence. Running time: 120 min.

Yet another tired "Die Hard" rehash wrapped around a ridiculous premise, "Air Force One" nevertheless stays aloft for the better part of its two-hour running time thanks to the diversionary skills of director Wolfgang Petersen ("In the Line of Fire") and some superb acting from Harrison Ford. In the end, however, as is increasingly the case with Hollywood action pictures, credibility is stretched too thin for even the best of talents to salvage this story of an American president (Ford) hijacked by terrorists led by the usual genre psycho ("The Fifth Element's" Gary Oldman).

Although the interior of Air Force One might not exactly compare to his World War II "Das Boot" U-boat, Petersen does manage to sustain the film's suspense and intensity well beyond what its premise merits. Ford, likewise, appears so believably presidential that even fistfuls of action-film cliches start to seem fresh. But Oldman adds another over-acted villain to his c.v., with temperamental exclamations of "Shaaaht aahp!" and repeated lectures on the lost glory of "Maaahther Raaahsia" verging on comedy. Also, as the film winds to a close, claustrophobic tension once again gives way to overblown digital effects and outlandish set pieces enough to make Ford yearn for the calmer days aboard the Millennium Falcon.—*Wade Major*

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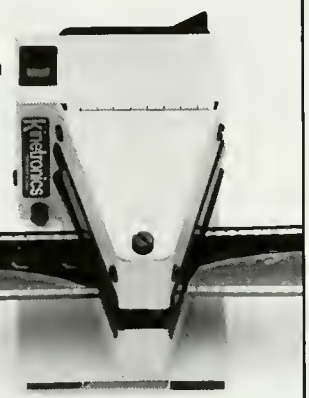
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REVIEW BRIEFS

THE LONG WAY HOME ★★★

Narrated by Morgan Freeman. Directed and written by Mark Jonathan Harris. Produced by Rabbi Marvin Hier and Richard Trank. A Seventh Arts release. Documentary. Not yet rated. Running time: 120 min. Opens 9/19.

Time and again in this documentary about the fate of displaced European Jewry in the post-World War II years, odd but moving images appear: marriages in Bergen-Belsen, the former Nazi concentration camp; Jews being placed in Allied camps surrounded by all-too-familiar barbed wire and guard houses; the gaunt and near-dead Nazi victims newly rescued from the likes of Dachau turning their backs on their emancipators, the better to avoid their looks of horror.

Although the driving spirit of the Jewish people 50 years ago and of this Mark Jonathan Harris film—to have their own homeland in Palestine—might in current application suggest to an answer to today's Palestinian question that reaches beyond the intent here, "The Long Way Home" is a finely made effort recalling the struggles of the Jewish people in their second Exodus era. The footage, from film libraries worldwide, is well edited together; the simplicity of Harris' script and Morgan Freeman's narration is effectively conceived.—***Kim Williamson***

GRAVESEND ★1/2

Starring Michael Parducci and Tony Tucci. Directed and written by Salvatore Stabile. Produced by Toni Ross, Mark Ross and Daniel Edelman. A Manga release. Action/drama. Rated R for violence, drug content and strong language throughout. Run time: 85 min. Opens 9/5 NY, late Sept. LA.

Boys boys guns guns blah blah. (Or how to get the audience to want your protagonists dead.) "Gravesend" is more proof that improvising, like jet piloting, takes skill, and that a gun is what the brain-dead clutch in lieu of thinking.

In this action/drama, presented by Oliver Stone, four intolerable characters with no mental or emotional equipment try to handle serious problems. Mackey Aquilino ("Donnie Brasco") as JoJo the Junkie is as authentic as the locations, and emotional satisfaction is provided via exceptionally real scenes—all, however, involving supporting characters. And there is a moment in a car with its radio on (Louis Armstrong singing "It's a Wonderful World") where moviegoers will wish even one characters had Arm-strong's class or intelligence. But these humans are like xeraxes of xeroxes: The stuff is gone.—***Karen Achenbach***

SOUL IN THE HOLE ★★★1/2

Directed by Danielle Gardner. Produced by Lilibet Foster. A Northern Arts release. Documentary. Unrated. Running time: 90 min. Opens 8/8 NY, widens Sept.

A deeply involving look at the raucous inner-city subculture of in-your-face street basketball, Danielle Gardner's wonderful feature-length documentary "Soul in the Hole" is a passionate piece of work that will engross people with no interest in Division I athletics or the NBA. The film follows the fortunes of the Kenny's Kings team, based in Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood, as the players defend their championship reputation against challengers from all over New York City during the long hot summer of 1993. More than just a chronicle of wins, losses and breathtaking plays, "Soul in the Hole" captures the gritty spirit of the game and carnival atmosphere of the tournaments.—***Alex Albanese***

ANTHEM ★★★★

With Hunter S. Thompson, George Stephanopoulos and Robert Redford. Directed, written and produced by Shainee Gabel and Kristin Hahn. A Zeitgeist release. Documentary. Unrated. Running time: 124 min.

Francis Ford Coppola once said that he dreamed of a world in which every person who wanted it had access to simple and affordable moviemaking equipment,

REVIEWS

STAR MAPS ★1/2

Starring Douglas Spain, Efrain Figueroa, Kandeyce Jorden, Martha Velez and Lysa Flores. Directed and written by Miguel Arteta. Produced by Matthew Greenfield. A Fox Searchlight release. Drama. Rated R for strong sexuality and language, and for violence. Running time: 87 min.

Douglas Spain stars as Carlos, a young Hispanic man who returns to his family in L.A. determined to be a star after working as an actor in Mexico. Despite the protests of his sweet sister Maria (Lysa Flores), Carlos goes to work for his manipulative father, Pepe (Efrain Figueroa), a pimp to a group of young men who sell star maps on the streets as a front for prostitution. Carlos has kinky sex with both Johns and Janes, hoping his dad will reward him with help getting into show business. When Carlos on his own gets a break from a smitten actress/customer (Kandeyce Jorden), who's determined to put him on her TV show, an all-out war with Pepe ensues.

First-time filmmaker Miguel Arteta seeks profundity in Carlos' quest to become an actor and escape his brutal dad, but their emotional confrontations don't engage the audience. What's worse is that the director seems to want his film to be topical, funny, shocking and sweet, all at the same time; Arteta should have stuck to Carlos' grittier story instead of taking excursions into other terrain.—*Carole Glines*

OPERATION CONDOR ★★★★

Starring Jackie Chan, Carol Cheng, Eva Cobo De Garcia and Shoko Ikeda. Directed by Jackie Chan. Written by Jackie Chan and Edward Tang. Produced by Leonard Ho. A Dimension/Miramax release. Action/adventure. Rated PG-13 for martial arts action and some shootings, and for sensuality. Running time: 89 min.

The third time's the charm for Jackie Chan ("Rumble in the Bronx"): His latest import sports nonstop fun and madcap mayhem. Miramax's Dimension label has done a good job of tightening the original 1991 Hong Kong film (entitled "Armor of God II: Operation Condor"). The sequel has little to do with the original 1987 "Armor of God" (which Jackie Chan also directed and starred in) except for the leading character: Jackie (code name: Condor), a globe-trotting Chinese Indiana Jones/James Bond.

"Operation Condor" is one of the best Chan movies and the first Chan-directed film to be released in America. Most importantly, Dimension has made sure to secure a PG-13 rating (as opposed to the R rating given to both New Line's "Rumble in the Bronx" and "Supercop"), thus expanding the movie audience to include those in America who might most appreciate Chan's blend of goofy humor and endless action: young teenagers.

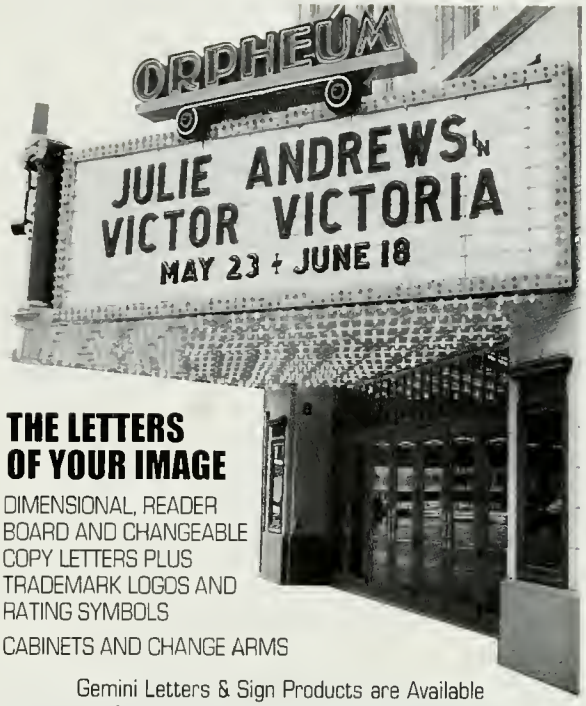
By Chan standards, the story is straightforward and solid, if simple and often silly. Yet any Chan film is really just an excuse for extended chase sequences and spectacular fight scenes that highlight Chan's physical prowess and comic timing, and Chan's high action/comedy hijinks are in top form here.—*Susan Lambert*

KISS ME GUIDO ★★1/2

Starring Nick Scotti and Anthony Barrile. Directed and written by Tony Vitale. Produced by Ira Deutchman and Christine Vachon. A Paramount release. Comedy. Rated R for sexuality and strong language. Running time: 89 min.

The premise has potential: In dire need of rent money, Warren (Anthony Barrile) advertises for a GWM (Gay White Male) to share his apartment. Homophobic Frankie (Nick Scotti) answers the ad, thinking GWM means Guy With Money, and comedic consternations ensue.

The film's intent is to show how the fundamentally opposite roommates learn from one another and grow in the process, but the comic possibilities of this construct are barely explored. (The similar "Maybe...Maybe Not" exploited this culture-clash concept overlapping the two protagonists' worlds more.) Frankie isn't exposed to enough of Warren's friends, family or pastimes, and vice versa, to fully demonstrate the wide differences between the unlikely roomies.



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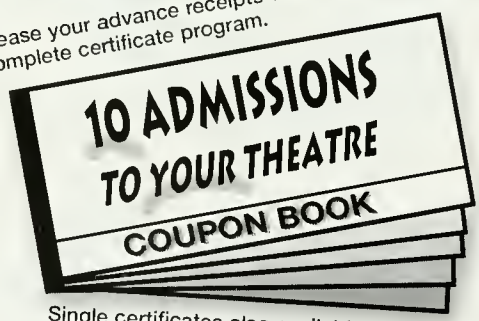
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REVIEW BRIEFS

which would ultimately spawn an exciting new wave of filmmaker. Thus, a film like Shainee Gabel and Kristin Hahn's stunning documentary "Anthem," shot on videotape by two young women with a dream and a tank of gas.

Their quest: to chronicle what is and what has become of the "American Dream." Having stabbed at the core of today's American psyche through interviews with dozens of people ranging in influence from waitress to White House aide, they pour out a complex study of the loss of pride and dignity in America, and the burning desire by people of all walks of life for authentic heroes and valiant political leadership.

The film is weakened by never-ending editorials by the filmmakers. Nevertheless, "Anthem" stands as a vital and unique testament to the vigor and scope of the American way of life; this is the rare kind of film that should be placed in a time capsule for future generations so they might have a better appreciation of our moment in history.—***Jon Alon Walz***

THE LAST TIME I COMMITTED SUICIDE ★1/2

Starring Thomas Jane, Keanu Reeves and Claire Forlani. Directed and written by Stephen Kay. Produced by Edward Bates and Louise Rosner. A Roxie release. Drama. Rated R for sexuality. Running time: 93 min.

Based on a letter by would-be poet Neal Cassady (Thomas Jane) to writer Jack Kerouac in the 1950s, an elliptical screenplay by writer/director Stephen Kay ("Intimate Power") follows Cassady through several nights of revelry as he romances a suicidal young woman ("Basquiat's" Claire Forlani) and hangs with his buddy (Keanu Reeves) at a Denver pool hall, getting drunk and gabbing endlessly about anything.

The existential angst and restlessness of the 1950s Beat generation are not conveyed with any dramatic impact or perception in this Kushner-Locke/Tapestry production, which tries to make art out of shallowness and vocuity. For all his well-meaning intentions, Kay fails to grasp the spiritual malaise and rebellion of the lifestyle.—***Dale Winogura***

TETSUO II: BODY HAMMER ★★★

Starring Tomoroh Taguchi, Nobu Kanaoka and Shinya Tsukamato. Directed and written by Shinya Tsukamoto. Produced by Fuminori Shishido and Fumio Kurokawa. A Manga release. SF. Japanese-language; English subtitles. Unrated. Run time: 83 min.

Writer/director/DP/art director/editor Shinya Tsukamoto also co-stars in his aptly named film ("Tetsu" = iron; "o" = man) about humans who transform themselves into metal (here, guns). In this 1991 Toshiba EMI/Kaiyju production, a reworking of Tsukamoto's 1989 "Tetsuo: Iron Man" (same cast and concept, different plot and setting), mutant skinheads chase a Japanese salaryman (punk music superstar Tomoroh Taguchi) through dark, fragmented shots—stunning for making Tokyo appear empty as well as for posing small human bodies against the infinite webs of glass and steel that cities have become.

Color gels add to the visual effect, as does Chu Ishikawa's punk-industrial score. But interest in the story doesn't really penetrate until the movie's final third, when numerous plot revelations up the tempo.—***Karen Achenbach***

SUDDEN MANHATTAN ★★★

Starring Adrienne Shelly, Louise Lasser and Tim Guinec. Directed and written by Adrienne Shelly. Produced by Marcia Kirkley. A Phaedra release. Comedy. Unrated. Time: 80 min.

The sweetly dippy and bonkers "Sudden Manhattan" details the descent of a lonely young New Yorker (writer/director Adrienne Shelly) into existential madness with offbeat humor and gentle strangeness. Although the influences of Hal Hartley, Woody Allen, Roman Polanski and David Lynch are obvious, Shelly's daffy comic

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Scotti's performance as Frankie carries the movie, adding most of the film's humor as the literal and figurative straight man. He manages to make sympathetic and charming his character of the homophobic yet otherwise (mostly) virtuous "guido" (a derogatory term for gold-chain-wearing, brashly mannered, style-impaired Italian-Americans who venerate machismo). Like the premise, first-time writer/director Tony Vitale also has potential—if he increases the adventuresome aspects of his ideas.—*Christine James*

NOTHING TO LOSE ★★1/2

Starring Tim Robbins, Martin Lawrence, John C. McGinley, Giancarlo Esposito and Kelly Preston. Directed and written by Steve Oedekerk. Produced by Martin Bregman, Dan Jinks and Michael Bregman. A Buena Vista release. Comedy. Rated R for pervasive strong language and a sex scene. Running time: 98 min.

This Touchstone effort doesn't exactly recapture the golden formula of such previous mismatched interracial buddy pictures as "48HRS.," "Trading Places" and the "Lethal Weapon" series, but it does manage to maintain a hapless charm of its own that, although often clumsy and unfocused, should please fans of its two male leads.

Tim Robbins ("The Shawshank Redemption") stars as Nick Beam, a Los Angeles advertising executive whose happy married life comes to a crashing halt when he comes to believe that his wife ("Jerry Maguire's" Kelly Preston) is having an affair with his boss ("That Darn Cat's" Michael KcKean). Before he can complete a downward spiral into suicidal despair, he becomes the victim of carjacker T. Paul ("A Thin Line Between Love and Hate's" Martin Lawrence). Having literally "nothing to lose," Nick turns the tables on his attacker, taking the man on a journey of comic terror.

As buddy pictures go, "Nothing to Lose" is one of the more obvious ones, with hardly an original or inventive twist to be found. Thanks to the comic chemistry between Robbins and Lawrence, the damage is minimal. Like a modern-day Laurel and Hardy, Robbins offers droll understatement while Lawrence effects manic outbursts. For writer/director Steve Oedekerk, the film is a middling success: a monumental step up from his last effort as a hyphenate, "Ace Ventura: When Nature Calls," yet well shy of the more balanced resonance of his winning "The Nutty Professor" script.—*Wade Major*

CONTACT ★★★1/2

Starring Jodie Foster, Matthew McConaughey and Tom Skerritt. Directed by Robert Zemeckis. Written by James V. Hart and Michael Goldenberg. Produced by Robert Zemeckis and Steve Starkey. A Warner Bros. release. SF/drama. Rated PG for some intense action, mild language and a scene of sensuality. Running time: 150 min.

"Contact" connects, thanks to an intelligent script by Michael Goldenberg ("Bed of Roses") and James V. Hart (adapting from the Carl Sagan novel) and a strong performance from Jodie Foster as Ellie, a driven scientist who has devoted her life to searching the airwaves for signals from space. It's not "ID4"/"MIB" movie fare; there are no slime-gushing assassinations and only one explosion. The film's dramatic elements and its philosophic rather than pyrotechnic nature, along with its spanning of the sci-fi, drama, comedy, romance, suspense/thriller and fantasy/adventure genres, make the latest from Robert Zemeckis ("Forrest Gump") a sci-fier for sophisticated audiences.

One day, miraculously, Ellie's efforts pay off: There is a signal from space. Even as mayhem results among the masses, out of Ellie's past steps Palmer Joss ("A Time to Kill's" Matthew McConaughey, occasionally too charming), an easygoing spiritualist who's now the president's religious adviser. Aside from his role as the love interest, the point of Palmer's character seems to be to draw a parallel between the spiritual and the scientific, though the results are not entirely successful.

Unlike so many other alien-themed movies, "Contact" doesn't disappoint (at least not entirely) with regard to provid-

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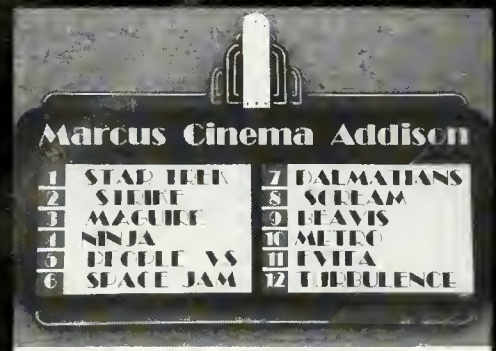
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REVIEW BRIEFS

fantasia has its own unique voice and rhythm, at once bizarre and playful.

The polished style and breezy pace of Shelly's promising debut prevent any arty pretensions from seeping in, and so does her delightfully unaffected narration. "Sudden Manhattan" is a weird yet oddly endearing surreal adventure.—***Dale Winogura***

HIJACKING HOLLYWOOD ★★1/2

Starring Henry Thomas and Scott Thompson. Directed and produced by Neil Mandt. Written by Neil Mandt and Jim Rossow. A Curb release. Comedy. Unrated. Running time: 92 min.

A breezy, amusing little Hollywood satire, "Hijacking Hollywood" eventually burdens itself with expository dialogue the actors aren't equipped to handle. But writer/director/actor Neil Mandt sustains a brisk pace for the most part with some biting and sophisticated humor and astute perceptions on the movie racket.

Resourcefully made on a low budget, "Hijacking Hollywood" allows Mandt to rib the L.A. lifestyle and the movie business broadly at times, but there are enough funny observations.—***Dale Winogura***

LIKE A BRIDE ★★★1/2

Stars Claudette Maille and Maya Mishalska. Directed by Guita Schyfter. Written by Hugo Hirlart. Produced by Tita Lombardo. An Atara release. Drama. Spanish- and Ladino-language; English subtitles. Unrated. Running time: 90 minutes.

The thriving experience of Mexican Jewry is lovingly detailed in "Like a Bride" ("Novia Que Te Vea"), a delicate and subtle drama based on Rosa Nissan's novel. The film, which won five Ariel awards, follows the friendship in 1960s Mexico City of two young girls, Oshinica (Claudette Maille) and Rifke (Maya Mishalska). Oshinica comes from a conservative Sephardic family that traces its lineage to Spain before the Jews were expelled from that country. Rifke's parents are more liberal Ashkenazi, Eastern European Jews driven from the continent by the Holocaust.

Familiar Jewish themes of assimilation versus tradition are filtered through a fresh perspective, resulting in a film that reverberates in a unique way, greatly aided by Guita Schyfter's light, effective direction and poignant performances by the young leads.—***Shlomo Schwartzberg***

NO ORDINARY LOVE 1/2

Starring Smith Forte and Ericka Klein. Directed and written by Doug Witkins. Produced by Eli Kabillio. A Phaedra release. Drama. Unrated. Running time: 104 min.

A group of multi-racial gay and straight friends and lovers living in the same house are supposedly examined in a low-suds soap opera narrative that climaxes in a convoluted yet tepid murder mystery.

A big hit at gay film fests, "No Ordinary Love" is a crude, incoherent mishmash that takes too long to get started and doesn't develop interesting ideas. The first hour is a clumsy set-up for moments of intense character realization in the last reels, but it's not enough to compensate for all the ill-assorted subplots.—***Dale Winogura***

RAISING HEROES ★★1/2

Starring Troy Sostillio and Henry White. Directed, written and produced by Douglas Langway. A Phaedra release. Thriller. Unrated. Running time: 85 min.

A somewhat diverting, occasionally suspenseful little thriller, "Raising Heroes" is marred by plot holes, hokey contrivances and detracting experimentalist touches. But writer/director/producer/editor Douglas Langway deserves praise for displaying a canny cinematic eye and for treating his central gay roles without patronizing advocacy or preciousness in this story of a gay couple (played with tenderness by Troy Sostillio and Henry White) planning to adopt a child when their lives become endangered after one of them witnesses a convenience-store robbery and the culprits come gunning for them.—***Dale Winogura***

REVIEWS

ing outtasight sights. Special effects are imaginatively used to take audiences on an interspacial tour. Ultimately, though, the unknown can only be glimpsed, and it's implied that we aren't ready to be made fully aware of the wonders of the universe. It's a trite way of avoiding the effort of creating an alien world that can live up to sustained scrutiny.

Still, the drama unfolding on earth is the greater focus of the filmmakers. Reaction to history's greatest discovery is shown as being militantly divided, and astute commentary is made on how such news would actually affect the world. At two-and-a-half hours, "Contact" is well-paced with humor, humanity, and an electrifyingly ascending momentum.—*Christine James*

A SIMPLE WISH ★★

Starring Mara Wilson, Martin Short, Kathleen Turner, Robert Pastorelli and Amanda Plummer. Directed by Michael Ritchie. Written by Jeff Rothberg. Produced by Sid, Bill and Jon Sheinberg. A Universal release. Comedy. Rated PG for mild language. Running time: 90 min.

Efforts to produce a broad-based family film with equal appeal for adults and children fall flat in "A Simple Wish," an almost too simple fantasy that hedges so indecisively between full-blown fantasy and satire that it never does justice to either genre.

In the wake of her "Matilda" success, Mara Wilson stars as Anabel, yet another wide-eyed, wonder-struck child in search of a better future; in this case, that consists of soliciting her "fairy godmother." Unfortunately, Anabel's fairy godmother turns out to be a bungling fella named Murray (comedian Martin Short, last seen in "Mars Attacks!").

Had screenwriter Jeff Rothberg and director Michael Ritchie chosen to play this Bubble Factory production as a straightforward fantasy with all the requisite mirth and malice, "A Simple Wish" might have worked as a proper children's film. Instead, the filmmakers trade charm for satire, overloading the narrative with "hip" adult references. Children, of course, won't appreciate the references, and adults are likely to find their inclusion in a film of this sort more curious than amusing.—*Wade Major*

THIS WORLD, THEN THE FIREWORKS ★★1/2

Starring Billy Zane, Gina Gershon, Sheryl Lee and Rue McClanahan. Directed by Michael Oblowitz. Written by Larry Gross. Produced by Chris Hanley, Brad Wyman and Larry Gross. An Orion Classics release. Drama. Rated R for strong violence, sexuality and language. Running time: 99 min.

"God rigged it, we take the hits" is the weltanschauung of this modestly convincing adaptation of a 1955 Jim Thompson short story about two troubled grifters. Born twins, Marty and Carol Lakewood (Billy Zane and Gina Gershon) while still children saw their father, caught naked in bed with a neighbor's wife by an outraged husband, shotgun the man, their little faces sprayed by blood. Now a muckraking journalist equally interested in roiling life's muck and in raking transgressors on to their eternal unreward, often while quoting biblical derangements, Marty has always had a special bond with sis, a we-against-the-world attitude. Fate brings the dark-hearted duo together again as Marty and Carol, who is now a well-



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REVIEWS

upholstered prostitute, ID a mark: an apparently repressed and lonely patrolwoman, Lois Archer ("Bliss'" Sheryl Lee), who owns beachfront property. Machination and murder follow.

"This World, Then the Fireworks" has almost as many problems as its leads. Right from the opening credits, a wildly overdone jazz score announces the filmmakers' too-hip-for-the-house approach to Thompson's work; they go in with cigarettes dangling from their lips, and the smoke seems to blind them to their real job of getting at these two lost souls' humanity.

Debut director's Michael Oblowitz helming and Larry Gross' scripting are overbaked outside yet uncongealed inside, but the work of Zane, Gershon and Lee could hardly be better. All three have shown an eagerness to take on on-the-edge projects, and they deliver here. Each of their three characters is a misfit built of conflicting emotions and desires, and it's a delight to watch the performers' faces handle the challenge.—*Kim Williamson*

OUT TO SEA ★★★1/2

Starring Jack Lemmon, Walter Matthau, Dyan Cannon, Gloria DeHaven, Brent Spiner, Elaine Stritch, Hal Linden, Donald O'Connor, Edward Mulhare and Rue McClanahan. Directed by Martha Coolidge. Written by Robert Nelson Jacobs. Produced by John Davis and David T. Friendly. A Fox release. Comedy. Rated PG-13 for language and sex-related humor. Running time: 105 min.

In their first non-"Grumpy" pairing since the 1993 reteaming that earned them a new generation of fans, Walter Matthau and Jack Lemmon head "Out to Sea" to once again prove that flab, ear hair and enlarged prostates are no obstacles to attracting beautiful and sexy women.

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The hijinks begin when chronic gambler Charlie (Matthau) cons his widowed brother-in-law Herb (Lemmon) into joining him on a Caribbean cruise, on which Charlie plans to seduce a woman of sufficient means to support his habit. What Charlie hasn't told Herb is that he enrolled them as dance hosts to avoid paying for the cruise. The expected hijanks ensue.

Although the romantic twists and turns that follow are fairly obvious, Matthau and Lemmon's effortless charms and impeccable timing keep things brisk and lively throughout. Unlike their previous efforts, however, the actors here thrive less on their interaction with each other than on their respective romantic entanglements, allowing for a more diverse collection of dramatic and comic possibilities. The supporting cast also provides able work.

For director Martha Coolidge ("Three Wishes"), "Out to Sea" marks a welcome and successful return to the breezy comedic sensibilities she first displayed in her debut film, "Valley Girl." Most of the film's other creative credits are just serviceable, with the exception of David Newman's score, which is superb.—*Wade Major*

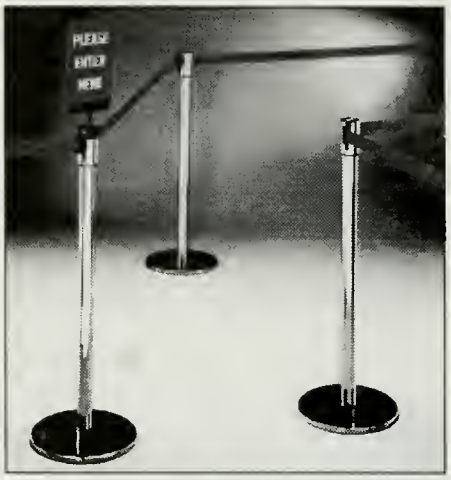
Review Digest

Genre key: (Ac) Action; (Ad) Adventure; (An) Animated; (C) Comedy; (D) Drama; (Doc) Documentary; (F) Fantasy; (Hor) Horror; (M) Musical; (My) Mystery; (R) Romance; (Sat) Satire; (SF) Science Fiction; (Sus) Suspense; (Th) Thriller; (W) Western.

TITLE/MPAA DISTRIBUTOR 5 Excellent 4 Very Good 3 Good 2 Fair 1 Poor	RUN TIME	GENRE	REVIEWED IN ISSUE	BOXOFFICE	VARIETY	H. REPORTER	L.A. TIMES	N.Y. TIMES	USA TODAY	AVERAGE	TOTAL BOXOFFICE$*
Addicted to Love **R** (WB)	*100*	R C	7-97	3	3	3	2	2	3	2.7	33.8
Anaconda **PG-13** (Col)	*90*	Adv	6-97	2	2	3	3	3	3	2.7	63.9
Austin Powers **PG-13** (NL)	*89*	C	7-97	3	3	4	2	3	3	3.0	52.4
Batman & Robin **PG-13** (WB)	*124*	AcAd	8-97	2	3	3	2	2	3	2.5	102.8
Bliss **NC-17** (Tri)	*102*	D	5-97	4	2	2	3	2		2.0	0.2
Brassed Off (Mir)	*107*	C	3-97	3	3	3	3	3	3	3.0	2.3
Breakdown **R** (Par)	*95*	Th	7-97	4	4	3	3	3	4	3.5	49.4
Buddy **PG** (Col)	*84*	C D	7-97	2	2	2	3	2	2	2.2	9.9
Chasing Amy (Mir)	*105*	D	4-97	3	3	4	4	3	3	3.3	11.3
Con Air **R** (BV)	*115*	Ac	8-97	2	3	3	2	2	2	2.3	93.0
Contact **PG** (WB)	*150*	SF D	9-97	3	3	2	3	3	3	2.8	47.4
The Daytrippers (CFP)	*90*	C	8-96	3		2	3	3		2.8	2.0
Double Team **R** (Col)	*93*	AcAd	6-97	4	3	2	3	2	2	2.7	11.3
English Patient **R** (Mir)	*159*	R	1-97	3	3	4	4	4	4	3.7	77.9
Face/Off **R** (Par)	*139*	Ac	8-97	4	3	4	4	4		3.8	86.3
Female Perversions **R** (Oct)	*114*	D	11-96	2			3	2		2.2	0.9
Fifth Element **PG-13** (Col)	*125*	SF	7-97	3	2	2	3	2	2	2.3	61.3
George of the Jungle **PG** (BV)		C	8-97	2	3	4	3			3.0	22.9
Gone Fishin' **PG** (BV)	*94*	C	8-97	1	1	1	2			1.3	18.2
Grosse Pointe Blank **R** (BV)	*107*	C	5-97	4	4	3	3	3	3	3.3	27.8
Hercules **G** (BV)		Ani	8-97	3	4	4	4	4	4	3.8	76.8
Jungle 2 Jungle **PG** (BV)	*105*	C	5-97	2	3	3	3	2	2	2.5	59.0
Kiss Me Guido **R** (Par)	*90*	C	9-97	3		3	3			3.0	0.1
Kolya (Mir)	*111*	D	12-96	3	4	4	4	4		3.8	5.7
Liar Liar **PG-13** (Uni)	*86*	C	5-97	3	4	4	3	3	3	3.3	177.4
Lost World: Jurassic Park **PG-13** (Uni)	*129*	Adv	7-97	4	3	3	3	2	3	3.0	222.5
Men In Black **PG-13** (Col)	*96*	SFAc	8-97	3	4	3	4	4		3.6	172.1
Mrs. Brown **PG** (Mir)	*103*	D	8-97	4	4		4		4	4.0	0.1
My Best Friend's Wedding **PG-13** (TS)	*107*	RC	8-97	3	3	4	3	3	3	3.2	94.7
Night Falls On Manhattan **R** (Par)	*110*	D	7-97	3	3	3	4		4	3.4	9.7
Nothing To Lose **R** (BV)	*98*	C	9-97	3	3	3	2		3	2.8	11.6
Operation Condor **PG-13** (Mir)	*103*	AcAd	9-97	4	2	4	3			3.2	4.7
Out To Sea **PG-13** (Fox)	*105*	C	9-97	3	3	4	4	2		3.2	20.1
The Pillow Book (CFP)	*126*	D	7-96	3			2	4		3.0	1.8
Rudyard Kipling's Second Jungle Book **PG** (TS)	*90*	Adv	7-97	1	3	3	2	2		2.2	0.2
Romy and Michele's High School Reunion **R** (BV)	*91*	C	7-97	4	2	3	3	3	2	2.8	28.6
Scream **R** (Mir)	*111*	HorC	2-97	3	2	3	3	2		2.5	103.0
Shall We Dance? **PG** (Mir)	*122*	C	5-97	3		4	3	3		3.2	0.5
Shiloh **PG** (Leg)	*93*	D	4-97	4		3	3	3		3.3	1.0
A Simple Wish **PG** (Uni)	*90*	C	9-97	2	2	3	3	2	3	2.5	5.5
The Sixth Man **PG-13** (BV)	*108*	C	6-97	3	3	3	3	2	2	2.7	14.5
Sling Blade **R** (Mir)	*140*	D	11-96	4	4	4	4	3		3.8	24.4
Speed 2 **PG-13** (Fox)	*120*	Ac	8-97	2	2	2	2		2	2.0	44.5
Sprung **R** (TM)	*90*	R C	6-97	3	2	3	3	3		2.8	7.5
Thrill Ride **G** (SC)	*38*	Imax	9-97	2	2	2	3	3		2.4	0.1
Trial and Error **PG-13** (NL)	*97*	C	8-97	1	3	2	3			2.3	13.4
Ulee's Gold (Ori)	*113*	D	4-97	4	4		4	4	4	4.0	4.3
Waiting for Guffman **R** (SC)	*82*	C	11-96	3	3	3	4	3	4	3.3	2.8
Wild America **PG** (WB)	*103*	Ad	9-97	3	3	3	3	3		3.0	6.3

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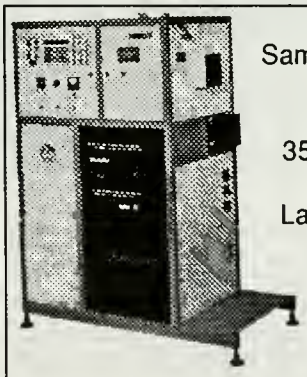


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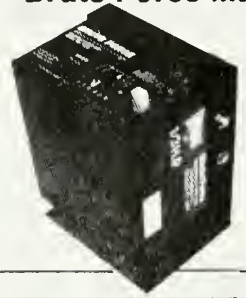
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REVIEWS

WILD AMERICA ★★★

Starring Jonathan Taylor Thomas, Devon Sawa and Scott Bairstow. Directed by William Dear. Written by David Michael Weiger. Produced by James G. Robinson, Irby Smith and Mark Stouffer. A Warner Bros. release. Adventure. Rated PG for language and some adventure peril. Running time: 103 min.

Kids from six to 16 will get a kick out of "Wild America," a fact-based outdoor adventure story about three brothers who spend a summer roaming the American wilderness photographing animals. Prepubescent and teenaged girls can feast their eyes on a trio of high school hearthrhrobs: Jonathan Taylor Thomas ("The Adventures of Pinocchio"), Devon Sawa ("Casper") and Scott Bairstow ("White Fang 2"); boys in the audience will relate to the camaraderie and daredevil antics of the lead characters.



BOYS LIFE: *Scott Bairstow, Jonathan Taylor Thomas and Devon Sawa in "Wild America."*

The Morgan Creek production is based on the childhood experiences of producer Mark Stouffer and his two brothers, Marshall and Marty, who spent the summer of 1967 driving across America documenting on film the nation's vanishing wildlife. The story is seen through the eyes of 12-year-old Marshall (Thomas), constantly tormented by his older siblings. But, proving the dictum that "those things that don't kill us make us stronger," Marshall's treatment has made him fearless, which proves a blessing on the trio's dangerous journey.

The Stouffer brothers recorded their adventures on 16mm; it was their first nature documentary and the start of careers as prize-winning wildlife filmmakers. The three actors come across as real siblings, filled with mischief, daring, misjudgment, rivalry and at bottom a genuine love and respect for one another.—***Jean Oppenheimer***

REVIEWS

THE SWAN PRINCESS: ESCAPE FROM CASTLE MOUNTAIN ★1/2

Voices by Michelle Nicastro, Douglas Sills and Jake Williamson. Directed by Richard Rich. Written by Brian Nissen. Produced by Richard Rich and Jared F. Brown. A Legacy release. Animation. Rated G. Running time: 71 min.

Though it's somewhat more active and colorful than its dismal predecessor, "The Swan Princess," this sequel is pretty much just more stiff, unpolished animation for undiscriminating family audiences, lacking wonder and imagination. The few moments of charm and sweetness can be traced to Brian Nissen's occasionally clever script, but Richard Rich's pandering, immature direction is almost as blatantly amateurish in technique as his handling of the original (which was a success, unaccountably).

Bright colors and backgrounds are diminished by an absence of character detail and personality, with stilted motions and inexpressive faces in their place. Even worse, the three original songs by Lex de Azevedo and Clive Romney are only slightly more melodic and graceful than the tunes in the previous film; one number is a misfired and misplaced attempt at a rock-music style. As bland and unsophisticated as most children's TV, this is the kind of inept cartoon feature that sets the cause of good animation back a couple of decades. One plus: It's short.—*Dale Winogura*

HEAD ABOVE WATER ★★

Starring Cameron Diaz, Harvey Keitel, Craig Sheffer and Billy Zane. Directed by Jim Wilson. Written by Theresa Marie. Produced by Jim Wilson and John M. Jacobsen. A Fine Line release. Drama. Rated PG-13 for thematic elements and some moments of strong violence. Running time: 92 min.

From the school of film noir comes "Head Above Water," a sometimes original but largely ineffective thriller. Nathalie (Cameron Diaz), an ex-drug addict, is vacationing in Maine with her husband George (Harvey Keitel), the judge who gave her a reduced sentence. Also around is handyman Lance (Craig Sheffer), a childhood friend of Nathalie's who's always had a crush on her. Then another old friend, Kent ("The Phantom's" Billy Zane), arrives to make a play for Nathalie when Lance and George are off fishing—but Kent soon winds up dead on her bed. Whodunnit?

The acting, which needs to be razor-sharp in such a film, is substandard. Nathalie is mainly a reactive character; though Diaz is onscreen more than in "My Best Friend's Wedding," she has less to do. Sheffer, the weak link in "Bliss," turns in another stonefaced performance. As the seemingly meek George, Keitel is atypically bland. To its detriment, the film tries too hard to shoehorn these characters into complex situations, which fails because the people are so dull. But to their credit the filmmakers don't telegraph their plot twists too often; there are real surprises.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

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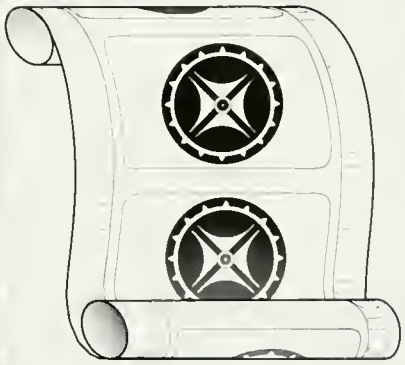
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REVIEWS

FRANK CAPRA'S AMERICAN DREAM ★★★

Narrated by Ron Howard. Directed and written by Ken Bowser. Produced by Charles Duncombe. Executive produced by Tom Capra and Frank Capra Jr. A Columbia Repertory release. Documentary. Unrated. Running time: 109 min.

Here's a proposal for a new axiom about documentaries: beware of biographical sagas that refer to their subject by first name. "Frank Capra's American Dream" is more artful and informative in the way it conveys its hidden agenda, but at bottom it's almost as suspect as the promotional "documentaries" the Disney Studios used to churn out with such regularity—which helped create a mystique around "Walt" so pervasive that many viewers above a certain generational threshold still believe the most successful animation producer in the history of movies actually had a hand in drawing his own cartoons.



CAPRA MAN: *The late James Stewart with Jean Arthur in Frank Capra's "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington."*

He didn't, of course, just as Frank Capra had no real hand in the writing of his signature works of the sound era. Yet—aside from an obligatory nod to Capra's most famous scenarist, Robert Riskin (which of course makes no mention of the competitive tensions that surrounded and ultimately destroyed their relationship)—you'd never know it to watch this movie. But that's just a sin of omission, not on a par with the outright, albeit masterfully subtle, distortions of Capra's record this Capra family-produced bio purveys as fact. For example: Capra's shrewd political decision to wangle his way onto the Academy board of governors in the early 1930s is avoided, though his presidency of the Academy is carefully presented after sequences showing his Best Director wins for "It Happened One Night" and "You Can't Take It With You." Capra was up to his neck in backstage Oscar politics by the time he grabbed the brass ring, and his record on labor issues (the Academy had arbitration authority in those days) was far more ambiguous than it is presented here. More importantly, his familiarity among the Academy's voting membership undoubtedly influenced his receipt of the trophies he so desperately sought, and which he probably deserved anyhow.

Then there's the matter of the House UnAmerican Activities Committee. To hear this film tell it, Capra was a '50s martyr of the McCarthyite inquisitors, whose period as a citizen under suspicion went out with a euphemism—the Red Channels clouds parting "not with a bang but with a whimper," as one of Capra's heavily featured sons puts it. But as **BOXOFFICE** contributor Joseph McBride proved in his groundbreaking Capra biography "Frank Capra: The Catastrophe of Success," that whimper was emitted by Capra himself, who eventually gave up "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington" screenwriter Sidney Buchman to HUAC, along with other, less well-known Capra collaborators, in a secret session that ultimately saved his career.

The irony of course is that, like "Walt's," "Frank's" achievements need no gilding to be worthy of admiration, and even celebration. As this feature rightly points out, his films charted a far more complex and a much darker vision of American society and politics than is popularly believed. Copiously illustrated with clips from Capra's ouevre and by interviews with such unlikely admirers as Oliver Stone and Robert Altman, it is in the simultaneously haunted and consecrated faces of such Capra stars as Jimmy Stewart, Gary Cooper, Jean Arthur and Barbara Stanwyck as they enact Capra and Riskin's populist parables of triumph and despair that "Frank Capra's American Dream" ultimately finds its sought-for apotheosis.—***Ray Greene***

SQUEEZE ★★★

Starring Tyrone Burton and Eddie Cutanda. Directed and written by Robert Patton-Spruill. Produced by Garen Topalian, Stephanie Danan, Patricia Moreno and Arri Newman. A Miramax release. Drama. Rated R for strong violence, pervasive strong language and some drug content. Running time: 96 min.

Three 14-year-old friends, Tyson (an excellent Tyrone Burton), Hector (a poignant Eddie Cutanda) and Bao (Phuong Duong) attempt to survive into adulthood on the poverty-blighted, gang-controlled streets of Boston's Dorchester Fields. Trying to save these kids is J.J. (Geoffrey Rhue), an adult who runs a local youth collective. Starring at-risk kids who came through the media arts program of the Dorchester Youth Collective, and based on stories by D.Y.C. founder Emmett Folgert, "Squeeze" is the debut film of Robert Patton-Spruill. A few sequences (including a death) are clumsy and stedicam work occasionally too fast and close to follow, but most of "Squeeze" is visually solid, and an ethnically diverse cast creates intensity.—***Karen Achenbach***

NATIONAL NEWS

MOVIEFONE WINS $22 MILLION JUDGEMENT FROM PACER/CATS

An arbitration panel ordered ticketing systems manufacturer Pacer/CATS to pay a whopping $22.7 million to MovieFone, Inc. in a judgement based on MovieFone's claim that Pacer/CATS reneged on a 1992 contract to provide hardware to the phone ticketing company, which would have helped MovieFone to expand and improve its tele-ticketing operations.

The big post-judgement question is: who's going to pay? Key Pacer/CATS assets were acquired by ticketing giant (and MovieFone competitor) Ticketmaster in 1994, which rolled those assets into another entity, called CCS. MovieFone claims it was Ticketmaster's acquisition of Pacer/CATS assets and the rivalry between the two companies that caused Pacer/CATS to fail to honor its MovieFone commitments and that therefore Ticketmaster is liable. Ticketmaster claims it isn't responsible for any aspect of the judgement, since Pacer/CATS as a company is unrelated to Ticketmaster, and because no Ticketmaster executives were involved with or questioned during the arbitration.

A transcript of the three-member panel's decision appeared to support MovieFone's position. "Pacer/CATS materially breached and blatantly violated the agreement between the parties," the panel declared in part. "Pacer/CATS, Ticketmaster and [former Pacer/CATS parent] Wembley secretly entered into a transaction to strip Pacer/CATS of the resources necessary to perform its agreement with MovieFone and, under cover of this concealment, developed a common plan and purpose, the aim of which was to terminate the agreement and demolish the business."

The panel also declared that Ticketmaster's Pacer/CATS division CCS "is explicitly bound by its terms and liable for breaches that it committed, or were previously committed by Pacer/CATS." The panel pointed out that CCS "since its inception...has continued to do business under the same trade name and logo as Pacer/CATS, using the same personnel, office, phone number, stationery, business cards and other paraphernalia."

The $22.7 million judgement was decided upon to reimburse MovieFone for the development costs related to its own proprietary tele-ticketing system after Pacer/CATS faltered in its contractual obligations.

THE LION LANDS ORION, GOLDWYN

As Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Inc. finalized its deal to buy Orion Pictures and Goldwyn Entertainment Co. from Metromedia Intl. Group (MIG) to a tune of $573 million, it also gave out pink slips to Orion Pictures vice presidents Brad Krevoy and Steve Stabler, who are negotiating for a settlement of their five-year contracts with Metromedia. Reportedly a total of 85 Orion employees were terminated immediately, with approximately 136 employees to stay on during the transition, of whom 25—mostly the distribution executives—will be absorbed into the studio, while the rest will find their jobs eliminated over the next nine months. MGM plans keep the Goldwyn name as an art-film label. The fate of the 35-employee Goldwyn unit, including Goldwyn president Meyer Gottlieb, has yet to be determined.

MGM decided to acquire Orion and Goldwyn in order to more than double the size of its current library. The 2,200-title library from Orion and Goldwyn includes "Dances With Wolves" and "The Silence of the Lambs" and now gives MGM "the largest modern film library in the world," according to MGM chairman and CEO Frank Mancuso. The library is expected to significantly enhance the studio's operating cash flow. Some industry insiders say it puts MGM in a better position for a possible initial public offering. MGM added almost all of the 10 acquired completed films from MIG to its practically empty release slate.

INDIE EXECUTIVE SHUFFLE

Call it the independent executive exchange program, but the shuffle at Miramax, October Films and Live Entertainment is keeping everyone on their toes. Miramax senior vice president Scott Greenstein, often referred to as the third Weinstein, left Miramax in June and was taken on board at October Films to replace co-managing executive Amir Malin, who left October to take a top spot at Live Entertainment.

Live, which was recently acquired by an investors group headed by Bain Capital and Richland Gordon & Co., named Malin co-president in charge of domestic and international film distribution, and announced its full top team: Live chairman Roger Burlage remains in place along with two new executives—Mark A. Curcio, former head of Bain's Los Angeles office, was named CEO, and Bill Block, former head of West Coast operations for talent agency International Creative Management, was named co-president. Neither Curcio nor Block has any previous film production or film company experience.

Miramax, meanwhile, promoted Steven Hutensky to senior VP of business and legal affairs and Andrew Herwitz to senior VP of acquisitions and business affairs. Greenstein will join with October's other co-managing executives Bingham Ray and John Schmidt. Bain had bid on taking over October (before Universal acquired a majority interest in the indie) and Malin was known to be intrigued by the potential of Live's 2,000-title library.

AMC IN PLANET HOLLYWOOD ORBIT

Planet Hollywood International, Inc. and AMC Entertainment announced a joint venture to develop and operate an integrated moviegoing, dining and retail concept under the branded name Planet Movies by AMC.

The 50/50 partnership will be responsible for the creation and marketing of themed environments combining AMC megaplexes with Planet Hollywood restaurants as well as other dining, retail and movie-related outlets. The venture plans to open complexes worldwide; to kick things off, seven existing AMC 'plexes encompassing 150 AMC screens will be adapted to the Planet Movies concept. The re-branded locations include AMC's Pleasure Island 24-plex in Orlando, Fla., which is located across the street from Planet Hollywood's most successful restaurant and retail unit.

The co-venture will own and operate all subsequent units, including eight to 10 new complexes with a total screen count between 200 to 250, which are to be built in the next 18 to 24 months. After that, Planet Movies anticipates rolling out new facilities at the rate of five to 10 sites per year.

MR. VALENTI GOES TO MOSCOW

Jack Valenti, chairman and CEO of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) and chairman and CEO of the Motion Picture Association (MPA), announced the appointment of Simon Barsky to the post of senior vice president and general counsel of both the MPAA and its international counterpart, the MPA. Barsky, who has been with the MPAA since 1978, will oversee all of the associations' legal affairs worldwide.

However, Valenti will continue to be involved with one of the most prominent international legal affairs affecting the industry: the ongoing battle against the piracy of U.S. films in foreign countries. Trade war threats against major offenders such as China have loomed for months as an ultimatum to incite action to solve the problem.

In July, Jack Valenti departed for Moscow to meet with a number of the country's high-ranking government officials on the issue of piracy. Russia is one of the largest markets in the world for pirated U.S. films, accounting for an estimated annual revenue loss of $300 million. Upon arrival in Moscow, Valenti met with the Russian audiovisual industry and launched the Russian Anti-Piracy Organization, a new joint initiative to fight piracy. As Valenti pointed out in a statement, "Piracy steals from us all. Nikita Mikhalkov's award-winning 'Burnt by the Sun' and Andrei Konchalovsky's new work 'The Odyssey' are just two examples of Russian works to suffer in pirates' hands."

AU REVOIR, RYSHER

After three years in motion picture production, a series of boxoffice losses has prompted Rysher Entertainment to pull out of the movie industry. It will focus exclusively on TV operations, phasing out all theatrical production activities. The move will result in the elimination of about 40 jobs. CEO Tim Helfet said in a July 8 meeting that Rysher had lost money on its theatrical product, having never managed to score a major boxoffice hit. The company suffered substantial losses on the MGM/UA-distributed "Turbulence," which cost nearly $60 million to make but grossed only $11.5 million domestically, and "The Evening Star," distributed through Paramount, which grossed $12.5 million and resulted in losses of more than $30 million. The total cost to Rysher's parent company, Atlanta-based Cox Enterprises, is estimated at $200 million.

Other Rysher projects to bomb were "House Arrest," "Exit to Eden" and "Destiny Turns on the Radio," while the company's hits included "Private Parts," "Primal Fear" and "Big Night." Rysher will produce one more film, "Eugene Onegin," starring Ralph Fiennes and Liv Tyler.

EXHIBITION BRIEFINGS

A STAR IS BORN IN SOUTHFIELD

Star Theatres has opened the 20-screen, all stadium seating, all-THX approved Star Southfield Entertainment Centre in Southfield, Mich., and it's already setting records. On its opening weekend, June 20-22, the Star Southfield had the highest attendance in the country, with nearly 45,000 patrons coming through the theatre's doors. It was the second highest grossing theatre for the opening weekend of "Batman & Robin," and the highest grossing theatre for the July 4 opening weekend of "Men In Black," with 55,000 attendees.

The Star Southfield's two largest auditoriums have 700 seats each; total seating capacity is 6,000. The 185,000-square-foot complex has three themed areas: the "Historic Detroit Lobby," "Hollywood Boulevard" and "Hollywood Soundstage." The centerpiece of the central concession stand is a 20-foot-tall bucket of popcorn with basketball-sized popcorn kernels that actually pop into the air. The theatre's unique design even features sky ceilings with cloud machines.

Star Theatres, based in Grand Rapids, Mich., is run by Loews co-chairs Jim and Barrie Loeks, and is a partnership between Loeks Michigan Theatres and Sony Retail Entertainment. It operates 82 screens in eight locations throughout Michigan.

SIGNATURE STYLE

Signature Theatres has opened its flagship Hawaiian movie theatre, the Signature Pearl Highlands 12. The 12-screen, 2,500-seat theatre offers all three digital sound systems—DTS, Dolby Digital and SDDS—as well as stadium-style seating and plush high-back chairs with cupholders. Founded in 1996, Signature already owns and operates more than 100 screens in Northern California and Hawaii.

CROWN'S SCREEN COUNT REACHES NEW APEX

Connecticut-based Crown Theatres is purchasing Apex Cinemas, a 24-screen circuit based in Annapolis, Md. This will bring the total number of screens Crown owns and operates to 67. A new 16-screen megaplex in Annapolis, a 14-plex in Brooklyn, N.Y., and a six-screen expansion of the Crown Marquis 10 in Trumbull, Conn., are also in the works. The circuit also has sites in development in Queens, N.Y.; Elizabeth, N.J.; Cherry Hill, N.J.; Exton, Penn.; and Miami, Fla.

CHRISTIE ACQUIRES WESTREX

Christie Inc., a manufacturer and distributor of motion picture theatre projection equipment, has purchased the Westrex Electronic Film Projector product line. Westrex manufactures 35mm and 70mm projectors for special venue applications, including large format theatres, motion simulator rides, and 3-D and multiple projector theatres. This move is part of Christie's strategy to expand into the special venue market. "We are extremely happy about the acquisition as special venues are an expanding market that we have been interested in pursuing for some time," says Christie's executive VP and COO Jack Kline. "Westrex is a known leader in the industry...The marriage of the two companies will allow us to work as a cohesive unit to extend our leadership position." Westrex's manufacturing operations have moved from Simi Valley, Calif., to Christie's headquarters in Cypress, Calif.

DOLBY RECEIVES BAFTA AWARD

On the heels of announcing the sale of more than 2,500 digital processors over the first six months of 1997, Dolby Laboratories was recently selected by the British Academy of Film and Television Arts to receive a Special Technical Award to mark the company's "outstanding technical achievements in film and sound." Dr. Ray Dolby, founder and chairman of Dolby Laboratories, accepted the award at a ceremony in London on July 9.

EXPANDING UPON HERITAGE

Cecil L. George, president of Altus, Okla.-based Heritage Park Theatres, announced plans to add three screens to their existing five-plex in Altus, Okla. Heritage Park will also add two screens to its four-plex in Elk City, Okla., and in early 1998, the company will build a six-plex in Pampa, Texas.

WB INTL. PACTS WITH PEPSI

Warner Bros. International Theatres and Pepsico Inc. have entered into a multi-year deal under which Pepsi products will be served exclusively in all Warner Bros. International cinemas. That entails 358 screens in 43 theatres in six countries: the United Kingdom, Spain, Germany, Portugal, Italy and Japan. Promotional tie-ins and lobby merchandising campaigns are also in the works to cross-promote both companies.

SHOWMANDISER PROMOTION OF THE MONTH

Bill McDaniel, promotions manager for the Star Gratiot Theatre in Clinton Township, Mich., created a hilarious mock-tabloid to promote his theatre's screenings of the sci-fi blockbuster "Men In Black." The cover features a headline proclaiming an alien invasion, illustrated with a photo of a spaceship flying over the Star Gratiot. Spoofs of alien abduction stories and other sensationalistically humorous articles ran in the four-page flyer, including the Pop and Popcorn diet "guaranteed to work wonders!" (with a typical tabloid-type disclaimer noting that the claim is, of course, "NOT A GUARANTEE"). A coupon for a free soda during "MIB's" opening weekend was also included. The publication was distributed for free at the theatre's boxoffice and area businesses for two weeks prior to the film's release.



ON THE MOVE

United Cinemas International (UCI), an overseas multiplex co-venture between Paramount and Universal, has appointed **David Poveda** as operations and business development director of UCI Brasil. UCI Brasil's first theatre is scheduled to open this month...**Hoyts Cinemas Corp.** has named **Jud Parker** senior executive vice president of film...**Lynn Shubert,** a past president of the ITEA and former VP of the theatre division of Christie Electric Corp., has been retained as principal consultant to spearhead **Miller & Kreisel Sound Corp. (M&K)**'s launch of their new THX-approved Multichannel Pro Solutions line of monitors and powered subwoofers into the exhibition market...**Mari Barnum,** head of Exhibitor Relations for **Fox,** is leaving her position after 16 years with the studio. Barnum said she would spend some time with her family and then explore a new career path.

OBITUARIES

Jesse Shlyen, a member of BOXOFFICE's founding staff and our managing editor for decades until his retirement in 1976, passed away May 12 at the age of 87. Please see page 107 for BOXOFFICE's tribute to Jesse...**Mary Jane "Janey" Higginbotham,** wife of System & Products Engineering Co. (SPECO) president George Higginbotham, passed away July 14 at age 66. Mary Jane was born in Horton, Kan., on Nov. 8, 1930, and lived in Olathe, Kan., for the past 18 years. She is survived by her husband, a son, a stepson, three daughters, a stepdaughter, 13 grandchildren and one great-granddaughter.

SHOWMINDER

Remember to save the following dates: **ShowEast,** Oct. 20-23, Trump Taj Mahal, Atlantic City, N.J. Call 212-246-6460...**CineAsia,** December 3-5, Singapore International Convention and Exhibition Centre. Call 212-246-6460...**ShoWest,** March 9-12, 1998, Bally's Hotel, Las Vegas, Nev. Call 310-657-7724.

Q&A: GET SMART: VINCE LUCIANI NAMED PRESIDENT

SMART Theatre Systems, manufacturer of cinema sound products, has long known about finding a niche and filling it. While DTS, Dolby and Sony battle for leadership in the digital realm, SMART continues to focus much of its manufacturing and marketing muscle on product for the many theatres that use analog sound equipment, as well as devices that complement digital equipment. SMART's latest strategy is to increase its international presence, particularly in Eastern Europe, where analog sound-equipped theatres are predominant. This moves sees Norm Schneider take the role of chief executive officer, spending most of his time focusing on that market. Assuming the position of president is Vince Luciani, a former engineer at SMART who spent a few years at Panasonic's Car Audio department before returning to head domestic sales and production at the company that first hired him right out of college.



BOXOFFICE: What does this new executive structure say about the direction in which SMART is headed?

VINCE LUCIANI: SMART is concentrating on the international market. I was brought in to take care of domestic sales and manufacturing. It will free up Norm, who has moved up to CEO, to concentrate on the international market, spending a lot of time in Eastern Europe. We're trying to stake our claim over in Europe.

BOXOFFICE: What is it about that market that appeals to SMART?

LUCIANI: [SMART's product] is mainly at this point in time an analog soundtrack audio system. We are not in the position to set forth with a new digital format. Since we are an analog house, and the U.S. is going a lot towards digital, we feel Eastern Europe is still running a lot of analog prints, and that's a good market there.

BOXOFFICE: How will the growing digitalization impact SMART's business in the future?

LUCIANI: While the digital formats are fighting it out to see who's going to gain dominance in the industry, SMART is always going to be there for analog backup. If another "Jurassic Park" comes out and it's only available in DTS and your theatre only has Dolby Digital playback, then SMART is going to be there for you to play the analog backup track. So that's basically the game that we're playing. And also, we are expanding our product line to include more than just sound equipment. We have just launched a a very flexible system for booth automation that includes both the projector side and the sound side and the lights and masking and lens changes—it does everything. So with those products, we're trying to widen our product base.

BOXOFFICE: What new SMART product are you most excited about?

LUCIANI: Probably the MOD VI. I would put it in the realm of revolutionary. Because what we're doing for a suggested retail price of $2,000 is what everyone else is currently doing in the $4,000 to $6,000 range. It's still a full-featured analog processor, but, since it is so low-cost, it allows you to add digital really easily.

BOXOFFICE: What kind of specialized product lines is SMART currently selling or developing for the specialized needs of overseas exhibitors?

LUCIANI: We are putting together a package. The package includes a MOD VI, a new low-cost monitor, and a six-channel amplifier. We're packaging that in a 21-inch rack, and we're including speakers, everything complete. Our European customers do not have the ability that we do here in the States, where you can buy speakers from one guy, amps from one guy, and processors from another guy, because all this importing is very difficult. So they want to have one-stop shopping for their sound systems.

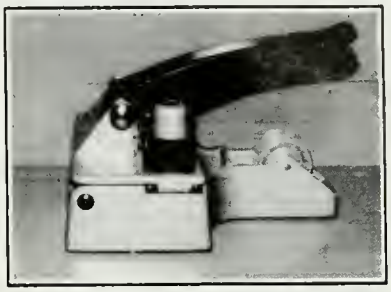
BOXOFFICE: I understand you were with SMART a few years ago, and are just now returning to SMART as president.

LUCIANI: That's right. Out of college, I went to graduate school here in Atlanta, and I heard about SMART through a co-worker where I was doing some intern work. Within a week, I came over and visited SMART and decided that's where I wanted to work. Being an audio person, going to school in audio, I thought this was the perfect place for me. So I came here directly out of school and worked here for about two and a half years. After that, I thought that it was good to get a perspective of business from a large company, and Panasonic's car audio division had an opening. By day I would work for Panasonic, but at night I would come back to SMART and continue to do design work for them. I moonlighted with SMART for about four and a half years of the six years that I was gone. So I kept up with SMART quite a bit, because I had a feeling in the back of my mind that I might come back here some day. I knew that SMART was the kind of organization that I wanted to be with.

BOXOFFICE: What sort of unique impression would you hope to make on SMART?

LUCIANI: I guess what I would like my mark to be is to open up a new market for us. I hope that I can diversify us, and open other markets up that may not necessarily be in the theatre industry. Of course, SMART will always be in the theatre industry, and we will always support our current product line, and we will always do active research and development in that area. [New markets] will probably be in the audio realm. Basically, SMART is an audio house, an analog audio house. And we will continue to try to make better sound. Because that's what we do. And there's sound in many, many different fields. So who knows where you might see the SMART Devices logo pop up in the future.—*Christine James*

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EUROVIEWS

European News Notes *by Melissa Morrison*

LEAD STORY: CINEMA EXPO '97 WRAP-UP

AMSTERDAM—The sixth edition of the exhibition trade fair Cinema Expo International ran June 29 - July 2 at Amsterdam's RAI convention center. Titles screened for exhibitors included Buena Vista International's "Face/Off," Warner Bros.' "Batman & Robin," Fox's "Volcano" and "Speed 2: Cruise Control" as well as UIP's "The Lost World: Jurassic Park." MGM was also on hand to assure exhibitors that "Tomorrow Never Dies" will be delivered on time. Polygram pushed to prove they are a major player with a screening of "Bean" and an appearance by "Bean" star Rowan Atkinson, who was presented with the Cinema Expo award for excellence in comedy.

Other awardees included Luc Besson ("The Fifth Element"), who received the excellence in filmmaking award; 20th Century Fox International's Jim Gianopulos, honored as distributor of the year; and Decatron's Albert Bert, who won the exhibitor of the year award. Disney's Peter Schneider accepted the creative achievement award for himself and Roy E. Disney (who was absent due to a leg fracture from a car accident). Producer Saul Zaentz ("The English Patient"), who received the first Albert R. Broccoli Award for excellence as a producer, praised the award's namesake, the producer of the James Bond movies, for creating a series of films with artistic merit that has also enjoyed worldwide commercial success for over 35 years.

Talk at this year's Cinema Expo was over expansion into underdeveloped Italy and the fact that few French exhibitors attended due to this year's Cinema Expo event clashing with France's three day "Fete Du Cinema," a popular sales-boosting campaign that offers moviegoers substantially reduced ticket prices *(see "Summer Selling Successes," next page)*. Next year's Cinema Expo hopes to avoid such a conflict and is scheduled to run June 15-19, 1998.

PATHE, CANAL PLUS UNITE EUROPEAN DISTRIBUTORS

PARIS—Two major French players have spearheaded the formation of a theatrical network that will effectively control Europe-wide rights to U.S. independent films and give American producers a new, powerful source of funding. The Canal Plus television giant and Pathe theatrical distributor and exhibitor announced in May at Cannes that the new venture would involve the cooperation of partners in the United Kingdom, Germany, Spain and Italy—in other words, about 85 percent of Western Europe. The new group would acquire films for these countries in one fell swoop, rather than the usual method of licensing films region-by-region. The other participating distributors are the UK's Guild Pathe, Germany's Tobis Filmkunst, Spain's Sogepaq, as well as France's AMLF. Either Italy's Medusa or Cecchi Gori is also expected to participate. In return for getting rights to American independent films, the group will invest up to $30 million in making them, allowing U.S. producers to acquire financing with the promise of direct sales in most of Europe. A Canal Plus spokesman said the group would target middle-budget films and currently had $10 million to $30 million to invest. That amounts to about one to three films annually. The rights agreement will also cover video and pay-TV. The new project is not the first one Pathe and Canal Plus have collaborated on in the name of European domination: The two also joined forces earlier this year to compete for—and win—a coveted UK Lottery franchise, a sort of mini-studio meant to strengthen the British film industry *(see "Clearing A Pathe for British Filmmakers," this page)*.

CLEARING A PATHE FOR BRITISH FILMMAKERS

LONDON—Pathe Pictures, a winner of one of the revolutionary British film franchises, is making good on its pledge to fund first-time filmmakers. The consortium, headed by the French distribution and exhibition behemoth, received $53.4 million, the largest segment of the $149 million awarded to three groups by the Arts Council of England in May. As part of its bid for the franchise, Pathe Pictures promised to create a fund dedicated to producing one movie annually by a new director for the six years of the franchise's life span. The effort is seen as part of Pathe's expansion into pan-European ventures, and British film's recent renaissance makes it prime hunting ground. Other members of Pathe Pictures' consortium, which is supposed to act as a mini-studio, include Canal Plus, Thin Man Films, Allied Films, Pandora Productions, Fragile Films, and Imagine Films (which includes the output of director Mike Leigh, whose Oscar- and Cannes-lauded "Secrets and Lies" is partially responsible for British film's boom). The other two consortiums are the Film Consortium and DNA Films. Pathe Pictures' films will be distributed in the United Kingdom by Pathe Distribution, formerly Guild Pathe Cinema.

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

LONDON—Warner Village Cinemas is planning to build London's first megaplex, a 32-screen, 200,000-square-foot 8,200 seat theatre that will be the largest cinema complex in Europe. The exhibitor is also discussing the possibility of eventually using the $56 million megaplex, converted from the Battersea Power Station and scheduled for completion in the year 2000, for the newly reconfigured London Film Festival (which hopes to become Cannes' rival in size and importance) planned for launch in fall 1998. The compound will also contain production and post-production space, a hotel, restaurants and apartments.

Also in the works for Warner Village Cinemas is a megaplex in the city of Birmingham that would have 30 screens and 6,000 seats.

Warner Village Cinemas, a joint venture between Warner Bros. International Theatres and Australia's Village Roadshow International, announced in April its intention to invest a total of $16 million into British cinemas. If realized, its expansion plans would make it the largest exhibitor in the United Kingdom. Currently, it is number four.

INTERNATIONAL AMUSEMENTS

PAISLEY, ENGLAND—U.S.-based National Amusements opened its latest Showcase Cinema on June 12 in Paisley, England. Known as The Phoenix, the state-of-the-art 14-screen, 3,800 seat movie palace joins 14 other United Kingdom theatres operated by National Amusements. Less than a month earlier, National Amusements unveiled London's first Showcase Cinema, located in Newham. The 14-screen, 4,000 seat movie palace boasts a decidedly American atmosphere, with an art gallery of famous Golden Age Hollywood stars and movie stills; a neon sculpture tribute to Hollywood; and a cinema store selling film-related merchandise. The Phoenix shares these features, as well as a coming attractions video wall, a video game room and an expanded concession counter that offers ice cream sundaes. National Amusements has 156 screens in the U.K. and more than 1,100 worldwide.

SUMMER SELLING SUCCESSES

After the success of last year's summer movie campaigns such as Germany's Der Sommerhit: Kino (a collaboration among distributors, exhibitors and media to promote summer movies), a slew of other European countries have decided to try similar tactics to goose the traditionally slack season. Denmark spent $350,000 on a bug-thened campaign—"coming soon to a garden near you"—presumably designed to encourage Danes to take refuge from nature's pests inside cinemas. Norway gave away tickets to matinee screenings in its bars and restaurants. The U.K. launched its National Cinema Day (June 15) with reduced ticket prices. France enlarged its Fete du Cinema from one to three days, running June 29 to July . A $6 pass allowed French cinemagoers to see any film for the discount price of $1.70. And in Iceland, the industry added a twist to its summer campaign by appealing to tourists, distributing booklets advertising the country's English-language films to passengers on the cruise ships that dock in local harbors.

Germany's Der Sommerhit: Kino, launched last year at a cost of $20 million, increased ticket sales by 19 percent.

NORWAY'S SHORT SUBJECT

OSLO—A Norwegian distributor and major exhibitor are reviving the short-film genre in the country, with the help of the Norwegian film institute. Europafilm and Oslo Cinemas have started a subscription service in which exhibitors paying an annual fee have access to any of Europafilm's short films. Currently, Europafilm carries three-quarters of the 200 short films produced in Norway, as well as many foreign ones, including Aardman Animation's Wallace and Gromit adventure "A Close Shave." Such films generally are seen only on the festival circuit, but the Norwegian team is taking advantage of a local law that allows exhibitors to show short films tax-free. The annual subscription fee ranges from $400 to $2,500, depending on the size of the cinema. Since 1994, the Norwegian Film Institute has provided funding for producing films for Europafilm's short-film library. Europafilm approaches screenwriters and directors to make the films and takes care of post-production, prints and other costs. Approximately 60 percent of Norwegian cinemas screen short films.

Q&A: FRENCH PRODUCER HUMBERT BALSAN ON GOLF AND FILM

French producer Humbert Balsan has always lived on the creative end of the arts—as an actor (most notably in Robert Bresson's "Lancelot du Lac") and as a documentary director. In 1979, Balsan joined Ismail Merchant and James Ivory, and over the years has produced several of their films, including "Quartet," "Jefferson in Paris," "Surviving Picasso" and "The Proprietor." Balsan's 1996 film "Will it Snow for Christmas?" received both boxoffice and critical success, and won a Cesar—France's version of an Oscar—for its director, Sandrine Veysset. With 35 features produced through his company, Ognon Pictures, Balsan spoke to BOXOFFICE about his determination to protect the vision of his directors, many of them first-timers, and his plans for distributing his films stateside.

BOXOFFICE: Is it fair to call you one of the more successful producers in France today?

HUMBERT BALSAN: I play golf. In film production, like in golf, you have to be modest. You can say I had a series of successes this year. One was with a film called "Will it Snow for Christmas?" [on which Sandrine Veysset made her directorial debut], a very big success in France, Switzerland and Belgium. Then we had two films do very well in Cannes—"Destiny," directed by Youssef Chahine, and "Post-Coitum, Animal Triste" [the first directorial effort of French actress Brigitte Rouan]. Both of these films were very well received and are being sold in many territories.

BOXOFFICE: What is your experience with United States distribution?

BALSAN: I've never had a big hit [in the U.S.] like I had in France with "Will It Snow For Christmas?" It was my biggest financial success. I made the film for a low cost and I had 100 percent of the negative because I didn't need to have co-producers. It was not the biggest hit in terms of seats in France [800,000 admissions in 6 months] but if you look at the ratio of cost to results, it's very, very big.

Theatres have to be booked properly and not show a comedy one day, and the next day a film of Godard. Theatres have to have a certain consistency.

BOXOFFICE: Do you plan to open a distribution arm of Ognon Pictures stateside?

BALSAN: My idea is to have a structure in the States that carefully follows my films and releases some of them. I've often been close to having a deal in the States but it has never happened, though always for different reasons. I think it is now the right time to concentrate on this. We have some good contacts with people, particularly Donald Rosenfeld, who worked with Merchant/Ivory for 10 years, and who is now on his own.

BOXOFFICE: How do you plan to reach a stateside market?

BALSAN: This has always been the big problem with the States. The United States is a great country for films, but it's also very protectionist. That's why I think if I take care of my own films, there's more motivation and then more work [accomplished]. Getting to screens is a problem. I think we'll come to the point of buying some theatres and releasing our films here in our own theaters. But it's the same in France. I always had difficulty getting access to the good theatres in France. I think there is a huge audience for interesting films in the States. It's just a matter of being there at the right time and working out a certain line of films to build a relationship with an audience so they will be faithful to the theatre. Theatres have to be booked properly and not show a comedy one day, and the next day a film of Godard. Theatres have to have a certain consistency. Exhibitors in the States have been doing this for many years but maybe it's not enough. There are so many films from around the world that exhibitors can't show everything. So the competition is very hard in this market for access to the good theatres.

BOXOFFICE: Would your exhibition strategy include building multiplexes here?

BALSAN: No, not at all. I would build art-houses. I'm an "artisan," as we say in French. For a producer, that means there's a certain spirit and a way of being very independent and doing things at a very human scale. I believe that cinema is closer to art than to industry. So I don't think you can be totally artistically oriented if you are doing production at a scale that's too big.

BOXOFFICE: You once said that what you require of your directors is authenticity.

BALSAN: I'm the kind of producer who doesn't try to push a director to do films to please investors. I push directors to make the film that's inside them. It's not always so easy, but I realized over the years that it's often in having a low budget that we can do this the most.—*Karen Achenbach*

NORTHERN EXPOSURE

Canadian News Notes *by Shlomo Schwartzberg*

LEAD STORY: AMC ENTERS CANADA'S EXHIBITION MARKET

Long rumored to become part of Canada's exhibition scene, AMC Theatres, through its Canadian subsidiary, AMC Theatres of Canada, is set to make its mark in Toronto, where it will anchor a major retail entertainment center. The Canadian-owned and operated PenEquity Management Corp., a designer and developer of large-scale real estate projects, has been selected by the city of Toronto to design an entertainment retail center on the corner of Yonge Street and Dundas Street East. The center, to be called Metropolis, will contain fashion outlets, themed restaurants and a music superstore, and will be anchored by a 115,000-square-foot AMC 30-plex with 6,000 seats. That would make it the city's largest multiplex. Says Harry Peckham, director of corporate business development for AMC Theatres of Canada, "We are thrilled to be part of this spectacular entertainment retail development, which will most certainly become the jewel of Toronto." Groundbreaking on the 270,000-square-foot, C$90 million (US$64.8 million) Metropolis will take place in spring of 1998. The center is scheduled to open in summer of 1999.

The AMC 30-plex is part of a massive theatrical expansion in Toronto's downtown area: Cineplex Odeon is adding nine screens to its dual Varsity cinemas, and Famous Players is erecting a major multiplex downtown as well.

AMC is also constructing a 30-plex in Montreal; that theatre will also anchor an urban entertainment center.

TORONTO FEST FILMS ANNOUNCED

Atom Egoyan's Cannes prize winner, "The Sweet Hereafter," will kick off the Opening Gala at the 22nd edition of the Toronto International Film Festival, which runs Sept. 4-13. The festival traditionally opens with a Canadian film.

Also at the fest will be the world premiere of "Mrs. Dalloway," the new film from Marleen Gorris ("Antonia's Line"), based on Virginia Woolf's novel and starring Vanessa Redgrave. North American premieres in Toronto will include Curtis Hanson's "L.A. Confidential"; Gilles MacKinnon's "Regeneration"; and Vera Belmont's "Marquise." The spotlight director at Toronto this year will be French director Benoit Jacquot; his most recent film, "Le Septieme Ciel," will also have its North American premiere at the fest. Balkan cinema will be spotlighted as well, and a new section called The Masters will present films from acclaimed talents such as Jean-Luc Godard and Lars Von Trier.

RENEWED "ALLIANCE" WITH MIRAMAX

Miramax Films has renewed its distribution agreement with Canadian distributor Alliance Releasing. Alliance expects to release some 80 Miramax films under the agreement. Recent Alliance pickups from Miramax that have been successful in Canada have included "The English Patient," "Trainspotting," "Sling Blade" and "Kolya." Alliance, which is Canada's largest distributor, also has an output deal with New Line.

FAMOUS: WHAT COMES A"ROUND" GOES AROUND

Famous Players' newest multiplex, the 10-screen Coliseum, located in the Toronto suburb of Mississauga, was the top-grossing theatre in Canada its opening weekend in May, taking in more than C$200,000. Its C$24,000 gross for the Andy Garcia film "Night Falls on Manhattan" was the third highest in North America. The Coliseum boasts a unique design, in which its 10 auditoriums are housed in a circular building (hence the theatre's name).

HOLLYWOOD COMES TO MONTREAL

The Brian De Palma film "Snake Eyes," shooting in Montreal this summer, marks a resurgence of American filming in that city. As recently as 1992, there were no American films shot in Montreal. Now, the city's estimated 1997 total film production of C$525 million, bolstered by the U.S. presence there, brings it very close to leader Toronto's C$530 million. (While "Snake Eyes'" budget is estimated at C$115 million, the 35 Quebecois features to be shot this year will cumulatively cost only C$75-80 million.)

There will be 15 American features shot in Montreal this year alone. The change has come about, says Andre Lafond, City of Montreal film commissioner, as a result of a concerted effort to get foreign productions to shoot in Montreal. "We established a consortium of the industry—actors, producers, the city of Montreal, almost everybody." This is a departure from the early '90s, when the attitude on the part of Francophone Quebec, based on protectionist concerns, was dismissive of American producers. "They always looked at U.S. producers as invaders, [and thought that it was] risky to attract too many foreign producers," says Lafond. Now, attracting foreigners is good business, he says. "We need new money, bigger volume in the system, to keep prices and fees low and competitive."

IDENTITY CRISIS: FEST VS. FEST

The Montreal World Film Festival is suing the Montreal International Festival of Cinema and New Media for C$5 million (US$3.6 million) on the grounds that the smaller festival is infringing on its identity. The suit states that the Festival of Cinema and New Media has been trying to steal films already committed to the World Film Festival, and that its name is too similar to the giant Montreal fest. Formerly the Montreal Festival of New Cinema and Video, the festival moved from a post-World Film Festival slot to an early summer date that precedes the World Film Festival by two months. The Festival of Cinema and New Media has traditionally been seen as the edgier, more avant garde festival of the two.

ON THE MOVE

Judy Holm has been promoted to the position of vice president, theatrical distribution for Polygram Entertainment Canada. Holm, formerly Polygram's director of theatrical marketing, will be responsible for expanding Polygram's marketing division into a full-integrated theatrical distribution arm.

Malofilm Communications has announced the appointment of Andy Myers as vice president and managing director of Malofilm Distribution. Myers was previously the longtime VP and general manager of Norstar Entertainment.

And Famous Players has announced that Dennis Kucherawy will assume the title of director, corporate public relations for the company. He will be responsible for information liaison between Famous Players and the public, and will be heavily involved in Famous Players' theatrical chain expansion. Kucherawy leaves Livent Inc., where he was vice president of communications.

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INTERNATIONAL NEWS BRIEFS

PACIFIC OVERTURES

NOTES FROM THE PACIFIC RIM *by Susan Lambert*

LEAD STORY: MAJORS INVESTIGATION ANNOUNCED AT INDIE'S CONFERENCE

SYDNEY— The National Association of Theater Owners (NATO) held an inaugural conference June 17-18 for Australia's independent theatre owners in order to discuss issues specifically appropriate to independents, particularly issues of film rental terms and better allocation of distributors' publicity resources. Intended to augment the Australian Movie Convention, between 70 to 100 exhibitors reportedly attended the event, held in Bowral of southern New South Wales.

At the conference, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), Australia's antitrust watchdog, announced its investigation into the exhibition and distribution sectors of the film industry. ACCC chairman Allan Asher said they were persuaded to investigate by the number of complaints received. Main concerns are anti-competitive behavior by the major circuits—Hoyts, Greater Union and Village Roadshow—and distributors—Village Roadshow Films (VRF, which handles Warner Bros. and Disney releases), UIP (which handles Paramount, Universal and MGM releases), Columbia TriStar and 20th Century Fox. Other concerns are the use of market strength to create monopolization and barriers to new competitors, as well as collusion and consumer protection. The ACCC also expressed concern that agency and joint-venture arrangements in film distribution led to a manipulation of release dates to prevent opening-week competition among titles.

The common complain by the independents, many of whom feel they are being squeezed out of the marketplace, is over inflexible film rental terms, unrealistic terms for second-run films and minimum exhibition periods. Other complaints include a refusal by distributors to supply prints and inconsistent treatment by distributors. The ACCC will seek to clarify if the complaints stem from unlawful conduct on the companies' actions or a change in the economic structure of the industry. Asher did note there was no real ticket pricing competition between the majors except when a major was competing against an independent theatre and commented that when it is harder to enter into an industry, it is easier for those in the market to behave in an anti-competitive way. He added, "If sustainable, legitimate explanations are given, it's unlikely that a court will find them in breach of the Trade Practices Act." The ACCC investigation is expected to take 10 weeks.

'IRATING PROTECTION

HONG KONG—Just before Hong Kong returned to Chinese ule on midnight June 30th, the democratically elected legislature astily enacted copyright enforcement legislation, after a year of obbying by Hong Kong filmmakers for tougher criminal penalties gainst pirateers and illegal importers of films, videos and music, vhich are putting a big dent into the already ailing Hong Kong film ndustry. Actor/filmmaker Jackie Chan led a protest march with ther Hong Kong film stars and directors to persuade the govern- ent to push for harsher restrictions and better enforcement. The ew law makes it easier to investigate and prosecute copyright nfringement and calls for stricter penalties, ranging up to eight ears in prison and HK$500,000 (US$65,000) in fines. It remains o be seen if the Chinese government, which this past year began a rackdown on its own pirating problem, will abide by any of the ıws enacted by the previous government.

'HILIPPINES DEVELOP FILM BOARD

MANILA—Meanwhile, in the Philippines, industry leaders also ook their battle to the Senate, which drafted a bill for the creation f a Film Development Board under the office of the President. The oard would be involved in boosting production of quality films nd increasing the strength of the local industry. Other functions ould include holding local and international film festivals, setting p training programs and establishing various incentive programs or quality Philippine films. The board would be comprised of the eads of the Film Academy of the Philippines, Cultural Center of ıe Philippines and Directors Guild of the Philippines along with oted film director Carlos Signuon-Reyna.

CHINA'S FIRST CINEMA CIRCUIT

BEIJING—China Film, the country's monopoly film importer, has established China's first national cinema circuit, comprising the top 300 cinemas in the country's 15 leading markets. Called the Zhonghua Theatres, the chain is more an alliance than a registered business and is based on previous contractual relationships between China Film Distribution and Exhibition Association and the theatres over the release of foreign blockbusters.

The circuit was formed with the intention of providing a guaranteed forum for releasing domestic product in conjunction with foreign films. The 300 theatres will have first run of 12 "priority" Chinese films and 10 Hollywood films each year, and the theatres will be required to give the Chinese films at least a seven-day booking. The film that launched the Zhonghua alliance in June is "The Opium War." A historical epic by director Xie Jin, "The Opium War" is said to be the biggest-budgeted film in China's history at 100 million yuan ($12.5 million) and is being jointly distributed, in a profit-sharing distribution arrangement, by China Film and the film's producer, Sichauam "Opium War" Film and TV Production Corp. Ltd. In order to join the Zhonghua chain, theatres had to meet an annual boxoffice total: In large cities, theatres must have at least 1 million yuan ($125,000) in annual revenue, and medium-size city theatres are required to have over 500,000 yuan ($62,500) in boxoffice totals.

In other news, the recently established Forbidden City Film Co. announced that its first film, "Since the Days of Lei Feng," a co-production with Beijing Youth Film Studio, has done exceptionally well at the boxoffice. The story of China's cultural revolution hero and his devotion to the cause of socialism has passed the 5 million yuan ($635,000) mark in Beijing alone. Forbidden City, which started up April 9, is comprised of a venture among China's second largest network, Beijing Television, its affiliate, Beijing Television Arts Center, the Beijing Municipal Film Co. and Beijing Cultural Audio-Visual Publishing.

DO YOU HAVE AN EXHIBITION-RELATED NEWS ITEM ABOUT THE ASIA-PACIFIC MARKET? E-MAIL SUSAN LAMBERT IN CARE OF boxoffice@earthlink.net

BOXOFFICE

	June	July	August	SEPTEMBER (Current)
Buena Vista (818) 567-5000 (212) 593-8900	**Con Air**, 6/6, Act/Adv, R, 115 min, Dolby SR & SR-D, DTS, SDDS, Anamorphic. Nicolas Cage, John Malkovich, John Cusack, Steve Buscemi, Ving Rhames. Dir: Simon West. **Hercules**, 6/6 excl. NY, 6/20 Chicago, 6/27 wide, Ani, G, 98 min, Dolby SR-D, SDDS, Flat. Voices: James Woods, Danny DeVito, Tate Donovan, Susan Egan, Matt Frewer. Dirs: Ron Clements, John Musker.	**George of the Jungle**, 7/16, Live Act, PG, 92 min, Dolby SR-D, SDDS, Flat. Brendan Fraser, Leslie Mann, Thomas Hayden Church, Abraham Benrubi. Dir: Sam Weisman. **Nothing to Lose**, 7/18, Com, R, 98 min, Dolby SR-D, SDDS, Flat. Martin Lawrence, Tim Robbins, John C. McGinley, Giancarlo Esposito, Kelly Preston. Dir: Steve Dedekerk.	**Air Bud** (aka MVP), 8/1, Com, 97 min, Dolby SR, Flat. Kevin Zegers, Michael Jeter, Bill Cobbs. Dir: Charles Martin Smith. **G.I. Jane** (formerly In Pursuit of Honor, Navy Cross), 8/15, Act, R, 120 min, Dolby SR & SR-D, SDDS, Anamorphic. Demi Moore, Viggo Mortensen, Anne Bancroft, Jason Beghe, Daniel Von Bargen. Dir. Ridley Scott.	**A Thousand Acres**, 9/19, Dra, Flat. Jessica La Michelle Pfeiffer, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Jason Robards, Keith Carradine. Dir: Jocelyn Moorhouse.
Columbia (310) 244-4000 (212) 833-8500	**Buddy**, 6/6, Com, PG, 84 min, SDDS, Anamorphic. Rene Russo, Robbie Coltrane, Paul Reubens, Irma P. Hall. Dir: Caroline Thompson.	**Men In Black**, 7/2, SF, PG-13, 98 min, Dolby A & SR, SDDS, Flat. Tommy Lee Jones, Will Smith, Linda Fiorentino, Rip Torn. Dir: Barry Sonnenfeld. **Air Force One** (formerly AFO), 7/25, Act/Dra, R, 118 min, Dolby A & SR, SDDS, DTS, Anamorphic. Harrison Ford, Gary Oldman, Glenn Close, Wendy Crewson, Jurgen Prochnow. Dir: Wolfgang Petersen.	**Excess Baggage**, 8/15, Act/Adv, PG-13, 90 min, SDDS, Flat. Alicia Silverstone, Benicio del Toro, Christopher Walken, Jack Thoompson, Nicholas Turturro. Dir: Marco Brambilla.	
MGM/UA (310) 449-3000 (212) 708-0300			**Paperback Romance**, 8/1, Rom/Com. Gia Carides, Anthony LaPaglia. Dir: Ben Lewin. (Goldwyn Division) **Hoodlum** (formerly Hoods), 8/29, Dra, R, DTS, Flat. Laurence Fishburne, Tim Roth, Andy Garcia, Vanessa Williams. Dir. Bill Duke	**The End of Violence**, 9/12, Dra. Gabriel Byrne, Bill Pullman, Andie MacDowell, Tra Lind. Dir: Wim Wenders. **The Locusts**, 9/26, Dra. Kate Capshaw, Je emy Davies, Vince Vaughn, Ashley Judd. John Patrick Kelly. (Orion Division)
Miramax (212) 941-3800 (213) 951-4200	**Squeeze**, 6/13, Thr, R. Dir: Robert Patton-Spruill. **Temptress Moon**, 6/13, Dra, R, 115 min Gong Li. Dir: Chen Kaige	**Shall We Dance** (Japan), 7/11, Com, PG. Koji Yasuyo. Dir: Masayuki Suo. **Operation Condor** (Hong Kong), 7/18 wide, Act/Adv, PG-13. Dir/Star: Jackie Chan. **Mrs. Brown**, 7/18, Dra, PG. Judi Dench, Billy Connolly. Dir. John Madden. **Love Serenade** (Australia), 7/25, Com/Dra, R, 101 min. Miranda Otto. Dir. Shirley Barrett.	**Copland**, 8/1, Dra. Sylvester Stallone, Robert De Niro, Harvey Keitel, Ray Liotta, Janeane Garofalo. Dir: James Mangold. **Talk of Angels**, 8/8, Dra, PG-13, 97 min, Dolby SR. Polly Walker, Vincent Perez. Dir: Nick Hamm. **She's So Lovely**, 8/15, Dra. Sean Penn, Robin Wright, John Travolta. Dir: Nick Cassavetes. **Mimic**, 8/22 wide, SF/Thr. Mira Sorvino, Josh Brolin. Dir: Guillermo del Toro.	**Mouth to Mouth** (Spain), 9/5, Com, R, Do SR-D, Anamorphic, 110 min. Javier Bard Dir: Manuel Gomez Pereira. **Seven Notes in Black** (Italy), 9/19 NY/LA Jennifer O'Neill. Dir: Lucio Fulci. **Wide Awake**, 9/19, Dra, PG. Dana Delany Denis Leary. Dir. M. Night Shyamalan. **Little City**, 9/26.
New Line (310) 854-5811 (212) 649-4900			**Spawn**, 8/1, SF, 87 min, Dolby SR, DTS, SDDS, Flat. Michael Jai White, John Leguizamo, D.B. Sweeney, Martin Sheen. Dir: Mark Dippe. **Love Jones** (reissue), 8/8, Rom/Com. Larenz Tate, Nia Long. Dir: Theodore Witcher. **Money Talks**, 8/22, Act/Com, R, 92 min, Dolby SR, DTS, SDDS, Anamorphic. Charlie Sheen, Chris Tucker, Heather Locklear. Dir: Brett Ratner.	
Paramount (213) 956-5000 (212) 373-7000	**Face/Off**, 6/27, Act, R, 136 min, Dolby SR-D, SDDS, DTS, Anamorphic. John Travolta, Nicolas Cage, Joan Allen, Gina Gershon. Dir: John Woo.	**Kiss Me Guido**, 7/18 ltd, Com, R, 89 min. Nick Scotti, Anthony Barrile. Dir: Tony Vitale. **Good Burger**, 7/25, Com, PG, 94 min. Kel Mitchell, Kenan Thompson, Abe Vigoda. Dir: Brian Robbins.	**Event Horizon**, 8/15, SF/Thr. Laurence Fishburne, Sam Neill, Kathleen Quinlan. Dir: Paul Anderson. **A Smile Like Yours**, 8/22, Rom/Com, R. Greg Kinnear, Lauren Holly, Jay Thomas. Dir: Keith Samples.	**In and Out**, 9/19, Com, PG-13. Kevin Klin Tom Selleck, Joan Cusack, Debbie Reyno Wilford Brimley, Greg Jbara. Dir: Frank O
TriStar (310) 244-4000 (212) 833-8500	**My Best Friend's Wedding**, 6/20, Rom/Com, PG-13, 105 min, Dolby A & SR, SDDS, Anamorphic. Julia Roberts, Dermot Mulroney, Cameron Diaz, Rupert Everett, Philip Bosco. Dir: P.J. Hogan.			
20th Century Fox (310) 369-1000 (212) 556-2400	**Speed 2: Cruise Control**, 6/13, Act, PG-13, 125 min, Dolby SR, DTS, SDDS, Anamorphic. Sandra Bullock, Jason Patric, Willem Dafoe, Glenn Plummer, Temeura Morrison, Bnan McCardie. Dir: Jan De Bont	**Out to Sea**, 7/2, Com, PG-13, 106 min, Dolby SR, Flat. Walter Matthau, Jack Lemmon, Brent Spiner, Dyan Cannon, Elaine Stritch, Hal Linden, Donald O'Connor, Alexandra Powers. Dir: Martha Coolidge.	**Picture Perfect**, 8/1, Rom/Com, PG-13, 105 min, Dolby SR & SR-D, Flat. Jennifer Aniston, Kevin Bacon, Olympia Dukakis, Jay Mohr, Illeana Douglas. Dir. Glenn Gordon Caron.	**The Edge** (formerly The Wild, formerly Bookworm), 9/26, Act/Thr, R, 120 min, Do SR & SR-D, Anamorphic. Anthony Hopkin Alec Baldwin, Elle Macpherson, L.Q. Jones old Perrineau. Dir: Lee Tamahori.
Universal (818) 777-1000 (212) 759-7500		**A Simple Wish** (formerly The Fairy Godmother), 7/11, Com, PG, 95 min, DTS, Flat. Mara Wilson, Martin Short, Kathleen Turner, Robert Pastorelli. Dir. Michael Ritchie.	**Leave It to Beaver**, 8/22, Com, PG, ~83 min. Janine Turner, Christopher McDonald, Cameron Finley, Erik Von Detten. Dir: Andy Cadiff **Kull the Conqueror**, 8/29, Adv, PG-13, ~90 min. Kevin Sorbo, Tia Carrere, Karina Lombard, Litefoot, Thomas Ian Griffith. Dir: John Nicoella.	
Warner Bros. (818) 954-6000 (212) 484-8000	**Batman & Robin**, 6/20, Act/Adv, PG-13, 124 min, DTS. George Clooney, Chris O'Donnell, Alicia Silverstone, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Uma Thurman. Dir. Joel Schumacher.	**Wild America**, 7/2, Adv, PG, 107 min, Dolby SR & SR-D. Jonathan Taylor Thomas. Dir: Bill Dear. **Contact**, 7/11, Thr, PG, 150 min, SDDS, DTS. Jodie Foster, Matthew McConaughey, John Hurt. Dir: Robert Zemeckis. **187**, 7/30, Dra, R, DTS. Samuel L. Jackson, Kelly Rowan, John Heard. Dir: Kevin Reynolds.	**Conspiracy Theory**, 8/8, Thr, DTS. Mel Gibson, Julia Roberts, Patrick Stewart. Dir: Richard Donner **Free Willy 3: The Rescue**, 8/8, Fam/Adv, PG, DTS. Jason James Richter, August Schellenberg, Annie Corley. Dir: Sam Pillsbury **Steel**, 8/15, Act/Adv, 105 min, DTS. Shaquille O'Neal, Judd Nelson, Annabeth Gish, Richard Roundtree, Irma P. Hall. Dir: Kenneth Johnson.	**Fire Down Below**, 9/12, Act, DTS. Steven S Marg Helgenberger. Dir: Felix Enriquez Alcala. **L.A. Confidential**, 9/19, Dra, R, 138 min. Spacey, Kim Basinger, James Cromwell, Danny DeVito. Dir: Curtis Hanson. **Breaking Up**, 9/26 NY/LA/Tor. Russell Cr Salma Hayek. Dir: Robert Greenwald.

FEATURE CHART — SEPTEMBER 1997

October	November	Forthcoming	
merican Werewolf in Paris. 10/3, Hor. Delpy, Tom Everett Scott, Julie Bowen. nthony Walker. **t Man** (formerly Space Cadet), 10/10, Harland Williams, Beau Bridges, Shelley Dir: Stuart Gillard. **ng God** 10/17, Dra, R, Flat. Timothy n, David Duchovny, Angelina Jolie. ndy Wilson.	**Flubber** (formerly The Absent Minded Professor), 11/26, Com, Flat. Robin Williams, Raymond J. Barry, Ted Levine, Marcia Gay Harden, Wil Weaton. Dir: Les Mayfield. **The Little Mermaid** (1989 reissue), Ani, G, 89 min. Voices: Jodi Benson, Pat Carroll, Samuel E. Wright, Buddy Hackett Dirs: John Musker, Ron Clements.	**Kundun**, 12/25 ltd, Dra. Tenzin Thutob Tsarong, Gyurme Tethong Dir: Martin Scorsese. **The Horse Whisperer**, Dec, Dra. Robert Redford, Kristin Scott Thomas. Dir: Robert Redford. **Mr. Magoo**, Dec, Com/Live Act. Leslie Nielsen, Kelly Lynch, Nick Chinlund. Dir: Stanley Tong. **An Alan Smithee Film** (working title), Com. Sylvester Stallone. Dir: Alan Smithee (Arthur Hiller). **Deep Rising**, Act/Thr Treat Williams, Famke Janssen, Wes Studi, Anthony Heald. Dir: Stephen Sommers. **Firelight**, Dra. Sophie Marceau, Stephen Dillane Dir: William Nicholson. **Ishmael**, Dra. Dir: Jon Turteltaub. **Mighty Joe Young**, Adv. Charlize Theron, Bill Paxton Dir: Ron Underwood. **Mulan**, Ani. Voices: Ming Na-Wen. Dirs: Barry Cook, Tony Bancroft. **Washington Square**, Dra. Jennifer Jason Leigh, Albert Finney Dir: Agnieszka Holland	**Buena Vista** (818) 567-5000 (212) 593-8900
a (formerly The Eighth Day), 10/17, SF, n, SDDS, Anamorphic. Ethan Hawke, Uma an, Jude Law, Alan Arkin, Loren Dean, idal, Ernest Borgnine ndrew Niccol. **v What You Did Last Summer**, 10/24, amie Lee Curtis, Sara Michelle Gellar, er Love Hewitt, Freddie Prinze Jr. m Gillespie.		**Les Miserables**, X-mas. Liam Neeson, Uma Thurman. Dir: Bille August. **The Replacement Killers**, 2/6/98, Act. Chow Yun-Fat, Mira Sorvino, Michael Rooker, Clifton Gonzales-Gonzales, Jurgen Prochnow. Dir: Antoine Fugua **Homegrown**, 2/98. Dra. Billy Bob Thornton, Kelly Lynch, Hank Azaria. Dir: Stephen Gyllenhall. **Shut Up and Dance**, 2/98. Vanessa Williams, Kris Kristofferson. Dir: Randa Haines. **Spice Girls Movie**. 1st Quarter '98. Richard E. Grant, Spice Girls. **Bad Boys 2**, Act/Com. Will Smith, Martin Lawrence. Dir: Tom Dey **Gloria**, Dra. Sharon Stone. **My Giant** Billy Crystal, Gheorghe Muresan. Dir: Michael Lehmann. **Palmetto** Woody Harrelson, Elisabeth Shue. Dir: Volker Schlondorff. **Zero Effect**. Bill Pullman, Ben Stiller. Dir: Jake Kasdan.	**Columbia** (310) 244-4000 (212) 833-8500
Related (formerly Criminal Intent), , Dra. James Belushi, Tupac Shakur. im Kouf. (Orion) **leon**, 10/10, Fam. Voices: Adam Wylie, on Pinchot. Dir: Mario Andreacchio. wyn) **ane Streets** (formerly Hurricane), , Dra Brendan Sexton III, Kit Carson, n Elliot. Dir: Morgan J. Freeman.	**Liar**, 11/21, Dra/Thr. Tim Roth, Chris Penn, Michael Rooker. Dir: Jonas and Joshua Pate. **Red Corner**, Dra/Thr. Richard Gere, Bai Ling, Byron Mann. Dir: Jon Avnet.	**Bent**, 12/5, Dra. Luthaire Bluteau, Clive Owens. Dir: Sean Mathias (Goldwyn). **Tomorrow Never Dies** (aka Bond 18), 12/19. Pierce Brosnan, Michelle Yeoh, Jonathan Pryce. Dir: Roger Spottiswoode. **Welcome to Woop Woop**. 1/98, Com Dir. Stephan Elliott (Goldwyn). **Music From Another Room**, 2/6/98, Rom/Com. Brenda Blethyn, Jude Law Dir. Charlie Peters (Orion). **The Man in the Iron Mask**. 2/20/98, Adv Leonardo DiCaprio, John Malkovich, Gabriel Byrne, Gerard Depardieu, Jeremy Irons. Dir Randall Wallace **Storefront Hitchcock**, 3/27, Doc. Dir. Jonathan Demme (Orion). **Mod Squad**. 4/3. Dir: Stacy Title. **I Love You... Don't Touch Me**, 4/17, Rom/Com. Dir: Julie Davis (Goldwyn). **Species 2**. 5/15, SF. Michael Madsen, Natasha Henstridge. **Best Men** (aka Independence), Dra. Drew Barrymore, Luke Wilson, Dean Cain, Sean Patrick Flanery. Dir: Tamra Davis.	**MGM/UA** (310) 449-3000 (212) 708-0300
ouse of Yes, 10/10 NY/LA, Dra/Com. Posey, Josh Hamilton. Dir: Mark Waters. **oms** 10/24 wide, Hor. Peter O'Toole, a Going Dir: Joe Chappelle.	**Nightwatch**, 11/7. Ewan McGregor, Josh Brolin, Nick Nolte. **Welcome to Sarajevo** (formerly Sarajevo), 11/14, Dra. Stephen Dillane, Woody Harrelson. Dir: Michael Winterbottom. **Wings of the Dove**, 11/21, Dra Helena Bonham Carter, Linus Roache, Terence Stamp, Alison Elliott Dir: Ian Softley. **Sliding Doors**, 11/26. Gwyneth Paltrow.	**Wes Craven Thriller**, 12/12 **The Mighty**. 12/19, Dra. Sharon Stone, Gena Rowlands. Dir: Peter Chelsom. **Good Will Hunting**. 12/25. **Jackie Brown**, 12/25. Pam Grier, Samuel L. Jackson. Dir: Duentin Tarantino. **B. Monkey**, 2/98, Dra Asia Argento, Jared Harris, Rupert Everett. Dir: Michael Radford. **Sonatine**, 1st Qrt '98, Dra. Dir/Star: Takeshi Kitano. **Full Tilt Boogie** Dir. Sarah Kelly. **A Price Below Rubies**. Dra. Renee Zellweger. Dir: Boaz Yakin. **The Revenger's Comedies**. Dra Sam Neill, Helena Bonham Carter. Dir: Malcom Mowbray. **Scream 2**, Hor. Neve Campbell. Dir: Wes Craven. **Wishful Thinking** Jennifer Beals. Artemesia. Michel Serrault, Miki Manojlovic. Dir: Agnes Merlet.	**Miramax** (212) 941-3800 (213) 951-4200
e Nights, 10/3 ltd, 10/10 exp, Com/Dra, SR & SR-D, SDDS Mark Wahlberg, ne Moore, Burt Reynolds. aul Thomas Anderson. **empire** (formerly Dark City), 8/29, Thr, SR & SR-D, SDDS William Hurt, Rufus l, Kiefer Sutherland, Jennifer Connelly lex Proyas.	**Most Wanted** (formerly America's Most Wanted), 11/7, Act/Com, R. Keenen Ivory Wayans. Dir: David Hogan. **One Night Stand** (formerly One Night), 11/14, Dra. Wesley Snipes, Nastassja Kinski. Dir: Mike Figgis. **Mortal Kombat II: Annihilation**. 11/21, Act. Robin Shou, Talisa Soto. Dir. John R. Leonetti.	**Woo**, Dec, Rom/Com. Jada Pinkett, Tommy Davidson. Dir Daisy Von Scherler Mayer **Mr. Nice Guy**. 1/98, Act/Adv Jackie Chan. **The Wedding Singer**, 1/98, Com. Adam Sandler, Drew Barrymore. Dir: Frank Coraci. **Blade**, 2/98. Wesley Snipes, Stephen Dorff, Kris Kristofferson. Dir: Stephen Norrington. **Wag the Dog**, 2/98. Dustin Hoffman, Robert De Niro, Woody Harrelson. Dir: Barry Levinson. **American History X**, 3/98. Edward Norton, Edward Furlong. Dir: Tony Kaye. **Lost in Space**, 4/98. William Hurt, Gary Oldman Dir: Stephen Hopkins. **The Kiss** Danny DeVito, Holly Hunter, Queen Latifah. Dir: Richard La Gravenese **Players Club** Ice Cube, Jamie Fox Dir: Ice Cube. **Pleasantville**, Com. Tobey Maguire, Reese Witherspoon. Dir: Gary Ross.	**New Line** (310) 854-5811 (212) 649-4900
e Girls, 10/3, Thr, R. Morgan Freeman, Judd, Alex McArthur, Cary Elwes. ury Fleder **ale: A True Story** (formerly Illumination), Dra, PG Peter O'Toole. Dir: Charles dge.	**Going West in America**, 11/7, Thr Dennis Quaid, Danny Glover, Jared Leto. Dir: Jeb Stuart. **The Rainmaker**, 11/14 tent. (or 2/98), Dra. Matt Damon, Claire Danes. Dir: Francis Ford Coppola. **The Truman Show**, 11/14 tent (or 2/98), Dra. Jim Carrey, Ed Harris, Laura Linney. Dir: Peter Weir.	**Titanic**, 12/19, Rom/Adv. Leonardo DiCaprio, Kate Winslet, Bill Paxton, Billy Zane Dir: James Cameron. **Untitled Robert Benton** (aka The Magic Hour), Dec. Paul Newman, Susan Sarandon, Gene Hackman. Dir: Robert Benton. **The Flood**, 1/98, Act. Christian Slater, Morgan Freeman, Minnie Driver, Randy Quaid. Dir: Mikael Salomon. **Dead Man on Campus**, 3/98, Com. Tom Everett Scott. Dir: Alan Cohn. **Deep Impact**, Act/Thr Tea Leoni, Elijah Wood, Vanessa Redgrave, Robert Duvall Dir: Mimi Leder. **The Odd Couple II: Travelin' Light**, Com. Jack Lemmon, Walter Matthau Dir. Howard Deutch. **The Real Blonde** Matthew Modine Dir Tom DiCillo. **Snake Eyes**, Thr. Nicolas Cage. Dir. Brian De Palma	**Paramount** (213) 956-5000 (212) 373-7000
n (formerly Stray Dogs), 10/3. Sean Billy Bob Thornton, Jennifer Lopez, olte, Powers Boothe. Dir: Oliver Stone. **Years in Tibet**, 10/8, Dra. Brad Pitt, Thewlis, B.D. Wong Dir: Jean-Jacques d. **From the Sea** (formerly To Love and ved/ Forever), 10/24 ltd., Dra. Vincent Rachel Weisz. Dir: Beeban Kidron.	**Starship Troopers**, 11/7, SF, SDDS. Casper Van Dien, Dina Meyer, Neil Patrick Harris, Denise Richards, Jake Busey. Dir: Paul Verhoeven.	**Old Friends** 12/25, Dra. Jack Nicholson, Helen Hunt, Greg Kinnear. Dir: James Brooks. **Apt Pupil**, Dra. Ian McKellen, Brad Renfro, Kevin Pollak, Joe Morton. Dir: Bryan Singer. **Bloodline** (formerly Kilronen), Thr. Jessica Lange, Gwyneth Paltrow. Dir: Jonathan Darby. **Desperate Measures**. Act. Michael Keaton, Andy Garcia. Dir: Barbet Schroeder. **Godzilla** Hank Azaria, Matthew Broderick, Jean Reno. Dir: Roland Emmerich. **The Mask of Zorro**, Act/Adv. Antonio Banderas, Anthony Hopkins, Catherine Jones. Dir: Martin Campbell. **Sour Grapes** Steven Weber, Craig Bierko, Karen Sillas. Dir Larry David **Stinkers**, Com. B.D. Wong, Bronson Pinchot, Jennifer Coolidge Dir: Barnet Kellman. **Wild Things** Kevin Bacon, Matt Dillon. Dir. John McNaughton.	**TriStar** (310) 244-4000 (212) 833-8500
ood, 10/3, Dra, R, Dolby SR, SR-D, Flat. sa Williams, Mehki Phifer, Nia Long orge Tillman Jr. **Less Ordinary**, 10/24, Dra. Cameron Holly Hunter, Ewan McGregor. nny Boyle.	**Anastasia**, 11/21, Ani. Voices: Meg Ryan, John Cusack, Kelsey Grammer, Angela Lansbury Dirs: Don Bluth, Gary Goldman. **Alien Resurrection**, 11/26, SF. Sigourney Weaver, Winona Ryder, Brad Dourif, Dan Hedaya, Dominique Pinon, Ron Perlman. Dir Jean-Pierre Jeunet.	**Home Alone 3**, 12/19, Com. Alex D. Linz, Olek Krupa, Rya Kihlstedt Dir: Raja Gosnell. **Great Expectations** 12/31, Dra. Robert De Niro, Gwyneth Paltrow, Ethan Hawke. Dir: Alfonso Cuaron. **Doctor Dolittle**. Dec, Com. Eddie Murphy, Dristen Wilson, Kyla Pratt. Dir: Betty Thomas. **Untitled Bulworth**. Dec. Warren Beatty, Oliver Platt, Halle Berry, Paul Sorvino. Dir. Warren Beatty. **Firestorm**, Act/Adv, R Howie Long, Scott Glenn, Suzy Amis, William Forsythe. Dir: Dean Semler. **Hope Floats** Com. Sandra Bullock. Dir: Forest Whitaker. **How Stella Got Her Groove Back**. Dra Angela Bassett. Dir Kevin Rodney Sullivan. **The Newton Boys** Matthew McConaughey. Dir: Richard Linklater. **The X-Files Movie** David Duchovny, Gillian Anderson Dir Rob Bowman.	**20th Century Fox** (310) 369-1000 (212) 556-2400
	The Jackal, 11/14, Thr. Bruce Willis, Richard Gere, Sidney Poitier, Diane Venora, Mathilda May. Dir: Michael Caton-Jones.	**For Richer For Poorer**, 12/12, Rom/Com. Tim Allen, Kirstie Alley Dir Bryan Spicer **The Boxer**, 12/26 ltd, 1/9/98 wide, Dra. Daniel Day-Lewis, Emily Watson. Dir: Jim Sheridan. **Meet Joe Black**. Rom/Dra Brad Pitt, Anthony Hopkins, Claire Forlani. Dir Martin Brest. **Primary Colors**, Dra. John Travolta, Emma Thompson, Billy Bob Thornton. Dir: Mike Nichols. **Reach the Rock**. Dra/Com. Alessandro Nivola, William Sadler, Bruce Norris. Dir: Bill Ryan. **Simple Simon**. Thr Bruce Willis Dir: Harold Becker. **Virus** Thr. Jamie Lee Curtis, Donald Sutherland, William Baldwin, Cliff Curtis. Dir. John Bruno.	**Universal** (818) 777-1000 (212) 759-7500
vil's Advocate, 10/17, Dra. o, Keanu Reeves, Charlize Theron. lor Hackford **to**, 10/31, Thr. Jason Patric, Irene Jacob, iger. Dir: John Badham.	**The Man Who Knew Too Little** (formerly Watch That Man), 11/1, Com/Thr. Bill Murray, Joanne Whalley, Peter Gallagher. Dir: Jon Amiel. **Mad City**, 11/7, Dra. John Travolta, Dustin Hoffman, Mia Kirshner. Dir: Constantin Costa-Gavras.	**Sphere**, 12/12, SF. Dustin Hoffman, Sharon Stone, Samuel L. Jackson. Dir: Barry Levinson. **The Postman**. 12/25, SF. Kevin Costner, Olivia Williams, Larenz Tate. Dir. Kevin Costner **Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil**, X-mas. Kevin Spacey, John Cusack Dir Clint Eastwood. **Courtesan** (formerly Venice), Dra, R, 112 min. Catherine McCormack Dir: Marshall Herskovitz. **Edwards and Hunt**, Com. Chris Farley, Matthew Perry. Dir: Christopher Guest. **Eyes Wide Shut** Tom Cruise, Nicole Kidman. Dir. Stanley Kubrick. **Fallen**. Dra. Denzel Washington, John Goodman. **Goodbye, Lover** Patricia Arquette, Ellen DeGeneres, Dermot Mulroney. Dir Roland Joffe. **Home Fries**, Com. Drew Barrymore, Gary Busey. Dir: Dean Parisot **U.S. Marshals**, Act. Tommy Lee Jones, Wesley Snipes. Dir: Stuart Baird **Without Limits** (formerly Pre), Dra. Billy Crudup. Dir: Robert Towne.	**Warner Bros.** (818) 954-6000 (212) 484-8000

BOXOFFICE Independent Feature Chart SEPTEMBER 1997

AUGUST

Artificial Eye
212-255-1922

Mon Homme *(France)*, Com/Dra, 95 min. Anouk Grinberg. Dir: Bertrand Blier. 8/15 NY
Happiness *(France)*, Com, 102 min. Michel Serrault. Dir: Etienne Chatiliez. NY

CFP
212-995-9662

Sunday, Dra, 93 min. David Suchet, Lisa Harrow, Jared Harris. Dir: Jonathan Nossiter. 8/22 NY/LA

Castle Hill
212-888-0080

Trojan Eddie, Dra, 105 min. Richard Harris, Stephen Rea. Dir: Gillies Mackinnon. 8/29 NY, Sept LA

Cinema Parallel
410-442-1752

Talking to Strangers *(reissue)*. 8/2

First Run
212-243-0600

Hamsun *(Norway)*. 160 min. Max Von Sydow. Dir: Jan Troell 8/6

Fox Searchlight
310-369-4402

The Full Monty, Com, 91 min, R, Dolby SR, Flat. Robert Carlyle. Dir: Peter Cattaneo. 8/13 NY/LA, 8/29 exp

Gramercy
310-385-4400

How to Be a Player, Com. Bill Bellamy, Lark Voorhies. Dir: Lionel Martin. 8/6

Kino
212-629-6880

The Keeper. Giancarlo Esposito, Isaach de Bankole.

Kit Parker
800-538-5838

Coffy *(1973 reissue)*, Dra, 91 min. Pam Grier, Booker Bradshaw. Dir: Jack Hill. 8/29 NY

Legacy
213-467-3700

Pipi Longstocking *(reissue)*, Com. 8/22 ltd

Manga
415-975-5405

Tetsuo II: Body Hammer. Dir: Shinya Tsukamoto. 8/15 LA

Northern Arts
413-268-9301

Soul in the Hole, Doc, 100 min. Dir: Danielle Gardner. 8/8 NY/LA

October
212-539-4000

Career Girls, Dra. Katrin Cartlidge, Lynda Steadman. Dir: Mike Leigh. 8/8 NY/LA, 8/15 exp

Phaedra
310-478-3308

Dogs. Toby Huss, Pam Columbus. Dir: Eve Annenberg.
Kiss and Tell, Com. Rose McGowan. Dir: Jordan Alan.
Sleepy Heads. Dir: Yoshifumi Hosoya.

Seventh Art
213-845-1455

Things I Never Told You, Rom/Com. Lili Taylor, Andrew McCarthy. Dir: Isabel Coixet.

Sony Classics
212-833-8851

In the Company of Men, Dra, 93 min. Aaron Eckhart, Matt Malloy. Dir: Neil LaBute. 8/1 NY/LA

Strand
310-395-5002

The Delta, Dra. Shayne Gray, Thang Chan. Dir: Ira Sachs. 8/1 NY, 8/15 LA

Trimark
310-314-3040

Box of Moonlight, 107 min. John Turturro, Sam Rockwell. Dir: Tom DiCillo. 8/1 LA, 8/22 & 8/29 exp

Triumph
310-280-8059

Masterminds *(formerly Smart Alec)*, Act/Com. Patrick Stewart, Vincent Kartheiser, Brenda Fricker. Dir: Roger Christian. 8/22

Zeitgeist
212-274-1989

Conspirators of Pleasure *(Czech)*, Com. Dir: Jan Svankmajer. 8/20 NY, 9/19 LA
Fire *(India)*, Dra, 104 min. Shabani Azmi. Dir: Deepa Mehta. 8/22 NY

SEPTEMBER

CFP

Bandwagon, Com/Mus, 103 min. Kevin Corrigan, Lee Holmes. Dir: John Schultz. 9/12 ltd
Stag, Dra, 94 min. Andrew McCarthy, Mario Van Peebles. Dir: Gavin Wilding. 9/26 ltd

Dreamworks SKG
818-733-7000

The Peacemaker, Act/Adv. George Clooney, Nicole Kidman. Dir: Mimi Leder. 9/26

Filmopolis
310-914-1776

In a Strange City. Winston Chao, Kuei-mai Yang. Dir: Chi Yin.

Fine Line
212-649-4800

Gummo, Dra. Chloe Sevigny, Max Perlich. Dir: Harmony Korine. 9/26 NY

First Look
310-855-1199

Different for Girls, Rom/Com, 97 min. Rupert Graves. Dir: Richard Spence. 9/12 NY, LA

Fox Searchlight

Intimate Relations, Dra, 100 min, R. Dir: Philip Goodhew. 9/5
Ice Storm, Dra, R, 112 min, Dolby SR, Flat. Kevin Kline, Joan Allen. Dir: Ang Lee. 9/26 NY, 10/3 exp

Gramercy

Going All the Way, Dra. Jeremy Davies, Ben Affleck. Dir: Mark Pellington. 9/19 ltd, 9/26 exp

Greycat
702-737-0670

I Was a Jewish Sex Worker, Doc, 74 min. Dir: Phillip B. Roth. 9/1 LA

Kino

Capitaine Conan *(French reissue)*. Dir: Bertrand Tavernier.

Legacy

Love Always, Dra/Com. Marisa Ryan. Dir: Jude Pauline Eberhard. 9/26 ltd

Leisure Time
212-267-4501

Twisted, Dra, 100 min. William Hickey. Dir: Seth Michael Donsky.

Live
818-778-3174

Suicide Kings *(formerly Boys Night Out)*, Thr. Christopher Walken, Sean Patrick Flanery. Dir: Peter O'Fallow. 9/12
No Way Home, Dra. Tim Roth, Debra Winger, James Russo. Dir: Buddy Giovizzo.

Manga

Gravesend, Dra. Dir: Sal Stabile. 9/5 NY, 9/19 LA

Movieworld
510-244-5590

Omaha: the movie, Com. 9/26
Mary Jane's Not a Virgin Anymore, Dra. Dir: Sarah Jacobson.

Northern Arts

Withnail and I *(1987 British reissue)*, Com, 105 min. Richard E. Grant. Dir: Bruce Robinson.

October

Kicked in the Head, Com. Kevin Corrigan, Linda Fiorentino. Dir: Matthew Harrison. 9/12 NY/LA

Phaedra

Timeless, Dra. Dir: Chris Hart.

Polygram
310-385-4000

The Gingerbread Man, Thr. Kenneth Branagh, Embeth Davidtz. Dir: Robert Altman. 9/26

Seventh Art

The Long Way Home, Doc. Dir: Mark Jonathan Harris. 9/19 NY/LA

Sony Classics

The Myth of Fingerprints, Dra. Noah Wyle, Julianne Moore, Roy Scheider. Dir: B. Freundlich. 9/19 NY

Strand

Latin Boys Go to Hell. Irwin Ossa. Dir: Ela Troyano. 9/5 NY/LA
Self-Made Hero *(France)*, Dra. Dir: Jacques Audlard. 9/26
Nenette et Boni *(France)*, Dra. Gregoire Colin. Dir: Claire Denis.

Triumph

The Assignment, Act. Aidan Quinn, Donald Sutherland. Dir: Christian Duguay. 9/26

Zeitgeist

My Sex Life... or How I Got Into An Argument *(France)*, Com. Dir: Arnaud Desplechin. 9/17 NY
Anthem, Doc. Dirs: Shainee Gabel and Kristin Hahn. 9/19 NY

OCTOBER

Castle Hill

Eye of God, Dra. Martha Plimpton, Nick Stahl. Dir: Tim Blake. 10/17 NY, 10/31 LA

CFP

The Twilight of the Golds, Dra. Jennifer Beals, Faye Dunaway, Brendan Fraser. Dir: Ross Marks. 10/24

Fine Line

The Sweet Hereafter, Dra. Ian Holm. Dir: Atom Egoyan. 10/10
Deconstructing Harry, Com. Kirstie Alley. Dir/Star: Woody Allen. 10/24 NY/LA, 10/31 exp

Gramercy

Bean, Com. Rowan Atkinson. Dir: Mel Smith. 10/17

Greycat

Parallel Sons, Rom/Dra, 93 min. Dir: John G. Young. 10/10 NY
David Searching, Com/Dra, 103 min. Anthony Rapp. Dir: Leslie Smith.

Kit Parker

Nueba Yol II, Com/Dra, ~95 min, NR. Luisito Marti, Raul Carbonel. Dir: Angel Muniz.

Live

Wes Craven Presents Wishmaster, Hor. Dir: Robert Kurtzman. 10/3

Manga

Tokyo Fist, Act. Dir/Star: Shinya Tsukamoto.

New Yorker
212-247-6110

Deep Crimson, Dra, 114 min. Daniel Gimenez, Marisa Paredes. Dir: Arturo Ripstein. 10/8

Northern Arts

Midaq Alley *(Mexico)*, Dra, 140 min. Salma Hayek, Ernesto Gomez Cruz. Dir: Jorge Fons.

BOXOFFICE Independent Feature Chart SEPTEMBER 1997

October

Year of the Horse, Doc. Neil Young. Dir: Jim Jarmusch.

Polygram

The Game, Dra/Thr. Michael Douglas, Sean Penn. Dir: David Fincher. 10/3

Sony Classics

Fast, Cheap & Out of Control, Doc, 79 min. Dir: Errol Morris. 10/3 NY/LA

Trimark

Chairman of the Board, Com. Carrot Top. 10/10

Turbulent Arts

415-552-1952

Lilies, Dra. Brent Carver, Marcel Sabourin. Dir: John Greyson. 10/17 NY, 10/24 LA

NOVEMBER

Castle Hill

Further Gesture. Stephen Rea. Ltd

CFP

Sick: The Life and Death of Bob Flanagan, Supermasochist, Doc. Dir: Kirby Dick. 11/7 NY, LA

First Look

Mrs. Dalloway. Vanessa Redgrave. Dir: Marleen Gorris. 11/7 NY/LA

Fox Searchlight

Oscar & Lucinda, Dra, ~131 min. Ralph Fiennes, Cate Blanchett. Dir: Gillian Armstrong. 11/14

Gramercy

Matchmaker *(formerly The Strangest Places)*, Com. Janeane Garofalo, David O'Hara. Dir: Mark Joffe. 11/21

International Pictures

212-925-0404

The Knowledge of Healing, Doc, 90 min. Dir: Franz Reichley. 11/5 NY

Live

Critical Care, Dra/Thr. James Spader, Albert Brooks, Kyra Sedgwick. Dir: Sidney Lumet. 11/7

Dirty Dancing *(1987, director's cut)*, 97 min. Patrick Swayze. Dir: Emile Ardolino.

October

Kiss or Kill *(Australia)*, Dra/Thr. Matt Day, Frances O'Conner, Chris Haywood. Dir: Bill Bennett.

Sony Classics

Tango Lesson. Dir: Sally Potter. 11/14 NY/LA

Theafilm

213-368-1778

Madam, the Grass Is High. Dir: Delbert Mann. Thanksgiving ltd

DECEMBER

Dreamworks SKG

Amistad *(formerly Mutiny)*, Dra. Matthew McConaughey, Morgan Freeman. Dir: Steven Spielberg. 12/12 ltd, 12/19 exp

Mousehunt, Com/Ani. Nathan Lane, Lee Evans. Dir: Gore Verbinski. 12/25

Fine Line

Julian Po *(formerly Tears of Julian Po)*, Dra. Christian Slater. Dir: Alan Wade. 12/5 NY/LA

Winter Guest, Dra. Emma Thompson, Phylidda Law. Dir: Alan Rickman. 12/19 NY

Gramercy

The Big Lebowski. Jeff Bridges, John Goodman. Dirs: Joel and Ethan Coen. 12/25 NY/LA, Jan. exp

New Yorker

Beaumarchais *(France)*, Com, 100 min. Fabrice Luchini. Dir: Edouardo Molinaro. 12/19 NY, Jan exp.

Trimark

Eve's Bayou, Dra. Samuel L. Jackson, Lynn Whitfield. Dir: Kasi Lemmons. 12/25 ltd, 1/17 exp

Zeitgeist

Will It Snow for Christmas? Dir: Sandrine Veysset. 12/17 NY

JANUARY '98

Fine Line

Girl Talk, Dra/Com. Troy Beyer, Randi Ingerman. Dir: Troy Beyer. Jan '98

Manga

General Chaos: Uncensored Animation, Ani. Various dirs.

Trimark

Star Kid *(formerly Warrior of Waverly Street)*, SF. Joseph Mazzello. Dir: Manny Coto.

FORTHCOMING

Artificial Eye

The Mother and the Whore *(France, 1973)*, Dra, 210 min. Jean-Pierre Leaud. Dir: Jean Eustache. Fall

Artistic License

212-265-9119

Color of a Brisk and Leaping Day, Dra, 90 min. Peter Alexander. Dir: Christopher Munch. Fall

Riding the Rails, Doc. Dirs: Michael Uys, Lexy Lovell.

Other Voices, Other Rooms, Dra. Lothaire Bluteau, Anna Thomson. Dir: David Rocksavage.

CFP

Love and Death on Long Island, Dra. John Hurt, Jason Priestley. Dir: Richard Kwietniowski.

Junk Mail, Com. Robert Skjaerstad, Andrine Saether, Per Egil Aske. Dir: Pal Sletaune.

Cinema Village

212-431-5119

Cartoon Noir, Ani, 85 min. Fall

Mondo Plympton, Ani, 85 min. Dir: Bill Plympton. Fall

Dove

310-786-1600

Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, Com/SF, 92 min. Douglas Adams. Dir: Neil Davies.

Dreamworks SKG

Paulie: A Parrot's Tale. Dir: John Roberts. 3/20/98

Saving Private Ryan, Dra. Tom Hanks, Tom Sizemore, Edward Burns. Dir: Steven Spielberg. 6/12/98

The Prince of Egypt, Ani. Voices: Val Kilmer, Steve Martin. Dirs: Simon Wells, Steve Hicker and Brenda Chapman. 11/98

Ants, Ani. Voice: Woody Allen.

Blue Vision. Dir: Neil Jordan.

El Dorado: City of Gold, Ani. Dir: Will Finn.

Small Soldiers.

Fine Line

Didier *(France)*. Alain Chabat. Dir: Alain Chabat.

The Legend of the Pianist on the Ocean, Dra. Tim Roth. Dir: Giuseppe Tornatore.

Pecker, Com. Dir: John Waters.

Red Violin. Samuel L. Jackson. Dr: Francois Girard.

When I Close My Eyes *(Japan) (formerly Letters of Love)*, Dra, 116 min. Dir: Shunji Iwai.

First Look

Slaves to the Underground, Dra, 92 min. Dir: Kristine Petersen.

Keep the Aspidistra Flying, Dra/Com. Richard E. Grant, Helena Bonham Carter.

The Other Side of Sunday *(Norway)*, Dra. Dir: Berit Nesheim.

This Is the Sea, Dra. Richard Harris, Gabriel Byrne, John Lynch. Dir: Mary McGuckian.

First Run

Forgotten Silver. Mock Doc. Dirs: Peter Jackson, Costa Botes.

Project Grizzly, Doc.

Six O'Clock News, Doc.

Fox Searchlight

Cousin Bette, Dra. Jessica Lange, Bob Hoskins. Dir: Des McAnuff.

Hard Men *(UK)*, Dra. Vincent Regan, Ross Boatman. Dir: J. K. Amalou.

Polish Wedding. Claire Danes, Gabriel Byrne, Lena Olin, Mili Avital. Dir: Theresa Connelly.

Ship of Fools, Dra/Com. Stanley Tucci, Campbell Scott, Tony Shalhoub, Isabella Rossellini. Dir: Stanley Tucci.

Gramercy

Body Count, Act. Ving Rhames, Forest Whitaker, David Caruso. Dir: Robert Patton Spruill. '98

Land Girls. Gwyneth Paltrow. Dir: David Leland.

Tempting Fate *(formerly Shakespeare's Sister)*, Dra. Kenneth Branagh, Madeleine Stowe. Dir: Leslie Linka Glatter.

Greycat

A Gun for Jennifer, Thr.

Killer Tounge, SF, 90 min. Melinda Clark. Dir: Alberto Sciamma

Gurney Releasing

212-838-2929

Follow the Bitch, Com. Melissa Lechner. Dir: Julian Stone.

Live

The Breakup. Bridget Fonda.

Joyride. Tobey Maguire, Benecio Del Toro.

The Second Arrival, SF. Patrick Muldoon. Dir: Kevin Tenny.

Movieworld

The Killing Kind, Dra. Kirk Harris.

The Lost Woman. Jennifer Rubin.

New Yorker

Underground, Dra, 168 min. Dir: Emir Kusturica.

October

Condo Painting, Doc. Dir: John McNaughton. '98

Hearts and Minds, Thr, R, 105 min. Dir: Ralph Ziman. '98

Three Seasons, Dra. Harvey Keitel. Dir: Tony Bui. '98

Shadow

207-872-5111

La Petite Apocalypse *(France)*, Com/Dra, 110 min. Pierre Arditi. Dir: Constantin Costa-Gavras.

Sony Classics

Ma Vie en Rose. Michele Laroque. Dir: Alain Berliner. 2/98

Nil by Mouth. Kathy Burke, Edna Dore. Dir: Gary Oldman. 2/98

Men With Guns, Dra. Frederico Luppi. Dir: John Sayles. 3/98

Strand

Ayn Rand: A Sense of Life, Doc.

Full Speed, Dra, 85 min. Elodie Bouchez. Dir: Gael Murel.

La Sentinelle *(France)*, Thr, 144 min. Dir: Arnaud Desplechin.

The Mouse. John Savage, Angelica Torn. Dir: Dan Adams.

Nights of Cabiria *(1957 Italian reissue)*, Dra, 110 min. Giulietta Masina. Dir: Federico Fellini.

The Tit and the Moon *(Spain)*, Com, 92 min. Dir: Bigas Lunas.

Tara

415-454-5838

Mushrooms *(Australia)*, Com, 93 min. Dir: Alan Madden.

Theafilm

James Dean: Race With Destiny. Casper Van Dien, Robert Mitchum. Dir: Mardi Rustam.

HOME RELEASE CHART

BOXOFFICE

SEPTEMBER 1997

HOME RELEASE	TITLE	BOXOFFICE (MILLIONS)	SCREENS	THEATRICAL RELEASE	THEATRICAL/VIDEO DISTRIBUTOR
August 12	Crash	$3.4	339	March 21	Fine Line/New Line
August 12	The Devil's Own	$42.8	2,504	March 26	Columbia/Col. TriStar
August 12	Everyone Says I Love You	$9.7	276	December 6	Buena Vista/Miramax
August 12	Lost Highway	$3.7	325	February 21	Gramercy/PolyGram
August 12	Mother	$19.1	621	December 25	Paramount
August 19	The Beautician and the Beast	$11.5	1,801	February 7	Paramount
August 19	Cats Don't Dance	$3.6	1,252	March 26	Warner Bros.
August 19	Dante's Peak	$67.1	2,657	February 7	MCA/Universal
August 19	Kama Sutra: A Tale of Love	$4.1	79	February 28	Trimark/Vidmark
August 19	Kolya	$5.5	173	January 24	Buena Vista/Miramax
August 23	McHale's Navy	$4.3	1,861	April 18	MCA/Universal
August 26	Hard Eight	$.1	29	February 28	Goldwyn/Columbia TriStar
August 26	Inventing the Abbotts	$5.7	898	April 4	Fox
August 26	Love Jones	$12.1+	821	March 14	New Line
August 26	Murder at 1600	$25.8	2,158	April 18	Warner Bros.
August 26	Rosewood	$13.1	991	February 21	Warner Bros.
August 26	Thieves	$1.2	24	December 25	Columbia/Col. TriStar
September 14	Double Team	$11.2	2,203	April 4	Columbia/Col. TriStar
September 16	The Saint	$61.3+	2,500	April 4	Paramount
September 23	The English Patient	$77.8+	683	November 15	Buena Vista/Miramax
September 30	Liar Liar	$177.4+	2,909	March 21	MCA/Universal
September 30	Volcano	$47.3+	2,777	April 25	Fox
September	Addicted to Love	$33.8	2,021	May 23	Warner Bros.
September	Fathers' Day	$28.7+	2,507	May 9	Warner Bros.
September	Grosse Pointe Blank	$27.8	1,242	April 11	Buena Vista/Hollywood
September	Jingle All the Way	$60.6	2,404	November 22	Fox
September	Romy and Michele's...	$28.6+	1,607	April 25	Buena Vista/Hollywood
September	Selena	$34.9	1,873	March 21	Warner Bros.
October 7	Anaconda	$63.9+	2,456	April 11	Columbia/Col. TriStar
October 7	That Old Feeling	$16.1	1,599	April 4	MCA/Universal
October 28	The Fifth Element	$61.3+	2,500	May 9	Columbia/Col. TriStar
October	Austin Powers	$52.4+	2,187	May 2	New Line
October	Breakdown	$49.4+	2,348	May 2	Paramount
October	Chasing Amy	$11.3	553	April 4	Buena Vista/Miramax
October	Gone Fishin'	$18.2	1,846	May 30	Buena Vista/Touchstone
October	My Best Friend's Wedding	$94.7+	2,134	June 20	TriStar/Col. Tristar

Compiled by BOXOFFICE MAGAZINE. Numbers for ***Boxoffice Gross*** represent total domestic boxoffice grosses to the nearest $100,000; + signs indicate that films remain in theatrical release. Number of ***Screens*** indicates the maximum number of screens in widest, simultaneous release. Entries in the ***Theatrical/Video Distributor*** column list two names when the video releasing company is different from (or releases through a subsidiary different from) the theatrical distributor. Exact day-and-date specific entries for ***Home Video Release*** are confirmed; in all other cases, the month indicated for a release is forecast by the editors of BOXOFFICE. BOXOFFICE is not liable for errors or omissions in the chart.

Boxoffice Magazine presents



MovieFone's Moviegoer Activity Report

For the Month of June 1997

MovieFone® (777-FILM®) and its sister service, MovieLink® Online, are now the single largest source of movie showtime information in the country, providing information to over 12 million moviegoers each month. The following information represents the most requested theatres and exhibitors on MovieFone.

Top 10 Exhibitors & Theatres

Most Requested Exhibitors

Rank	Exhibitor	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
1	United Artists	669,851	1
2	AMC	605,562	3
3	Cineplex Odeon	551,841	2
4	Sony	475,410	4
5	General Cinema	364,825	5
6	Century	231,160	6
7	Cinemark	199,033	7
8	Regal	136,427	10
9	Mann	131,319	9
10	Act III	121,197	11

Most Requested Theatres

Rank	Market	Theatre	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
1	NY	Sony Lincoln Square	42,296	1
2	LA	AMC Century 14	33,759	3
3	NY	Sony Orpheum	33,594	8
4	NY	CO Worldwide	29,275	5
5	BO	Sony Cheri	23,851	2
6	NY	CO Chelsea	23,668	6
7	MI	Cobb Palace 18	23,332	20
8	NY	City Cin Village East	22,458	44
9	PH	UA Riverview Plaza	21,881	11
10	PX	Century Glendale 9 D-I	21,732	148

Most Requested Theatres Per Screen

Total Requests	Rank	Theatre (# screens)	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
New York	1	CO Ziegfeld (1)	10,887	1
1,023,147	2	Sony Astor (1)	6,247	11
	3	CO Chelsea West (2)	10,485	19
Los Angeles	1	Pacific Cinerama Dome (1)	5,849	1
568,767	2	GCC Avco (3)	17,462	2
	3	Mann Village (1)	4,857	6
Dallas	1	AMC Highland Pk. (4)	8,831	1
555,490	2	UA Cine (2)	4,137	12
	3	AMC Forum (6)	11,230	6
Miami	1	Cobb Miami Lakes (10)	17,573	2
333,277	2	Cobb Kendall (9)	14,336	10
	3	UA Movies at the Falls (12)	18,029	5
San Francisco	1	UA Coronet (1)	9,630	13
326,030	2	Century Century 21 (1)	5,712	2
	3	UA Stonestown (2)	10,700	12
Philadelphia	1	Cinemagic (3)	15,184	2
260,290	2	UA Sameric (4)	13,582	1
	3	AMC Olde City (2)	5,698	3
Phoenix	1	Hark Cine Capri (1)	4,051	2
249,857	2	Century Glendale 9 D-I (9)	21,732	14
	3	SupSav Palm Glen (8)	12,807	6
Chicago	1	CO Biograph (3)	8,186	5
192,299	2	Sony Esquire (6)	10,015	6
	3	CO Lincoln Village 7-9 (3)	3,855	3
Boston	1	Sony Cheri (4)	23,851	1
190,382	2	FEI Somerville (1)	2,842	3
	3	GCC Chestnut Hill (5)	10,198	7
Houston	1	CO River Oaks Plaza (12)	14,628	2
185,983	2	Dollar Clearlake (8)	8,333	4
	3	AMC Almeda Square (5)	4,747	5
Toronto	1	Famous Uptown (3)	10,037	1
168,941	2	Famous Eglinton (1)	2,896	9
	3	CO Erin Mills Twn. Ctr. (5)	13,430	2
San Diego	1	Mann Cinema 21 (1)	2,029	4
111,977	2	Mann Valley Circle (1)	1,179	14
	3	Pacific Grossmont Ctr. (8)	5,197	11

Total Requests	Rank	Theatre (# screens)	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
Kansas City	1	Dksn Glenwood (4)	6,787	2
105,623	2	Boulevard D-I (1)	1,419	1
	3	Dksn Antioch (2)	2,203	3
Atlanta	1	UA Tara (4)	2,609	3
102,580	2	AMC Galleria (8)	4,474	1
	3	Lef Toco Hills (1)	504	19
Denver	1	UA Continental (6)	5,329	2
95,480	2	Cinderella Twin D-I (2)	1,585	1
	3	UA Cooper 5 - Aurora (5)	3,731	5
Seattle	1	CO City Centre (2)	2,545	4
89,268	2	Landmk Neptune (1)	923	1
	3	Act III Mountlake (9)	7,799	5
Nashville	1	Carmike Springfield (1)	2,912	1
77,561	2	Carmike Lions Head (5)	4,162	3
	3	Carmike Bell Forge (10)	8,217	2
San Antonio	1	Act III Rolling Oaks (6)	4,924	1
73,015	2	Act III Westlakes (9)	6,098	2
	3	Act III Nakoma (8)	5,264	7
Minneapolis	1	Mann MN Suburban World (1)	821	37
72,653	2	Mann MN Grandview (2)	1,237	21
	3	GCC Shelard Park (5)	3,014	17
Cleveland	1	Sony Cedar (2)	1,303	1
64,333	2	General Parma (3)	1,815	3
	3	GCC Ridge Park Square (8)	4,824	2
Las Vegas	1	Century Las Vegas 6 D-I (6)	7,418	1
61,854	2	UA Showcase (8)	7,812	2
	3	Gold Coast Twin (2)	1,387	4
Sacramento	1	UA Market Square (6)	3,877	6
48,174	2	Century 49'er D-I (6)	3,448	3
	3	Century Capitol (4)	2,272	1
Washington, DC	1	CO Uptown (1)	2,498	1
46,871	2	CO Cinema (1)	936	4
	3	CO Embassy (1)	514	2
Detroit	1	AMC Southland (4)	1,863	1
37,633	2	Star Lincoln Park (8)	1,991	2
	3	AMD Southfield City (12)	2,799	6

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1. CO Worldwide New York, NY
2. Sony Lincoln Sq. New York, NY
3. AMC The Grand Dallas, TX

*Caller specifically requested theatre

Key to Exhibitors

AMC	AMC Theatres, Inc.	Dksn	Dickinson Theatres	Landmk	Landmark Theatre Corp	NA	National Amusements				
Act III	Act III Theatres	Dollar	Dollar Cinemas	Lef	Lefont Theaters	Pacific	Pacific Theatres				
Carmike	Carmike Cinemas, Inc.	Famous	Famous Players	Laemmle	Laemmle Theatres	Regal	Regal Cinemas				
Century	Century Theatres	FEI	FEI Theaters	Mann	Mann Theatres	Sony	Sony Theatres				
CityCin	City Cinemas	GCC	General Cinema Theatres	Mann MN	Mann Minneapolis	Star	Loeks-Star Theatres				
CO	Cineplex Odeon Corp.	General	General Theatres	Mel	Metropolitan Theatres Corp	SupSav	Super Saver Cinemas				
Cobb	Cobb Theatres	Hark	Harkins Theatres	Muvico	Muvico Theatres	UA	United Artists Theatre Circuit				

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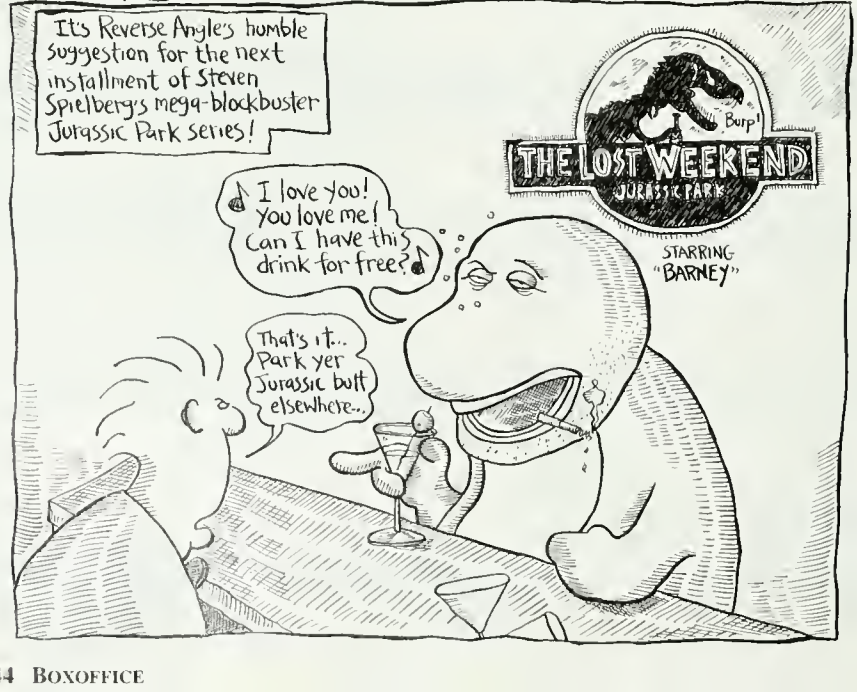
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The Big Picture

In calling his dark period novel on '50s movieland corruption "L.A. Confidential," mystery writer James Ellroy got it right. Back in the supposedly placid 1950s, Confidential Magazine was every studio publicist's worst nightmare—the tinseltown tattler, ready to go to any sleazy extreme to tell the trashy truth about the sacred cows and tinhorn idols of the movie elite.

For decades, the Hollywood powers that be had kept a lid on the often scandalous off-screen antics of the glamorous young millionaires who made up the movie colony. Mindful of the destructive controversies of the '20s (the Fatty Arbuckle manslaughter case, the death by overdose of "all-American" actor Wallace Reid, the kinky revelations accompanying the unsolved murder of director William Desmond Taylor), the film bosses had taken steps by the early '30s to control every aspect of their top stars' public images. The founding of the Hayes Office and the institution of Hollywood's first production code kept movie content from offending the tender sensibilities of the American public, while a complex and powerful network of industry flacks orchestrated carefully stage-managed public appearances for the Hollywood talent pool, calculated to make some of the most notorious hedonists in American history seem like nothing more nor less than exemplars of the mainstream Middle American value system who got lucky and made good.



Confidential changed all that. The brainchild of Robert Harrison, a former adman for the now-defunct Motion Picture Daily, and A.P. Govoni, a sometime editor for the National Police Gazette, Confidential took the Hearstian "yellow journalism" approach pioneered in such outlets as The New York Graphic and The Los Angeles Mirror and applied it in full-throttle, lunge-for-the-jugular fashion against the cream of the Filmtown crop. Journalistic ethics were loose at best: In addition to "sourcing" the usual crowd of industry hangers-on with an ax to grind, Confidential deployed its own network of private detectives, including the notorious Fred Otash, a former L.A. cop who became legendary within the Hollywood community for his implacable exposure of the most intimate details of celebrity misbehavior, both public and private.

Pay-offs to movietown hookers were commonplace, and Confidential wasn't shy about running the most intimate details culled from these less-than-reputable sources. "I'm a Hollywood call girl," ran the lead to one article published in March of 1957. "For a price, I've been up against the best of the movieland wolves. But for sheer novelty, give me Danny Kaye every time."

The public lapped it up. At the height of its power, Confidential racked up a whopping four million monthly readers, with more copies sold of each issue than the circulation of such emblems of '50s Americana as Look or The Saturday Evening Post. "Everyone [in Hollywood] reads Confidential," Humphrey Bogart once said. "But they deny it. They say the cook brought it into the house."

But not everyone, as it turned out, read it with pleasure. In 1955, under pressure from the film industry, the U.S. government took steps to suppress Confidential. The Postal Service ruled that sexy stories about Sammy Davis Jr., Guy Madison and Walter Pidgeon, among others, were demonstrably obscene, and ordered Confidential's publishers to submit advance copies to the Solicitor General's office, which would rule (presumably very harshly) on their suitability to be distributed through the mail. It was a naked violation of the First Amendment, and with the help of ace attorney Edward Bennett Williams, Confidential beat back the challenge.

After that came the deluge. In 1957, a California state senator launched an investigation into whether Confidential was encouraging California-based private detectives into selling out their clients. When that tactic failed, California governor Goodwin Knight directed state attorney general Edmund G. Brown to mount a full-scale investigation of Confidential and its scores of imitators.

In a star-packed trial that included testimony from the likes of Dorothy Dandridge, Maureen O'Hara and Liberace, Confidential fought the state of California to a draw. After 15 days of deliberations, the jury hung, and a mistrial was declared. With legal costs mounting, Harrison accepted a plea bargain that included a guilty plea to one obscenity charge and a binding agreement to lay off Hollywood. It took Harrison just three issues to realize that a defanged Confidential was finished; he sold out, and though the magazine continued to publish well into the 1960s, its era of notoriety and influence was over.

Though its hyped-up tabloid style makes it a period piece today, the ghost of Confidential looms large over American celebrity journalism. Stories that would have rocked the public back in the Eisenhower era are now considered so commonplace that they are fit cover subjects for the likes of People and TV Guide. The more errant stars have themselves gotten into the act, often collaborating on their own carefully orchestrated "triumph of a survivor" publicity campaigns in which the most intimate and sordid details are passed out like free beer, accompanied by a "but that's all behind me now" chaser.

Meanwhile, the hold stardom has on the American consciousness has in many ways become its defining characteristic. Broadcast at us 24 hours a day, screaming at us from every supermarket checkout line, as close as the nearest moviehouse and as far away as the latest satellite transmission, celebrity has become pervasive, omnipresent. Proud of its outsider status, it's doubtful Confidential could survive in such a star-obsessed world. In America as well as all over the world, there simply no longer seems to be an outside.—***Ray Greene***







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UNQUOTE: *I made "The Godfather," "The Conversation," "Godfather II" and "Apocalypse Now," and I was shocked at all the trouble I was in at the end of it.*—**Francis Coppola**

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Conventional wisdom says that the attempt to create a studio called American Zoetrope was Francis Coppola's biggest mistake. A look at the rise and fall of an idea that just might have been too far ahead of its time. ***By Ray Greene***

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HOLLYWOOD UPDATES

Ron Bass, who scripted the TriStar hit "My Best Friend's Wedding," has signed a three-year exclusive writing deal with **Sony Pictures Entertainment.** Before this pact (which also will have Bass producing other writers' scripts) commences in January, Bass will fulfill three other scripting commitments: "Mozart and the Whale," about a high-functioning autistic couple, for DreamWorks; an adaptation of "The Diving Bell and the Butterfly," also for DreamWorks; and an as-yet-unnamed project for Jerry Zucker and Universal.

Producer **Sean Cunningham** ("Friday the 13th") has formed **Sun Valley Film Corp.**, a production company to handle mainstream fare, while his **Cunningham Prods.** will continue to focus on the horror genre. Currently in development at Cunningham Prods. is "Freddy vs. Jason" for New Line. Sun Valley's first project will be the romantic comedy "Gold Rush," about the relationship between a businesswoman and the owner of the small brewery she's trying to buy out. Their romance is put to the test when she learns her young-looking beau is really 177 years old. Also in the works at Sun Valley is "Necessary Evil," a comedy about an ex-con trying to get his son back from inept kidnappers without letting his wife know their child is missing.

Sandy Gallin's Sandollar Prods. has renewed its first-look pact with **Disney** for its theatrical product. Currently in development under the deal is a third "Father of the Bride" movie; a romantic comedy called "At Last" by "Swingers" scripter Jon Favreau; and "Bruno the Big Baby," a comedy by Robin Schiff ("Romy & Michele's High School Reunion").

Inspired by the popularity and success of touring musical festivals, filmmaker **Suzanne Myers** has organized **Fuel,** which she hopes will become the Lolapalooza of the exhibition industry. Fuel, a program of four films which will tour 11 cities, will feature Myers' own "Alchemy," about a young sculptor; Chris Smith's "American Job," which chronicles one man's succession of dead-end jobs; Dante Harper's "The Delicate Art of the Rifle," a black comedy about the 1966 mass murder at the University of Texas; and Hannah Weyer's "Arresting Gena," about a teenage girl who lives with her uncle when her mother falls into a coma. Fuel kicks off in October in Raleigh, N.C., and will then proceed to Washington, D.C.; Philadelphia, Pa.; Providence, R.I.; Cambridge, Mass.; Columbus, Ohio; Cleveland, Ohio; Chicago, Ill.; San Francisco, Calif.; Seattle, Wa.; and Portland, Ore. Booking was handled by **Jeff Lipsky**, co-founder of October Films and most recently head of distribution for East-West Film Partners. The venues Lipsky selected are all independent theatres with a commitment to art-house product. "I wanted to stick with the exhibitors who were steadfastly dedicated to independent film, to cutting-edge cinema, who played as much Strand Releasing product as they did Miramax product," Lipsky told BOXOFFICE. The cities were also strategically chosen to target the right audience. "It's kind of a mix between A and B markets, markets that have some kind of a college presence, markets that are known as cutting-edge markets, where such films tend to take root." The program will play for a week in each site, with the filmmakers travelling along to speak to audiences about their films. A second group of cities may be chosen to continue the tour in January, depending on the success of Fuel's maiden voyage. From there, Fuel may become an annual event: "I know Suzanne has every intention of creating a tradition here and maintaining that tradition."

Actor **Ben Stiller** ("Flirting With Disaster") has named **George Linardos** to run his Fox 2000-based production company, **Red Hour Prods.** Linardos was previously Uma Thurman's producing partner, and prior to that, he worked as a development executive for Oliver Stone's Ixtlan on such projects as "The People Vs. Larry Flynt."

Hallmark Entertainment Prods. Worldwide has appointed **David Picker** as its president as part of a major expansion into theatrical motion pictures. The company is currently selecting movie projects to produce and co-finance. Picker has headed production at United Artists, Paramount and Columbia in the past; most recently, he produced "The Crucible" for 20th Century Fox.

David Friendly is leaving his position as president of **Davis Entertainment** to form his own production company, **Friendly Prods.**, and has already signed on with **Fox 2000** for a three-year exclusive deal. Friendly's producing credits include "Out to Sea," "Courage Under Fire" and the upcoming "Dr. Dolittle."

Miramax Films has inked a first-look deal with "Shall We Dance?" director **Masayuki Suo**, producer **Shoji Masui** and **Altamira Pictures**. "Shall We Dance?," about a Japanese businessman who secretly takes ballroom dancing lessons, outperformed the debuts of Miramax's other successful foreign language films "Like Water For Chocolate," "Cinema Paradiso" and "Il Postino," taking in over $88,000 on its opening weekend and averaging more than $17,000 per screen. At press time, the film had grossed $3 million.

Dimension Films, Miramax's genre label, has entered into a two-picture deal with **Craig Mazin** and **Greg Erb**, a comedy-writing team who cut their teeth running Princeton's humor magazine. The duo has already sold two pitches: "Rocket Man," which Buena Vista will release this fall; and "Senseless," the Damon Wayans starrer, due out through Miramax in early 1998. Dimension has bought Mazin and Erb's pitch "Daddy's Boy," about a twentysomething guy who returns to his hometown to find that his mother is planning on marrying his former high school pal.

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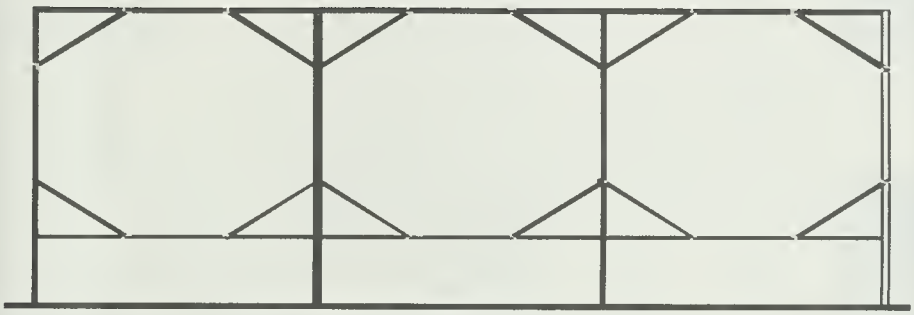
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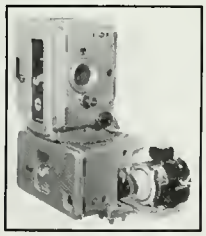
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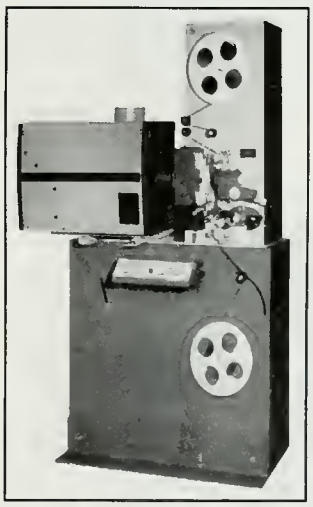


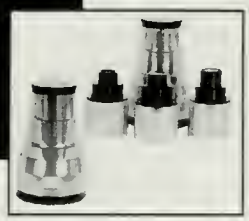
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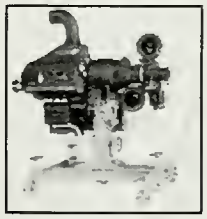




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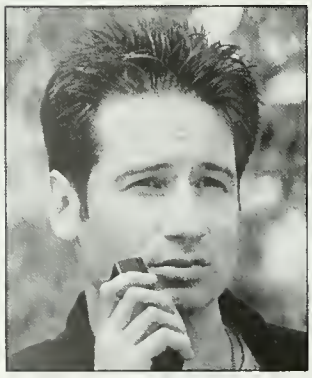
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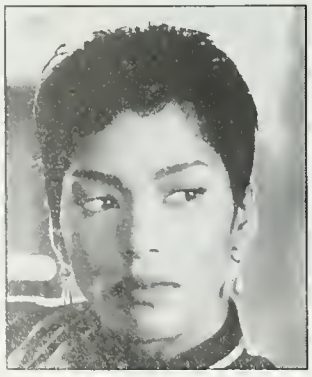
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"Country" Boy



DAVID DUCHOVNY

"X" Marks The Spot



ANGELA BASSETT

Gets In The "Groove"

"THE HILO COUNTRY" Woody Harrelson ("The People Vs. Larry Flynt") and Billy Crudup ("Sleepers") will star in this film based on a book by Max Evans about two men who return from World War II and fall in love with the same woman. The project is one that the late filmmaker Sam Peckinpah had long wanted to bring to the screen. Walon Green, who scripted Peckinpah's "The Wild Bunch," wrote the "HiLo" adaptation. Stephen Frears ("The Van") will direct. (Distribution is to be set)

"DIRTY WORK" The perennially sardonic Norm Macdonald (TV's "Saturday Night Live") will star in this comedy, which he co-wrote with Frank Sebastiano. Macdonald will play a loser who finally finds his niche when he opens a business devoted to exacting revenge for clients. (MGM)

UNTITLED WOODY ALLEN The latest comedy from Woody Allen (whose "Deconstructing Harry" is due out through Fine Line in December) will star Kenneth Branagh ("The Gingerbread Man"), Winona Ryder ("Alien Resurrection"), Leonardo Di Caprio ("Romeo & Juliet"), Kim Basinger ("L.A. Confidential"), Saffron Burrows ("Circle of Friends"), Judy Davis ("Children of the Revolution"), Famke Janssen ("GoldenEye") and Jeffrey Wright ("Basquiat"). (Distribution is to be set)

"FREQUENCY" Tommy Lee Jones ("Men in Black") may star for director Renny Harlin in this film about a fireman in 1969 who somehow accidentally taps into the future through a ham radio, crossing almost 30 years to make contact, by chance, with his son, a homicide cop, in the present day. Through their conversations, the son is able to prevent his father's death in a fire, and tries to track down his mother's serial killer. (New Line)

"BOFINGER'S BIG THING" Steve Martin ("Father of the Bride II") scripted this comedy and will star as a down-and-out producer who has written a script and is desperate to make the film with a particular star, to be played by Eddie Murphy ("The Nutty Professor"). Frank Oz ("In and Out") will direct. (Distribution is to be set)

"MARTHA AND ARTHUR" "My Best Friend's Wedding" stars Julia Roberts and Rupert Everett will reteam in this comedy about a macho movie star (Everett) who is married to Roberts' character in an attempt to hide his homosexuality from his fans. Roberts and Everett first worked together in Robert Altman's "Ready to Wear." (Buena Vista)

"JOHN CARPENTER'S VAMPIRES" James Woods ("Contact") will play an expert vampire hunter from the Vatican. Sheryl Lee ("Bliss") and Daniel Baldwin ("Phoenix") also star. (Distribution is to be set)

"BACHELOR" Based on the 1925 Buster Keaton starrer "Seven Chances," this romantic comedy will star Chris O'Donnell ("Batman & Robin") as a bachelor who has 24 hours to get married in order to receive a multi-million dollar inheritance from his grandfather. (New Line)

"MARY STUART" Glenn Close ("Air Force One") and Meryl Streep ("Marvin's Room"), who worked together in 1994's "The House of the Spirits," will reunite in this film adaptation of Friedrich Schiller's play which chronicles the rivalry between royal cousins Mary Queen of Scots (Streep) and Queen Elizabeth I (Close) that resulted in Mary's execution. Richard Eyre, the director of the National Theatre in London, will helm. Streep and Close are co-producing. (Distribution is to be set)

"ELIZABETH I" Even in modern-day Hollywood, Mary Queen of Scots and Elizabeth I are rivals: In this take on the story, Cate Blanchett ("Paradise Road") will play Queen Elizabeth I opposite Geoffrey Rush ("Shine") as Sir Francis Walsingham in this historical drama which follows the coups, assassination attempts and foreign opposition Elizabeth faced during her reign from 1558 to 1603. "Bandit Queen's" Shekhar Kapur will direct. (Distribution is to be set)

"X-FILES: BLACKWOOD" David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson of TV's sci-fi phenomenon "The X-Files" will headline this bigscreen version, whose plot, appropriately enough, is shrouded in mystery, though parapsychology and conspiracies will no doubt figure largely. Martin Landau ("City Hall") will also star. "X-Files" creator Chris Carter produces and wrote the script; Rob Bowman, a producer and director of the TV series, directs. (Fox)

"LETHAL WEAPON 4" It looks likely that Mel Gibson will return for the fourth installment of the "Lethal Weapon" action-comedies. Reports indicate that he'll receive a $20 million upfront fee, while his backend participation deal could earn him an additional $15 million to $20 million. Danny Glover will also reprise his role as Gibson's partner. Filmmakers Richard Donner and Joel Silver of the "Lethal Weapon" series (as well as the recent Gibson starrer "Conspiracy Theory") also return, and "Conspiracy Theory" scripter Brian Helgeland is writing the screenplay. (Warner)

"ARMAGEDDON" Michael Bay ("The Rock") will helm this action-disaster film in which Bruce Willis ("The Fifth Element") heads up a team sent into space to destroy a meteor on a collision course with Earth. Billy Bob Thornton ("U-Turn"), Steve Buscemi ("Con Air") and Ben Affleck ("Chasing Amy") also star. Jonathan Hensleigh ("The Saint") wrote the script, and Jerry Bruckheimer and Gale Anne Hurd produce. (Buena Vista)

"HOW STELLA GOT HER GROOVE BACK" This adaptation of Terry McMillan's bestseller will topline Angela Bassett (who also starred in the screen version of McMillan's "Waiting to Exhale) as a divorced working mother who takes a trip to Jamaica where she has an affair with a younger man. Whoopi Goldberg ("The Associate") will play Stella's best friend. "Exhale" scripter Ron Bass also returns. (Fox)

"ALMOST ROMANTIC" Janeane Garofalo ("Matchmaker") and Jon Stewart (TV's "The Jon Stewart Show") are in talks to star as the contentious maid of honor and best man at their friends' wedding. When the groom is incapacitated, they're offered the non-refundable Carribbean honeymoon, which they accept, despite their mutual disdain. (Buena Vista)

ET CETERA: Ron Howard is in talks to direct Jim Carrey in New Line's remake of **"The Secret Life of Walter Mitty"**...Jeff Goldblum and Kelly Preston have joined Eddie Murphy in the comedy **"Holy Man"**...Following Brad Pitt and Gwyneth Paltrow's breakup, Paltrow's father Bruce, who was to have made his directorial debut on Columbia's **"Duets,"** pulled the plug on the project, which would have starred the duo.

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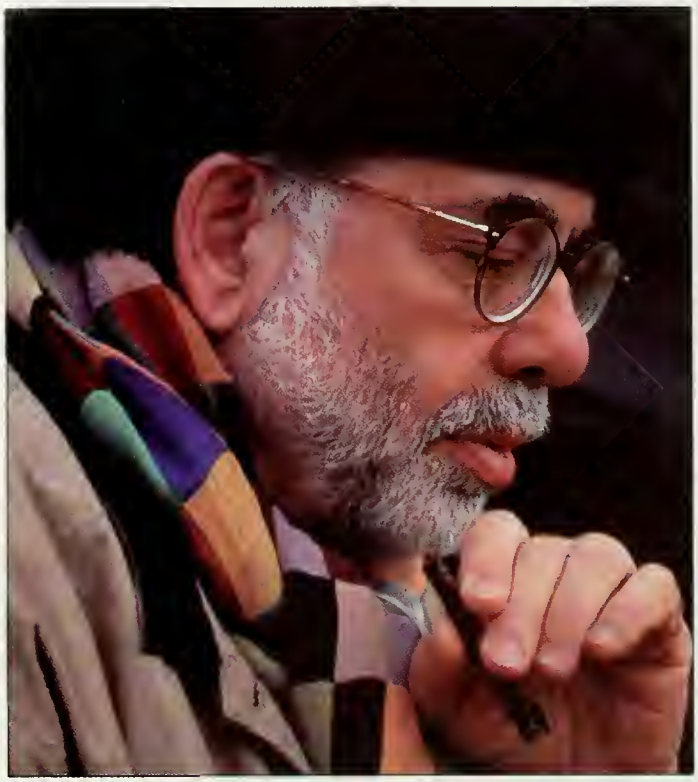


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TRIAL RUN

Maverick Filmmaker FRANCIS COPPOLA Takes His Case to the Court of Public Opinion With "THE RAINMAKER"

by Susan Lambert

Thirty years ago, Francis Coppola (who in 1977 dropped his middle moniker, Ford, stating he didn't trust anyone with three names) was on the brink of what was to become the most hailed—and often simultaneously railed-upon—career of any American filmmaker since Orson Welles. His "You're a Big Boy Now" opened in March of 1967 to good reviews and was considered a breakthrough artistic piece for the young director/screenwriter. Later that same year, Coppola began shooting "The Rain People," an experience which generated so much camaraderie between the director and his crew that it inspired in him the idea to create a revolutionary film studio—American Zoetrope. Three decades, five Oscars, one failed film studio and many controversys later, the man who was once lovingly referred to by his actors as Ayatollah Coppola took a moment during his post-production schedule on "The Rainmaker," an adaptation of yet another John Grisham courtroom bestseller to talk about his latest project and his visions for the future. The result is something unique: a portrait of the artist as a middle-aged journeyman, plying his trade in corporate America.

While the Coppola who filmed "The Rain People" was an ambitious young idealist-without-a-cause, the Coppola of "The Rainmaker" is a cautious, realistic artisan who recognizes the value of commissioned work. It's interesting to note that when Coppola's representatives at American Zoetrope, his production company, agreed on his behalf to this interview, there was one condition: no questions about "The Godfather." Just about everything there is to say about "The Godfather" has been said and re-said, but with any powerful figure, stipulations like that can be the first step in creating an interview that is too cautious at best, promotional nonsense at worst.

But the interesting and compelling thing about Coppola, in conversation as in even the most problematic of his films, is that the artist in him usually gets the best of him. His flaws as well as his virtues have a compelling purity to them that shines on through his work.

You can't really exist without [a studio's] favor. They own it. And there is not a filmmaker or an artist on the board of any one of those companies.

And he has so much to say. Coppola spent years being led around by his vision; it was vision that pushed him to the pinnacle and pushed him off of it. He survived, and found a way to come back from difficulties that might have destroyed a less determined filmmaker. That one of the true modern American artists and visionaries has in the process been forced to become a high-priced gun for hire may say more about our time and the nature of the movie industry than it says about the man.

A maverick who allows himself to be temporarily tamed in order to get what he needs from the establishment faces the possibility of losing what set him apart to begin with. But Coppola not only made some of the great American movies, he still believes in the idea of them, and that's what keeps him going, and makes him still so fascinating.

Coppola admits he picked up a copy of Grisham's "The Rainmaker" out of curiosity. "I thought I would read it and see what I could learn about what makes something such a bestseller." On a plane to France, Coppola found himself jotting notes in the margins of the book about what he liked. He was drawn to the characters and the story of Rudy, a young law student involved in the low-down, sleazy world of ambulance chasers who eventually takes on an important case fighting a big, bad insurance company that refuses to pay for a bone marrow transplant that would save a young man's life.

Coppola knocked off a letter to Grisham asking if the rights were available. "In my letter I said, 'Please don't sell it to the studios, because they're stupid, stupid, stupid.' You have to know the book to appreciate that [reference], otherwise it's just an insult to the studios." Coppola pauses before adding (ironically?), "Which, of course, I would never do."

Grisham wrote back that the rights had already been acquired by Michael Douglas and

Steven Reuther, who eventually came around to ask Coppola if he would be interested in directing the film. Obviously, he was.

"If you're not in the position to just go out and do the movie you might want to do," says Coppola, "it's certainly much better to do something like a John Grisham 'Rainmaker' than to do something about a plane getting hijacked or whatever—a story that they [the studios] seem to do over and over again."

In an industry that survives on image, control and calculation, Coppola is candid about his fall from grace, and surprisingly honest about his hired gun status. "These are not projects that I'm creating from scratch as I've sometimes had the privilege of doing in the past. The market isn't really so much interested in films from filmmakers doing their personal work, so basically, the jobs are to do projects that exist."

It's almost as if he's apologizing for taking on an obvious sell like the Grisham book, but Coppola's history is one of taking popular novels (Mario Puzo's "The Godfather," S.E. Hinton's "The Outsiders" and "Rumble Fish" and even "Bram Stoker's Dracula") and turning them into, at the very least, popular cinema and at the very best, great cinema. "Obviously," says Coppola, "Great literature is great for a reason, and it's theoretical that if you can capture that, you can have great cinema. But a lot of wonderful movies have [also] been made out of so-called 'popular novels.' John Grisham definitely has a talent for coming up with a story and interesting characters."

It was those characters that really interested Coppola in "The Rainmaker." Because he saw them as "a wonderful bunch of parts for actors," preserving them intact became the greatest challenge when he began adapting the novel to the screen. "I felt the insurance in this case was a wonderful climax to the story, but I would have been very disappointed if we lost some of the peripheral characters."

Coppola says that even when he tries to remain as faithful to the book as possible, the nature of a film often makes it difficult to interweave the many subplots a novel contains. "If you introduce multiple stories in a movie, you are always in danger of interrupting what the audience is interested in, so you have to do it very deftly and you have to do it at the right moment." Coppola finds audience test screenings to be helpful in the editing process. "I found on 'Godfather II,' where we had a lot of multiple stories, it took me a while to really find the combination of how one story would begin and go to another story... It requires a little bit of editorial skill and patience to lead the audience so it isn't a competing story or an interrupting story, but a parallel story."

Coppola feels he found the right balance for "The Rainmaker," though he admits that an unconventional romantic subplot posed special problems. "The love interest is a tough one," he says, "because there are so many stories and then, all of a sudden, there's another one." In the book, Rudy falls for a very young and horribly abused married woman named Kelly. For Coppola, casting Claire Danes ("Romeo & Juliet") in the role became vital to making it work. "It's a pretty tough role, because she had to play a character basically in tears and beat up most of the time," explains Coppola. "I had hoped—and I hope—that just Claire's essence and her youth—she's only about 18 years old or so—brings the role to life."

Though he has high praise for Danes ("She's a prodigy," he says) Coppola seems surprisingly hesitant when pressed about what else he's doing to make the difficult relationship work. "I don't know, her skill, the relationship, a 'love theme' [for the characters]?"

He's equally reluctant to speak of "The Rainmaker" on a personal level. In the book, a family watches their son die needlessly. The situation can't help but bring to mind the untimely death of Coppola's own son, Gio, who was killed in an accident on Coppola's 1987 movie "Gardens of Stone". But Coppola doesn't see the connection. "My own personal story is not all that really relevant to this particular book," he says. "I mean, when anyone loses a child I can very be very moved. This last year there have been instances [among people I know], and I find it very moving. But no, I don't think that had a lot to do [with 'The Rainmaker.']"



FULL COURT PRESS: *Coppola on the set of his new "David and Goliath" legal saga, John Grisham's "The Rainmaker."*

Coppola says the film surprises people because it turned out to be very funny. "In fact, people at first are like, 'Well, is this a comedy or a drama?' And I say, 'It's like Chekhov, you know, it's both.'"

Thematically, Coppola sees "The Rainmaker" as more a David and Goliath story. "I think the theme of a young, idealistic lawyer coming in at the bottom and finding himself battling a giant corporation is appealing." But even Coppola's works-for-hire have such an infusion of Coppola's vision that it's hard to not find connections between the story and the filmmaker.

There is at least one potential view of "The Rainmaker" that fits in with the notion of Coppola as artist/auteur. Coppola himself was once a young, idealistic film student working in the bottom echelon of the film world—i.e. his early work on porn flicks and Roger Corman films—who ended up battling the studio giants.

In "The Rainmaker," Rudy wins his battle against big money, but the kid has already died from his illness, and the settlement never materializes, so the win is double-edged. "Most things that involve big money as a goal, in the end, the money all evaporates and you die of cancer or you lose your kid or something much more important basically makes the money goal all add up to nothing," says Coppola. "I think that's what the book is driving at. You try to win, but in the end, there are more important things than those money prizes."

An interesting philosophy taken in context with Coppola's own very public financial difficulties (all of which stemmed from his failed attempt to create a studio in the early 1980s). He once made a comment about being embarrassed by the duality of his success and failure. "In my own case," says Coppola, "I was so young and full of enthusiasm and I made movies more out of, really, a kind of innocence. I just did it. I made 'The Godfather' and 'The Conversation' and 'Godfather II' and 'Apocalypse Now,' and I was shocked at all the trouble I was in at the end of it. How disgraced I was. That's before I realized it was sort of all a game, and I took it very hard—my disgrace after "Apocalypse" and "One From the Heart" and losing my studio. I kind of even didn't know what I had done wrong. Now I look back and I say, 'Gee, that was quite a run I had going.'"

Indeed it was—an unparalleled run of achievement, followed by a dramatic downturn worthy of Shakespearean drama. In many ways, the sheer magnitude of his success made his failures seem perhaps even more significant than they were. "The only movies that got wild with me," he claims, "were the ones that I financed, so I basically was not hurting any investors."

Now on a comeback trail that really seemed to begin with the critical and commercial success of "Bram Stoker's Dracula," Coppola no longer spouts the rhetoric of a rebellious outsider, particularly when it comes to the bottom

line. He would appear to understand all too well what the price of success and failure is in the film industry. He answers now to higher authority, the very thing he fought so desperately against for so many years. Coppola explains, "I've been very careful [of late] to make films that have been impeccably produced and done without controversy. These movies are under-budget and under-schedule. Obviously, I'm trying to earn that trust."



A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST: *Francis Coppola on the set of "The Rainmaker."*

This from the man who once said, "The way to come to power is to make a place in the Establishment and then challenge and double-cross the Establishment." One of the most interesting aspects to Coppola's films and his career was that even when he tried to become the Establishment, the artist in him never gave in long enough to the businessman to make anyone believe the charade. Even now, as he's "playing ball," Coppola is contemplating another trip to the summit.

"I did want to do a couple more pictures where I got paid before I basically just write movies that may or may not ever get made," says Coppola. "I'm considered an attractive director for actors and what-have-you, [and] I thought it would be nice, really, to make a couple of [commercial] pictures before I go off on the long, cold, lonely journey. 'Jack' was the first, and 'Rainmaker' was the second. I thought there would be a third, but I really don't see one. So maybe there will only be those two. I have quite a good track record, so I'm hoping all that will eventually hold me in good stead when I'm ready to leap off a cliff."

Coppola refuses to talk about what those personal projects might be, or even when he would pursue that track. "Obviously it has to be at a time when I'm sure that I've really provided for my family. I'm 58 years old and in pretty good shape and have no limitations except that I'm less able to put up with doing stuff that I'm not in love with."

Coppola says he hopes critics will respond to his movies and understand what he's trying to do, but he doesn't put a lot of stock in critical acclaim or disclaim. "Historically, the movies that got really trashed went on to be put in among the great movies, so it's sort of hard to take it too much to heart. More important is the perception of whether people want to let me make another movie or not."

Coppola says that because of the state of the industry at the moment, that's a very real concern. And not just for him. "I don't know any major, established director who is not in the same situation, where they fear that basically the time is rapidly growing near where they'll never be able to make films again." He adds that it's impossible to get a film made that is not a studio-friendly (i.e., market-driven) picture. "It's very hard to say to them, 'I'd like to make another 'Apocalypse Now.'" Obviously, not in that setting, but of that scale or with that kind of original theme."

Coppola's ability to do that died with the bloody death of American Zoetrope's studio incarnation. But Zoetrope, like the filmmaker himself, has survived in a smaller, more realistic form. Coppola explains, "Zoetrope exists, but we don't risk our own money anymore, so that means we're less. The films we make are not those wonderful, daring and special films like 'Koyaanisqatsi' or 'Apocalypse' or the style of films that we love." But Zoetrope does produce eclectic movies, like the excellent Latino-themed "Mi Familia," as well as big-budget cable and network television, like the TV smash "The Odyssey" and an upcoming adaptation of "Moby Dick." Coppola is proud of Zoetrope, which now also produces a short story magazine, even if it's not the grandiose studio he wanted it to be. "It has a great track record, when you think about it."

Still, there is something almost wistful about Coppola's assessment of himself in the context of the filmmaker he most wishes he could be. "The filmmaker I admire most is Woody Allen," he says. "He just makes his own films. You don't hear about him directing a John Grisham book, or a Disney project. I have such admiration for the fact that he's created his career in that way. I would love, in the near future, to be considered a filmmaker that only does his own writing. I hope."

Even Coppola's most personal movies are almost always of a very different breed than Allen's, created on a scope and scale that requires significant financial backing. "It *does* take a partner to finance [my work]," he agrees, meaning a major studio. "It's not just their money [I need], because I've produced a lot of films without their money. It's ultimately their distribution. You can't really exist without their favor. They own it. They own the means of distribution. They own the finance. And there is not a filmmaker or an artist on the board of any one of those companies."

For a moment, the fiery, maverick, idealistic Coppola peeks through before the hard-won pragmatic side takes over again. Asked if he now accepts the idea that the studio system he tried to overthrow is the best way to run a film studio, the wiser, older, "cooperative" Coppola says, "I'm basically disinterested. I don't mind if," Coppola sighs before continuing the thought, "if the public supports their products. Me, I'm in the wine business." The reference is to Coppola's flourishing vineyards in Northern California, and it's not an entirely flippant one. In fact, Coppola says his wine company is doing better than his film company is.

So will the wine someday pay for the feature films? "I don't know if it would ever do that," Coppola says, "but it's not impossible. Certainly, the wine supports my family."

Coppola has been gracious with his time, stretching the scheduled 30 minutes to almost an hour. It's time to go, but Coppola hesitates before wrapping things up. He has one thing left to say, perhaps the most optimistic and benevolent comment in a surprisingly candid bunch: "I leave you with one thought. The United States has the most extraordinary wave of young talented people in their 20s and 30s that are coming who are passionate about film and are extremely pure about it. I would say in four or five years they're going to hit the so-called establishment with such a force. And I just... my gut tells me, they're just not going to be able to buy them off... This young generation that they refer to as Generation X? That's a misnomer. If anything, they're Generation P, they're the promising generation. They're going to change what movies are."

Taken from the man who thirty years ago predicted digital systems and electronics would revolutionize the industry and whose pioneering efforts led the way for Dreamworks SKG and Lucasfilm, these are words not only to heed, but perhaps commit to memory. They are the words of a man who has been to the brink and back, and who isn't afraid to get back out there along the edge.

"The Rainmaker." Starring Matt Damon and Claire Danes. Directed and written by Francis Coppola. Produced by Michael Douglas and Steven Reuther. A Paramount Pictures release. Nov. 13 (tentative).

SONY PICTURES ENTERTAINMENT

CONGRATULATES

MANN'S CHINESE THEATRE

ON ITS

70TH ANNIVERSARY



THE BEST MANN

As Mann's Chinese Theatre Turns 70, BOXOFFICE Celebrates A Glorious Exhibition History *by Jon Alon Walz*

In 1973, Mann Theatres acquired the Chinese Theatre—one of the most famous moviehouses in the world. Instantly, the Chinese became Mann's flagship, and a living symbol of the circuit's commitment to the past and future of the movie medium. To understand the unique symbiosis between Mann and the Chinese, it is necessary to go back into the past some 70 years, when a pioneering exhibition visionary decided to create the ultimate viewing space...



CHINESE ARCHITECTURE: *Sid Grauman built Hollywood's world-famous Chinese Theatre in 1927. Today, it's one of the most visited tourist spots in America.*

Over the past 100 years, the art of the motion picture has evolved from the simplicity of random moving images projected in a dusty corner of Thomas Edison's basement into the amazing multinational, multibillion-dollar economic behemoth it is today. And no one cinema better exemplifies the grandeur and integral import of exhibition than Mann's Chinese Theatre, which turns 70 this year. The venue of choice for Hollywood premieres and one of the top-visited tourist attractions in the United States thanks to its unique forecourt of celebrity handprints and footprints, the Chinese was the brainchild of exhibitor Sid Grauman. The last theatre he would ever build, the Chinese capped off in a typically stellar style Grauman's lifelong dedication to the business of showmanship.

In the seemingly simpler time before 30-screen multiplexes, 3,000-print releases and digital surround sound became de facto industry standards, this cutting-edge West Coast exhibitor—working with nothing but a big dream and some grandiose notions—single-handedly created the craft of large-scale exhibition publicity and ultimately elevated it into an art.

Although he did not live to see the first multiplex, Sid Grauman will always be remembered as the visionary who recognized the public's need for movies and glamour. By building such renowned Los Angeles theatres as the Chinese and Egyptian and consistently promoting them in a grand style, Grauman was among a tiny group of insiders who collectively turned a sleepy little movie town in Southern California into "Hollywood."

"Showmanship is like any other merchandising," Grauman noted in 1931. "You must first buy desirable material, then present it to attractive advantage, and price it right. Above all, you must let the whole world know what you have to sell."

Grauman spent virtually his entire life selling and promoting events and entertainment. Born in 1879 to Rosa and David Grauman, he was soon whisked from his birthplace in Indianapolis to a small mining community in Colorado, where his father was a participant in the great gold rush of the late 1800s. Adopting his father's adventurous approach to life—it took a certain type of person to fully embrace the promise and risks of the gold rush—Grauman was quick to make friends wherever he went. According to Charles Beardsley, author of "Hollywood's Master Showman: The Legendary Sid Grauman," one of Grauman's earliest successes as an impresario was at a rather well-attended birthday party for a young girlfriend. As the evening progressed and the mood became somber, 10-year-old Sid canvassed the crowd looking for people with either musical or dramatic talent in order to put on a little show.

"It was not long before Sid put a young lady on the town hall platform to recite humorous poems while he found a rustic violinist and a harmonica player who were glad to improvise rudimentary dance music," writes Beardsley. "And eventually when the dancing palled, he led the partygoers in communal games. He realized that he had a very real ability to cater to people's tastes, to know instinctively what they wanted. This may well have been his first conscious awareness that he could please the public."

From Colorado, Grauman and his father followed the gold rush mania to the Yukon Territory in Alaska. Here, Grauman staged the occasional variety show for the entertainment-starved residents. An early success was a benefit for the local newsboys. Blizzards had prevented regional papers from reaching the town, and the newsboys were quickly going broke. Sid scoured the town for talent of any sort to perform in his show. Response was overwhelming: The event raised an impressive $1,200.

Soon after, his father left Alaska for San Francisco to take care of one of Grauman's sisters who had fallen ill. Grauman stayed in

Alaska for another year before rejoining his family in California, where he started his life in the movies.

Grauman saw his first movie at San Francisco's Cinemagraph theatre. Impressed by and curious about this odd spectacle, he landed a job at the theatre as a jack-of-all-trades, and quickly recognized that the ever-expanding revenue streams produced by these flickering "novelties" made them as legitimate a business as any other.

His father, redirecting his gold rush fever, agreed to help young Sid start his own movie theatre, the Unique on Market Street. It was an instant success. Adopting a part-live show, part-movies program, Grauman was the first to hire such performers as Jessy Lasky, who would later help found Paramount Pictures, and Al Jolson, who later became a major movie star. "Sid had, even in those days, the uncanny ability to pick exceptional talent," notes Beardsley.

Several years later, the Graumans built a new theatre, the Lyceum, that, along with the Unique, was completely destroyed in the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fires. Quickly devising a stunt to return movies to the city, Grauman struck a deal with an evangelist who sold him a big-top canvas tent and enough pews for 3,000 people. Mere days after the disaster, movies returned to San Francisco under Grauman's mammoth promotional banner, which assured patrons there was "nothing to fall on you except canvas."

The canvas theatre was, again, another instant hit, drawing 10,000 people a day. It operated continuously for two years and solidified Grauman's standing as San Francisco's master showman.

Grauman began expanding his theatrical franchise further into the Bay area and even operated two theatres on two different occasions in New York City. Around 1917, he and his father made their most important decision yet—a decision perfectly consistent with the impulsive nature of their lives thus far:

Sell it all. Move to Los Angeles.

The Graumans' first Los Angeles theatre was not designed to be just another venue for the movies. It was designed to dominate and eclipse the marketplace. Opening February 1, 1918 in the downtown area, the 2,345-seat Million Dollar Theatre was the West's largest and most lavishly appointed motion picture venue. Opening night drew such luminaries as

ONE SMALL STEP FOR MANN, ONE GIANT STEP FOR MANKIND

Mann Theatres Helps Revitalize Hollywood; Brings Chinese Theatre to New Cities

Mann Theatres, owners of Sid Grauman's world-famous Chinese Theatre since 1973, is adding 14 screens to the Hollywood landmark as part of a major revitalization of Hollywood Boulevard: The 15-screen Chinese will anchor a $145 million, 500,000-square-foot entertainment complex being developed by destination center designers TrizecHahn. The chain is also in the process of choosing locales for replica Chinese Theatres in select sites across America. Mann president and CEO Chuck Goldwater spoke with BOXOFFICE about Mann's plans to expand the Chinese dynasty.



A sketch of the entertainment center in which the Chinese Theatres' 14 new screens will be housed.

BOXOFFICE: Mann's Chinese Theatre is the last of the grand Hollywood movie palaces that's still very much a going concern. What is the secret?

CHUCK GOLDWATER: The secret is the magic of the theatre that has endured for 70 years now. It's the timelessness that the years have created for it. Certainly the unique nature of the forecourt of stars has created that sense of timelessness. It's given it a unique and personal attachment to the stars whose footprints are immortalized there.

BOXOFFICE: What are the details of Mann's expansion plans for the Chinese?

GOLDWATER: As part of the new entertainment project being developed [by TrizecHahn], we are going to do some considerable renovation to the existing Chinese theatre. Some clean-up, fix-up, patch-up, re-touch. We're contemplating re-seating the big Chinese Theatre auditorium. We're going to have 14 new screens in what [will be] several hundred thousand square feet of a new entertainment retail/restaurant/entertainment project [that is] the vision and the implementation of David Malmuth, who previously was with Disney in putting together their 42nd Street project in New York City.

BOXOFFICE: What do you think this is going to do for Hollywood?

GOLDWATER: It's certainly going to continue and hopefully accelerate the revitalization that is already underway in Hollywood.

BOXOFFICE: How do you feel to be the custodian of such an important piece of movie history as the Chinese Theatre?

GOLDWATER: Well, for me personally as a former film student who started as an usher in this business, I feel an extraordinary privilege and pride in being part of this grand tradition. [At Mann], we all take greatly to heart that the Chinese Theatre is ours to preserve and enhance, going forward into the future. We see it as such a special element of our company that we're working to create a prototype theatre based on the Chinese Theatre experience—the world's most famous movie theatre and everything that connotes, the grandeur of Hollywood that it represents—and create a unique and differentiating moviegoing experience in the new theatres that we'll be building in major destination locations.

BOXOFFICE: You're going to recreate the Chinese in different sites?

GOLDWATER: That's what we're trying to do. We're trying to replicate the experience without in any way diminishing or diluting the original. We have one under construction right now in Southeast Denver. It will be 16 screens, 4,000 seats, all-stadium, all-digital stereo, the finest in film and sound presentation and customer service excellence. And there are others that we're contemplating—very selectively. It is not the kind of attraction that we would do on every street corner. It would be reserved for special, major potential destination sites.

BOXOFFICE: Will you replicate the forecourt?

GOLDWATER: Rather than doing a forecourt of movie stars, our approach is to do a forecourt of fame of the local community stars: the police officer or firefighter hero of the year, the community volunteer leader, the student scholar athlete of the year, [so that] as well as being a place of entertainment that people come and partake of, [it] also becomes a local community landmark that everyone in the area participates in.

BOXOFFICE: What excites you about the exhibition industry?

GOLDWATER: What excites me is customers are responding to the great new movie theatres that are being built. They're responding to the improvements—the size, the scale, the convenience, the modern technology, the comfort—that all these new theatres are providing to them. And it encourages all of us to build these new theatres, to make sure we run them right with our customers foremost in mind. It tells me that showmanship is alive and well. Customer service is the road to the future. And Sid Grauman was right. Give the customers something to keep them coming back, and they will keep coming back. ***—Christine James***

Cecil B. De Mille, Charlie Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks and D.W. Griffith. Tens of thousands turned out in an attempt to get into the theatre, which was declared a success by residents and the local papers before the first patron was even seated.

The opening feature was the William S. Hart vehicle "The Silent Man," which was preceded by a rough version of the Sid Grauman Prologue, a live presentation of dance, recitation and song that was designed to complement the night's feature. Grauman experimented with prologues in San Francisco in the years after visiting New York City and seeing similar presentations by rival Samuel "Roxy" Rothafel.

"[Grauman's prologues] were essentially half the evening's entertainment—the film was the second half," actor Douglas Fairbanks Jr., whose father was good friends with Grauman, told BOXOFFICE. "The prologue took almost as much time as the film! He used them to set the atmosphere for the feature, and they were too lavish to be believed."

Grauman's prologues in Los Angeles became as popular as many of the pictures he showed in his theatres. "Whereas Roxy believed in presenting a diversified program of high-toned musical acts that bore no relation to the theme of the feature, Sid built his prologues around the picture, so that a Grauman show, movie and all, was a complete unit in mood, music and pageantry," writes Ben Hall in "The Best Remaining Seats." These pre-feature promotional devices immediately endeared Grauman to the entire city. Grauman had finally struck gold. For the rest of his life he had to turn enthusiastic, paying customers away from his theatres. He was a star in the only town where stars are real.

Following the opening of the Million Dollar, Grauman purchased and refurbished the nearby Rialto, a 900-seat theatre constructed in 1910 by entrepreneur J.M. Quinn. The name "Grauman" above the door of the Rialto equaled instant success.

Grauman quickly became close friends with the heads of all the studios, as well as all the major stars and directors of the day, all of whom wanted and needed him to show their movie in the hottest showcase in America. Grauman valued and cherished his friends, and would always go out of his way to help them—though they weren't spared from occasionally becoming the targets of his devilish sense of humor. "He liked to play practical jokes on people," recalls Douglas Fairbanks Jr. "There was a trick he and my father played on Chaplin during a preview of one of his films. They persuaded him to stand in the back of the theatre so no one would see him and so he could judge the audience's reaction without them responding to his presence. But there was no audience reaction at all! They didn't laugh at any of the jokes—it was dead as a funeral. This went on for a long time until Grauman and my father revealed that the entire audience consisted of wax dummies."

By the early '20s, in an effort to retain maximum profits from their features, the studios began buying and building their own theatre chains to exclusively display their product, while simultaneously coercing the "independents" to sign exclusivity contracts with one of them—otherwise, essential studio product would be denied. It would take until the 1950s for antitrust regulations to curb such strong-arm practices.

At this point Grauman was operating as an independent exhibitor, and fought to remain as such throughout his career. His power as a showman kept his theatres popular and full, allowing him to book at will the finest features in the marketplace. "One of the reasons for Grauman's enduring success was the friendly cooperation that stars and executives were willing to give him because of his constant readiness to offer them a favor without a thought of its return," notes Beardsley.



CEMENTING THEIR FRIENDSHIP: *Trowel in hand, Sid Grauman (right) helps Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks Sr. make first impressions last.*

In October of 1922, Grauman expanded out of the Los Angeles downtown area and into the rapidly expanding suburb of Hollywood, about 15 minutes west. The 1,800-seat Egyptian, designed to mimic the lavish palaces at the time of Cleopatra, was the first major movie palace to open outside of downtown.

Three months later, Grauman opened his last downtown theatre, the Metropolitan. At 3,485 seats it was the largest movie theatre ever built in the West, and at $3 million the costliest. On opening night, 30,000 people were turned away.

Grauman's final theatre, the Chinese, was built in the heart of Hollywood in 1927; actress Norma Talmadge inaugurated its star-studded legacy by personally turning the first spadeful of dirt at its groundbreaking. Over the past 70 years, the Chinese has become one of the definitive symbols of Hollywood, and, after Disneyland, is the most visited tourist spot in Southern California. The world-famous cement hand and footprints of the stars in the theatre's courtyard, according to many accounts, began as an accidental misstep into some concrete on the Chinese's construction site that has serendipitously become, for those lucky enough to be invited to leave their mark, an accolade akin to winning the Academy Award. Recent hand and footprint ceremonies still draw thousands to the theatre, closing down Hollywood Boulevard for hours.

Grauman never owned the Chinese, but held a one-third interest with partners Howard Schenck, Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks Sr. In 1929, Grauman sold his interest in the Chinese to Fox West Coast Theatres; he remained its managing director until his death two decades later. A fee was paid to his estate for use of his name until 1958.

Ted Mann purchased the Fox circuit in 1973, and today, Mann Theatres remains the custodian of the Chinese. According to Mann president and CEO Chuck Goldwater, the circuit is taking extensive measures to preserve this precious time capsule of Hollywood history. "Some of the footprints have been wearing away through time," he notes. "We are completing some analysis and cost estimates for making casts of some of the footprints that have worn the most, and we'll gradually work our way through the entire forecourt. We'll recast them in their exact original form, and then have that cast to preserve them for all time.

"It's something that was created once and only once—many of these stars have passed away. And their legend—what is literal about their presence, the footprints and the handprints—you can't get them back to do that again," Goldwater continues. "There's something that is truly precious about being able to literally touch and feel a sense of connection to the past. This is the closest we can come to touching the past, other than seeing it preserved on film, which certainly goes hand-in-hand with what we're doing at the Chinese."

During his career, Grauman was credited with devising the red carpet and spotlight premiere, inventing advanced-ticket sales for the movies, perfecting the pre-feature presentation, and even inspiring Charlie Chaplin's movie "The Gold Rush" with outlandish stories of his life on the mining circuit. He was also the only exhibitor among the select group of Hollywood insiders who formed the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in the mid-'20s.

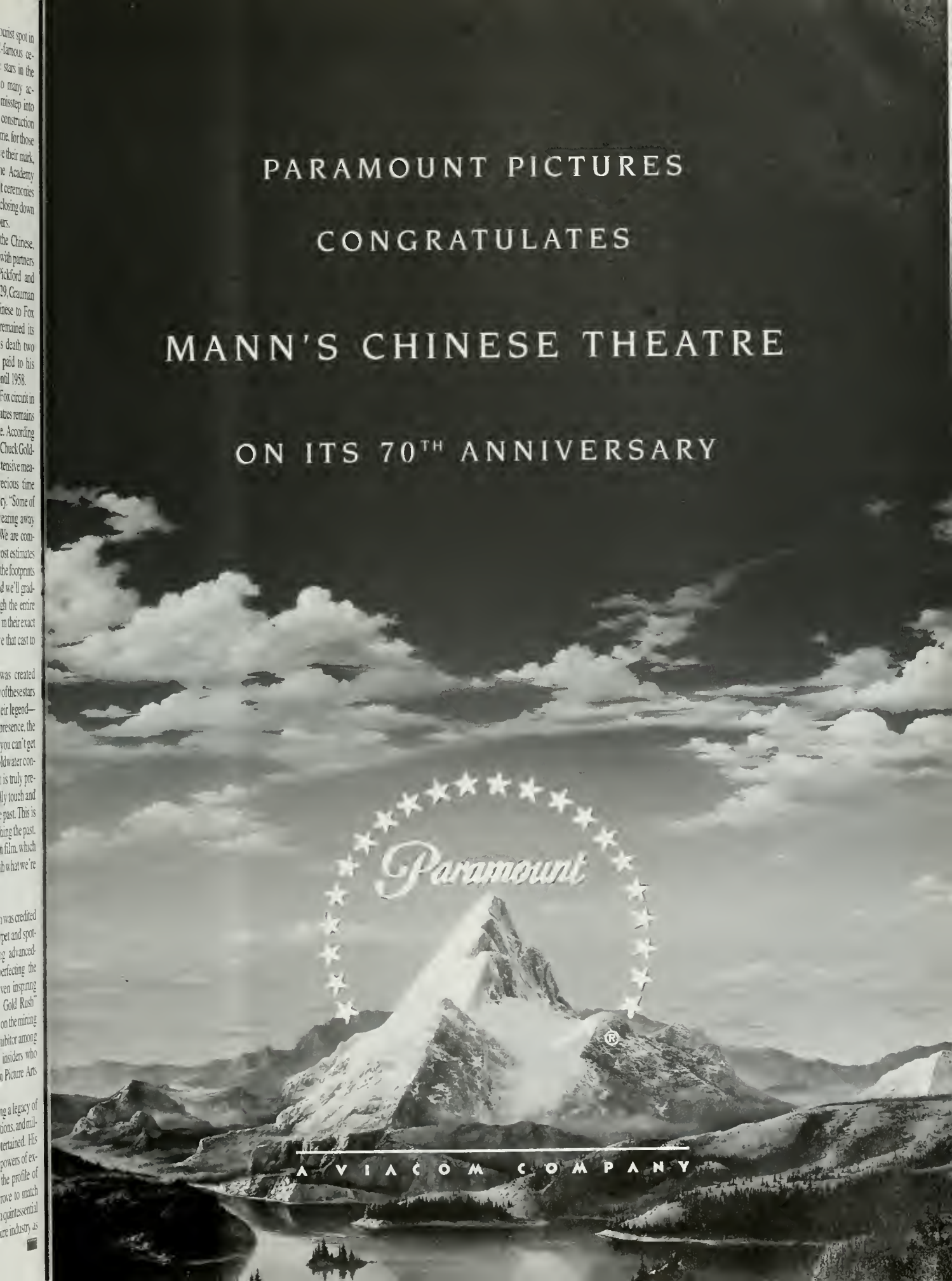
Grauman died in 1950, leaving a legacy of significant theatres, great promotions, and millions upon millions of people entertained. His masterful command of the full powers of exhibition not only helped raise the profile of exhibitors everywhere, who strove to match Grauman's every move, but was a quintessential key in the birth of the motion picture industry as we know it today.

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GODZILLA: MAN'S BEAST FRIEND

Japan's Fire-Breathing Behemoth Goes Digital Via a New Spin on the Old "Man in a Monster Suit" *by Michael J. Payne*



MAN-MADE MONSTER: *(Left:) A FutureLight technician demonstrates a digital "man-in-a-suit" approach to CGI. (Right:) Godzilla, circa 1956.*

A graceful, athletic actor stands on an empty soundstage looking like some futuristic commando. A tight, black bodysuit covers him, encircled with weblike strands of wires that connect 72 light-emitting markers placed at various spots on his body.

"Virtual reality" goggles cover his eyes. Eight specialized cameras—four high and four low—are aimed at him from each of the four walls of the soundstage. To the side, three technicians monitor the actor's movements on a video screen. But what they see on the screen is not a body-suited actor on an empty soundstage. Instead, they see that famous radiation-produced monster known as Godzilla.

As the body-suited actor makes any movement—walking, swinging his arms—the computer-generated Godzilla creature on the video screen makes the same exact movement. In effect, the actor is "performing" Godzilla, live and in real time. If Roland Emmerich, the director of the TriStar summer 1998 release, wants to change the "performance" of his digital monster, he simply tells the actor what he wants to be different and they go ahead and shoot another take immediately.

This real-time computer animation process is known as "motion capture," and it's the latest innovation in the ever-expanding world of digital special effects.

Emmerich and his partner, producer Dean Devlin, have always been on the cutting edge of special effects technology, as shown by their previous efforts together, "Stargate" and "Independence Day." Due to their interest, this particular motion capture system (designed by FutureLight, the R&D division of Santa Monica Studios' visual effects house VisionArt Design & Animation) was created specifically with "Godzilla" in mind. FutureLight's contribution to the multi-dimensional effects palate that will bring Godzilla back to the screen is just one element in a larger effort by effects artisans in a wide range of production houses; their virtual reality puppeteering will make up perhaps only a few moments of screen time. Still, for those with a sense of the Godzilla character's history, this "man in a suit" approach has interesting historic resonances.

"Godzilla" is slated to open on May 20, 1998 (the Wednesday before Memorial Day)—a major vote of confidence from TriStar given that date's traditional "start of summer" status. Its effects will use technologies light years beyond that utilized for 1954's "Gojira" (the original Japanese title). For the past decade, lacking motion capture technology, traditional computer animation (known as "keyframe" animation) has required CGI animators to manipulate their digital creatures by manually imputing geometric data. It's a slow, tedious process; programmers must spell out to the computer each specific movement they want their animated creature to make.

Today's CGI animators don't have things quite that bad; they have to work only on the frames where a movement begins and where it ends (these are called "keyframes"), and then the computer "interpolates" what happens in between (these interpolated frames are appropriately called "in-betweens"). Considering that an animated creature might have two arms, two legs, a tail, and various other moveable limbs (all of which require separately designed keyframes), the human animators

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PUPPET MASTERS: *"ID4" team Dean Devlin and Roland Emmerich take "Godzilla" digital.*

still have their hands full.

But this new technology hopes to change all that. Motion capture is exactly that: the computer "captures" the "motion" of the actor wearing the wired-up bodysuit. The 72 light-emitting markers webbed across the actor's body are picked up by the eight specialized cameras on the empty stage. Those cameras aren't actually "filming" the actor; they are recording the geometry of his movements. This geometric data is instantly translated into the live, real-time digital image of Godzilla. Motion capture might be thought of as a computerized version of the man-in-a-rubber-suit process used in the Japanese Godzilla movies.

But while the rubber Godzilla looked phony to many, the images generated by motion capture look at least as good as keyframe animation according to Josh Rose, the executive vice president of Santa Monica Studios. "There are subtleties you get with motion capture that you don't get with keyframes," says Rose. "With keyframe animation, you're making only a percentage of unique frames, and the computer is interpolating—creating all your in-betweens. With motion capture, every frame is a unique frame."

Perhaps motion capture's best feature is the ability to see the animation immediately, in a live, low-resolution image. "It allows the director to actually *direct* the animation," explains producer Devlin. "With [keyframe animation] you usually have to wait seven weeks to see the animation, and then you can make changes, and then you have to wait another seven weeks to see if it came out right."

But with motion capture's real-time imaging, the director sees the animation as it's being "performed" by the body-suited actor. And the actor also watches the animation in real-time, through the virtual reality goggles he wears. That way, the actor can follow the director's instructions to the letter.

The ability to quickly get the director's seal of approval on an animated shot is a boon to an industry notorious for delays and cost overruns. "You're getting 60 to 80 percent of your work out of the way by using motion capture," Rose says. "It's cheaper, it's more efficient, but most importantly it's aesthetically more pleasing. What has really been incredible for us is seeing the development of this character, and how it goes from being a man in a suit to all of a sudden being Godzilla."

This isn't to say that motion capture will soon replace keyframe animation; there is one little quirk with the process that needs to be ironed out. "Motion Capture tends to look too human," says Volker Engel, the Visual FX Supervisor for "Godzilla," who won an Oscar last year for the special effects on "Independence Day." The analogy to the man-in-a-rubber-suit is ironically accurate, for while motion capture animation looks as photo-realistic as keyframe animation, the movements of the creature are sometimes too human-like.

That's understandable, considering it's a human whose movements are being captured. With this in mind, much of the animation in "Godzilla" will be still done by the older, keyframe process. Volker explains, "When Godzilla is doing subtle movements that look human—for instance, if Godzilla stops and sniffs the air—then we'll use motion capture. For the bigger action scenes, we'll use keyframe."

Producer Devlin agrees. "Motion capture can't be used for every shot, but for certain types of shots, there's nothing better. When Godzilla needs to show emotion and actually 'act,' motion capture is the way to go."

Motion capture technology has actually been around for several years; the process is often used on live TV telecasts, a current example being cable network MSNBC's computer-oriented news show "The Site." But, until recently, the quality of the images generated by motion capture systems has left much to be desired. Something that looks realistic on a 27-inch TV tube can look ridiculous on a 50-foot-high theatrical movie screen, which is why motion capture has rarely been used for features.

The problem is two-fold: the accuracy of tracking the movements of the body-suited actor, and the quantity of how much data can be instantaneously translated into a real-time image. Most motion capture systems use light-reflecting markers on the actor's body to track his movements, but reflected light has a way of scattering, which leads to inaccurate measurements. And the hardware required to translate large quantities of data instantly into a computer-generated real-time image simply didn't exist until the last few years.

But the innovative folks at FutureLight solved these problems when they created their motion capture system. Rose explains, "Ours is an 'active' optical system, which means that we use light-emitting markers [on the actor's body]. They're actually giving off light, as opposed to reflecting light. And the light is only being emitted from a very small marker, [so that] the level of accuracy is into the microns. Sub-millimeter accuracy." This is a vast difference from other such systems which, according to Rose, use markers the size of ping-pong balls.

As for the hardware problems, FutureLight solved them by incorporating computer technology that had been recently designed for, of all things, medicine. "We're the only company using this particular hardware for entertainment motion capture," Rose says. "It was originally developed for medical and aerospace technology. This system revolutionized brain surgery."

Due to the large memory capacity and high speed of the new hardware, FutureLight's motion capture system can handle up to 72 markers—that's 72 different positions on the actor's body that will be tracked and instantly translated to correspond with 72 positions on the digital image of Godzilla. By comparison, most other motion capture systems average only 20 markers.

Another innovation created for FutureLight's system is the ability to see the animated creature in front of the live-action footage that's already been shot for the film. Unlike most similar systems, FutureLight's "medically licensed" hardware is powerful enough to combine together the animation and the background at the same time. Not only does the director see the animated Godzilla on the screen, he also sees the streets of New York that Godzilla is standing on. "Nobody's doing that," Rose says proudly. "It's amazing you can even see it in real time, but we're also providing real time over the background, so that you can make sure that everything—perspective, scale—is working together."

Thanks to FutureLight's improved level of accuracy and their expanded quantity of data that can be processed, motion capture is finally ready for the big screen. And what better film to try out this "man-in-a-suit" technology than "Godzilla?" "We've always said you can't do 'Godzilla' without a man in a suit," laughs producer Devlin. "So we're using a more modern version of the man in a suit."

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HOLIDAY IN HELL

Filmmaker Michael Winterbottom Welcomes Audiences to "Sarajevo"

by Sean O'Neill



HOT SET: *Stephen Dillane (left) and Woody Harrelson (center) are journalists covering the Bosnian conflict in Miramax's "Welcome to Sarajevo."*

Too much of the world, the bloody and horrific conflicts in the region once known as Yugoslavia might have been a minor curiosity—a source of occasional, temporarily sobering dispatches detailing man's capacity for inhumanity, even in Europe, even in the '90s. But then, everywhere but there, that distant war could disappear with the click of a channel changer, replacing scenes of carnage with the easy comfort of a sitcom or game show.

British film director Michael Winterbottom ("Jude"), however, was among those who found he couldn't change the channel. His two-year effort to record one story from that war will reach its culmination on Nov. 14, when Miramax debuts his "Welcome to Sarajevo" in New York and Los Angeles. American actors Woody Harrelson and Marisa Tomei provide supporting turns; English performer Stephen Dillane has the lead role, that of a U.K.-based journalist whose involvement in the war becomes much more personal than he could have foreseen.

"It seemed like what was happening in Bosnia was one of the most important events to have happened in Europe since the Second World War," Winterbottom says during a transatlantic call to BOXOFFICE from London one recent morning. "And the point of the project was to make something that tried to deal with what was happening there *and* to deal with the attitudes of people living in places like England or America toward it."

The film focuses on foreign journalists covering the conflict, Winterbottom notes. "That was interesting, because it's both about people from the outside who went there at the risk of their lives—a lot of journalists were killed in Sarajevo—while of course also being about the Bosnians who were actually involved in the war. The film had to have a kind of balance between how immediate it was [for the people on the front lines] and how different it was to those of us who watched the stories back at home."

It's odd to think it was only a dozen years ago that Sarajevo proudly hosted the Winter Olympics. But, when Winterbottom and company began making regular pilgrimages to Bosnia in January 1996, less than two months after the signing of the Dayton Accord (which halted the fighting), the landscape was vastly changed from those halcyon days. Nonetheless, even more than the physical devastation, it was the indomitable spirit of the local people that affected the director.

"Despite what happened there, it was actually a very enjoyable place to work," Winterbottom says of the setting for his third feature film. "The people had an incredible kind of spirit. We worked with a lot of Sarajevans, and they were all very cooperative. They wanted their story to be told. Obviously, it was very shocking at times, but one of the positive things was how everyone was trying to live a normal life, have a good time, go out to bars. Sarajevo is a very lively city, a very European city, a very enjoyable city to be in, which makes what happened there even more tragic."



Tragic, and far-reaching. "I'd never been to a city so recently affected by war," Winterbottom says. "Although I'd seen masses of documentary material, I don't think anything can prepare you for going to main streets of town—certain areas, say around the airport—that have been completely destroyed. Our interpreter, who was kind of an adviser for the film, was taking us around, and we were having a nice time, going to coffee bars and restaurants, and then we went past her flat. She lived there through the whole four years of the war, and the place was riddled with what seemed like thousands of shell holes and bullet holes. Her family would just sort of move from room to room, depending on which direction the sniper fire was coming from."

> ***"It seemed like what was happening in Bosnia was one of the most important events to have happened in Europe since the Second World War."***

The film is based on Michael Nicholson's nonfiction work "Natasha's Story," detailing the circumstances under which Nicholson brought back a young female orphan to England and legally adopted her. In choosing to dramatize the Bosnian conflict by telling the story just that way—through a British reporter (now named Michael Henderson) whose character and resolve are challenged when an idle promise that he makes to an orphan of the war-torn country is put to the test—Winterbottom realizes he risks charges of being Anglocentric. But he says he's prepared for such criticism.

"Part of any war like that is that people come from outside to look at it," he says. "And we were outsiders making the film. It's about what it must have been like to be a journalist in that situation, and we see things through their eyes. But I hope it's not a preachy film. It's not meant to be that at all. It's not about how people were for ignoring this situation. When you see TV pictures every day, it's hard to make a distinction—you should feel for these pictures and not those.

"And, unfortunately, you can't say, 'This is what we learn from Bosnia: You must do this or that.' It's hard to go to a city like Sarajevo and not feel there should have been more NATO intervention earlier, but the specifics of any involvement are much more complicated than that. This film is about the experience of individuals.

"You know, you just make films and hope people come to see them. And I hope that people can't help but be moved and involved by these stories," Winterbottom says. "Hopefully, there are enough people out there who still want to be moved by film that this project will be a success."

"Welcome to Sarajevo." Starring Stephen Dillane, Woody Harrelson and Marisa Tomei. Directed by Michael Winterbottom. Written by Frank Cottrell Boyce. Produced by Graham Broadbent and Damian Jones. A Miramax release. Docudrama. Rated R. Opens 11/14 NY/LA.



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NOVEMBER TRAILERS

Hollywood's Holidays Are Opening, And It's One Crowded Calendar

Cinema's last big season, summer 1997, began weakly, thanks to less-than-expected performance of much-anticipated sequels. Now come Hollywood's big holidays, and the only mega-sequel for Thanksgiving is "Alien Resurrection." Aside from two remakes—"The Jackal" and "Flubber"—most film fare will be brand-new narratives, needing to go from never-heard-of to must-see status before release.

And many distributors, both major and minor, are opening their releases in a now-or-never wide pattern. Case in point: Nov. 7. Warner ("Mad City") and TriStar ("Starship Troopers") of course target thousands of screens—but so do Trimark and Gramercy.



Things really get arresting—either of the absorbing or heart-stopping variety—during the November's second half, as distributors jockey to gobble their servings of Thanksgiving-time tickets. The 11/21 and 11/28 lineups include, along with "Flubber" and the fourth "Alien" and specialized fare, Fox's animated "Anastasia"; Paramount's "The Rainmaker" from Francis Coppola; New Line's programmer sequel, "Mortal Kombat: Annihilation"; MGM's "Red Corner," starring Richard Gere; and Warner's "The Man Who Knew Too Little," headlining Bill Murray.

But is this so much heavier a bill than was last year's? Well, yes. In 1996, the 11/22 and 11/29 frames sported a total of three major wide releases: "101 Dalmatians," "Star Trek: First Contact" and "Jingle All the Way," just one of which spotted its way to $100+ million glory. And, looking forward, how does Christmas 1997 shape up? A quick glance at this issue's Studio Feature Chart tells the tale: 20 releases in December alone. Here's to hoping that audiences treat this season as holidays of obligation.

NOVEMBER 7

Mad City

When he's laid off, a museum staffer (John Travolta) snaps, accidentally shoots a guard and then takes patrons hostage. A tabloid reporter (Dustin Hoffman) decides to exploit the situation. Alan Alda, Mia Kirshner ("Leo Tolstoy's Anna Karenina") and Blythe Danner co-star. Constantin Costa-Gavras ("Music Box") directs; Tom Matthews (former **BOXOFFICE** managing editor) and Ebbe Roe Smith ("Falling Down") script; Arnold Kopelson and Anne Kopelson produce. (Warner, 11/7 wide)

Exploitips: *This comes with an audience-friendly PG-13, even if Costa-Gavras is known for mature fare. But the real sell, of course, is the superstar duo of Travolta and Hoffman. And that'll come in handy, with this film going up against another of the season's big guns—what TriStar hopes is the "Men In Black" of the fall...*

Starship Troopers

Based on the Robert A. Heinlein novel, this $90 million sci-fi thriller follows a corps of heroic men and women, all elite members of the Mobile Military, who must wage intergalactic war against aliens. Newcomer Caspar Van Dien, Dina Meyer ("Johnny Mnemonic"), Jake Busey ("Twister"), Neil Patrick Harris (TV's "Doogie Howser, M.D.") and Clancy Brown ("The Shawshank Redemption") star. Paul Verhoeven ("Total Recall") directs; Ed Neumeier scripts; Alan Marshall and Jon Davison produce. (TriStar, 11/7 wide)

Exploitips: *A co-production with Buena Vista's Touchstone label, this big-budgeter could be a significant boxoffice factor through Thanksgiving and—depending on response to the similar-genre "Mortal Kombat: Annihilation" and "Alien Resurrection"—on toward Christmas. Despite his misstep with "Showgirls," Verhoeven has shown a facility with SF material. Given the casting, it's that genre that's the star, and the Heinlein name is a hallowed one among SF fans.*

Eve's Bayou

In this drama, a 10-year-old girl tells the story of her eccentric Louisiana family. Samuel L. Jackson ("A Time to Kill") and Lynn Whitfield ("A Thin Line Between Love and Hate") star. Actress Kasi Lemmons ("Fear of a Black Hat") directs and scripts; Samuel L. Jackson produces with Caldecot Chubb ("The Crow"). (Trimark, 11/7 wide)

Exploitips: *Although with "Meet Wally Sparks" and "Chairman of the Board" it's now (if hesitantly) a wide-release player, Trimark continues to handle specialized fare, and this one counterprograms the date's other offerings. Expect the Jackson and Whitfield names to attract black audiences; rating allowing, urban families might give this a try.*

Bean

Brit TV superstar Rowan Atkinson brings his Bean character to the bigscreen in a screwball comedy about his antics as a (dis)reputed art expert. Peter MacNicol and Harris Yulin (both "Ghostbusters II") and Burt Reynolds co-star. Mel Smith ("The Tall Guy") directs; Richard Curtis and Rowan Atkinson (both also "The Tall Guy") script with Robin Driscoll; "French Kiss" duo Tim Bevan and Eric Fellner produce for their Working Title label with Peter Bennett-Jones. (Gramercy, 11/7 wide)

Exploitips: *Our 3 1/2-star review (Sept. issue) calls "Bean" (held from 10/17) "an incredibly entertaining piece of comic mayhem." U.S. fans of his PBS series are likely ticketbuyers; to pull wider, stage a Bean or Whistler's Mother lookalike contest—or go for media attention with a charity Whistler's Mother dunking throw.*

The Wings of the Dove

Adapted by Hossein Amini ("Jude") from Henry James' turn-of-the-century romantic novel and set in London and Venice, this latest from director Iain Softley ("BackBeat," "Hackers") tells the story of a young woman (Helena Bonham Carter) from a wealthy family who falls in love with a poor journalist ("Priest's" Linus Roache). To keep him and her social standing, she asks him to romance a beautiful but dying American heiress ("The Spitfire Grill's" Alison Elliot) so they can inherit her fortune. Unexpected consequences ensue for all. David Parfitt ("Mary Shelley's Frankenstein") and Stephen Evans ("Much Ado About Nothing") produce. (Miramax, 11/7 NY/LA)

Exploitips: *The season's first key specialized title, this R-rater (for sexuality) has a good cast and producer team and a hip director (who's batting 1-for-2, though). Bookstore tie-ins will help draw the likely distaff crowd.*

Hugo Pool

In this absurdist comedy, Alyssa Milano ("Fear") stars as Hugo, a pool cleaner with odd clients (the likes of Robert Downey Jr., Malcolm McDowell, Cathy Moriarty

and Sean Penn). Robert Downey Sr. ("Putney Swope") directs, and co-scripts with his late wife Laura Downey; Barbara Ligeti ("Motorama") produces. (First Look, 11/7 NY/LA)

Exploitips: *First Look moved "Mrs. Dalloway" off this date to February, probably fearing the novel-based period piece would battle for its audience with "The Wings of the Dove." "Hugo Pool" is much different in sensibility, so sell the contemporary angle to maximize younger specialized turnout.*

Sick

Subtitled "The Life and Death of Bob Flanagan, Supermasochist," this documentary tells of the life and profession of the late performance artist Bob Flanagan, whose disturbing routine involved self-torture. Kirby Dick directs. (CFP, 11/8 NY/LA)

Exploitips: *To build hypable avant-garde buzz, highlight the subject's "sickness."*

A Further Gesture

Playing a hard-luck Irishman, Stephen Rea ("Michael Collins") exits the Emerald Isle for New York City, only to become involved in an attempted assassination. (Castle Hill, ltd)

Exploitips: *Given a certain popularity of Irish-themed films stateside, the Irish element and Rea's name are the sells.*

The Knowledge of Healing

This documentary focuses on Tanzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama. Frank Reichley directs. (IN, 11/5 NY)

Exploitips: *This is nicely timed to split the calendar between the Tibet-themed "Seven Years in Tibet" and "Kundun."*

NOVEMBER 14

The Jackal

In this "The Day of the Jackal" variant, a ruthless killer (Bruce Willis) known as The Jackal is on a global murder mission; to track him down, an FBI deputy director (Sidney Poitier) and a Russian officer (Diane Venora) enlist the aid of an imprisoned IRA terrorist (Richard Gere). Michael Caton-Jones ("Rob Roy") directs; Chuck Pfarrer ("Barb Wire") and Kevin Jarre ("The Devil's Own") script; both of "Michael," James Jacks and Sean Daniel produce. (Universal, 11/14)

Exploitips: *The A-list teaming of Willis and Gere can be counted on to draw both genders and expand ticket sales beyond thriller-genre fans, although an R rating (for strong violence and language) will limit below-17 turnout—who will likely be reboarding "Starship Troopers'" anyway. Key competition will be weekend #2 of the similar-demo "Mad City."*

The Little Mermaid

The story of a beautiful young mermaid named Ariel, who longs to be human, and her handsome prince is told again in this reissue of the 1989 Disney animated film, based on Hans Christian Andersen tale. Voices by Rene Auberjonois, Jodi Benson, Buddy Hackett, Kenneth Mars and Edie McClurg. John Musker and Ron Clements (the "Hercules" duo) direct and script; Musker

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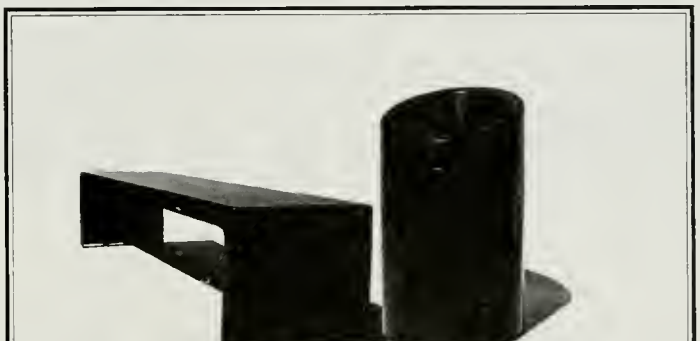
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produces with the late Howard Ashman. Alan Menken does the Oscar-winning score; another Oscar went to the Ashman/Menken song "Under the Sea." (Buena Vista, 11/14)

Exploitips: *Even as the first of the new Disney's big animation successes (it did $84 million), this G-rater is likely to have just one big weekend. Though non-Disney, with all the perils that portends, Fox's new "Anastasia" is directly targeted at young girls come 11/21—and then Disney trumps itself with "Flubber" the following week. One can still expect continued play through the holidays.*

One Night Stand

The latest from Oscar-nom'd filmmaker Mike Figgis ("Leaving Las Vegas") is a romantic drama about a married man who has what he thinks will be a one-night stand with a married woman. Unable to forget her, he tries to rekindle the romance—with unexpected consequences. Wesley Snipes, Nastassja Kinski ("Fathers' Day"), Robert Downey Jr. (also in "Hugo Pool"), Kyle MacLachlan ("Showgirls") and Ming-Na Wen ("The Joy Luck Club") star. Figgis scripts (Joe Eszterhas originated), and he produces with Annie Stewart and Ben Myron. (New Line, 11/14 300 runs)

Exploitips: *Even in this era, the black/white romantic casting might put off regional audiences, so expect best results in urban areas—thus the limited opening—and with the distaff demo. Snipes has a following, and the Figgis name (thanks to the Academy and public attentions to "Leaving Las Vegas") could draw crossover audiences. Rated R for strong sexuality and language, and for drug content.*

Oscar and Lucinda

Brought together in love and guilt by a shared passion for gambling, a British priest ("The English Patient's" Ralph Fiennes) and an Australian glassworks heiress (Cate Blanchett) decide to work together to transport a glass church by river to a remote Down Under parish. Tom Wilkinson and Clive Russell co-star. Gillian Armstrong ("Little Women") directs; Laura Jones ("High Tide") adapts Peter Carey's Booker Prize-winning novel; "Cosi's" Timothy White produces with Robin Dalton. (Fox Searchlight, 11/14)

Exploitips: *The arthouse crowd will have two key choices this weekend; expect the more mature set to opt for "Oscar and Lucinda," while the younger go for the more politically current "Welcome to Sarajevo." The Armstrong and Aussie pedigrees will pull the "My Brilliant Career"/"Shine" types (at $13 mil., this is very expensive Down Under fare), but the best bet for broadening the audience is to highlight Fiennes' presence, last onscreen exactly a year ago with the hit "The English Patient."*

Welcome to Sarajevo

British and American journalists, including a female producer ("Shallow Grave's" Kerry Fox), a novice reporter (Emily Lloyd) and a jaded writer (Woody Harrelson), cover the war in Bosnia. For one—U.K. correspondent Michael Henderson (stage actor Stephen Dillane)—it becomes personal when he, helped by an American aid worker (Marisa Tomei), decides to smuggle to safety a little orphan girl. Michael Winterbottom ("Jude") directs; Frank Cottrell Boyce scripts; Graham Broadbent and Damian Jones produce. *See Sneak Preview in this issue.* (Miramax, 11/14 NY/LA)

Exploitips: *In our 3 1/2-star review (July issue), our Cannes critic called this docudrama "a complex, deeply moving story...an extraordinarily affecting, personal, and at times uplifting tale." Winterbottom's camera is candid: The film is rated R for brutal images/war atrocities and language. Expect the younger brood among arthouse audiences to favor this, given its topicality, while the older opt for "Oscar and Lucinda."*

The Tango Lesson

Filmmaker Sally Potter ("Orlando") recounts her romantic involvement with Argentine tango dancer Pablo Veron and her multicontinental efforts to make a film about the Latin dance. Christopher Sheppard (also "Orlando") produces. (Sony Classics, 11/14 NY/LA)

Exploitips: *Potter's challenging "Orlando" grossed a good $7 million take in 1993, and highlighting that credit could draw arthouse audiences that might otherwise be resistant to dance fare. Though "Orlando" would hardly have filled the bill, "The Tango Lesson"—rated a promotable PG (for brief language and some violent images)—might allow outreach to local art programs for exhibitors eager to take advantage of the age-friendly rating.*

Slaves to the Underground

In this drama set against the slacker music scene of Seattle, a love affair between two all-girl rock group bandmates (Molly Gross and "Love Always'" Marisa Ryan) runs aground when one of the gals runs into her ex-boyfriend (Jason Bortz) and their relationship reignites. Documentarian Kristine Peterson directs, and she produces with Bill Cody and Raquel Caballes Maxwell; Bill Cody scripts. (First Look, 11/14 NY/LA)

Exploitips: *In our 1 1/2-star review (April issue), our Women in Cinema/Seattle fest critic had a number of problems with "Slaves to the Underground"; still, on an arthouse-heavy weekend, this R-rater (for strong sexuality and language) could successfully skew to younger female/lesbian auds unserved elsewhere.*



ANASTASIA

Meg Ryan voices the title character in this animated interpretation of the life of Czarevna Anostosia, daughter of Russia's last Czar, Nicholas II, who might have escaped alive the killing of the royal family in 1917 during the Bolshevik Revolution. In this telling, a girl who remembers nothing of her heritage follows a clue to Paris in an attempt to find her identity; the evil Rasputin pursues her, and a charming conman befriends her. Kelsey Grammer, Angela Lansbury, John Cusack and Christopher Lloyd provide other voices. Don Bluth and Gary Goldman, the team for "An American Tail" and "All Dogs Go to Heaven," direct and produce; Eric Tuchman, Susan Gauthier and Bruce Graham script. (Fox, 11/21 wide)

Exploitips: *Like DreamWorks, Fox is going heavy into animation—even as recent Disney animated fare has been struggling to reach the once-easy $100 million mark. This $50+ million effort is the studio's first out of its new Arizona facility, and although it's likely to pull the family demo in general it trends toward the little-girl side in particular—the same group that Disney satisfied just last weekend with its "The Little Mermaid" reissue. Yet the advantage should be "Anastasia's," given that it's a new entry opening at the start of the Thanksgiving school break.*

NOVEMBER 21

The Rainmaker

Adapted from John Grisham's 1995 best-seller, this David and Goliath tale follows the struggles of a recent law-school graduate ("Courage Under Fire's" Matt Damon) pitted against an unscrupulous insurance industry giant and a big-name law firm. Claire Danes ("William Shakespeare's Romeo & Juliet"), Danny DeVito, Jon Voight ("Most Wanted"), Danny Glover (also in "Switchback"), Virginia Madsen ("Ghosts of Mississippi") and Mickey Rourke co-star. Francis Ford Coppola directs and scripts; Michael Douglas and Steven Reuther produce for Douglas/Reuther

LATE MOVIE MOVES...

RTY DANCING

Patrick Swayze stars in this ssue of the 1987 hit as the nce instructor who makes the itskills summer of a coming- age girl (Jennifer Grey) into e time of her life. (Live, 8/22)

Exploitips: *This PG-13 effort uld benefit from its end-of- mmer timing for girls.*

EXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE: IE NEW GENERATION

Four teens (including "Jerry aguire's" Renee Zellweger) ise on prom night in a small xas town, unaware a psycha ller ("Contact's" Matthew cConaughey) is on the loose. m Henkel (who wrote "Texas hainsaw Massacre") directs nd scripts. (CFP, 8/29)

Exploitips: *In a two-star re- ew, our critic says the main traction will be Zellweger and cConaughey, both become ars since this 1994 shoot.*

ULIAN PO

A young man on the road Christian Slater) finds woman ouble in a small town. Alan Vade directs and scripts. (Fine ne, 9/5 NY/LA)

Exploitips: *Slater's recent ar- est in L.A. for an alleged Mike yson-like altercation might ise the press profile here.*

IDING THE RAILS

This documentary recounts obo life in the Great Depres- on. Michael Uys and Lexy Lovell irect, script and produce. (Artis- c License, 9/5 LA, 9/12 NY)

Exploitips: *Our four-star re- iew (July) called this "moving...a oving cinematic tapestry."*

RACKING UP

This comedy/drama tells the agi-comic story of the down- all of a struggling actor. Matt Mitler stars, directs, scripts and roduces. (Phaedra, 9/12)

Exploitips: *College town rama students could go here.*

ELINQUENT

A teenager enters a fantasy vorld when he discovers a de- erted summer home. Peter Hall irects. (Rice Arts, 9/12 LA)

Exploitips: *The sexual-matur- ng theme is universal and pro- ocative. To draw the MTV demo, highlight the score by British rockers Gang of Four.*

MY SEX LIFE

This French-language comedy tells the story of an assistant professor (Mathieu Amalric) unhappy in learning and love. Arnaud Desplechin directs and co-scripts. (Zeitgeist, 9/17 NY)

Exploitips: *In a three-star review (Aug. '96), our Cannes critic cited an engaging cast and script as the best elements.*

ANTHEM

This videotape documentary recounts the find-the-American-Dream travels of filmmakers Shainee Gabel and Kristin Hahn. (Zeitgeist, 9/19 NY)

Exploitips: *Our four-star review (Sept.) called this "a vital and unique testament."*

AARON'S MAGIC VILLAGE

This animated film adapts Nobel winner Isaac Bashevis Singer's classic "Stories for Children." French director Albert Hanan Kaminski ("Sesame Street") helms and scripts; Oscar winner Michael Legrand composes. (CFP, 9/19 ltd)

Exploitips: *Try outreach efforts to local Jewish groups.*

CONSPIRATORS OF PLEASURE

This comedy is the latest from Czech animator Jan Svankmajer. (Zeitgeist, 9/19 LA)

Exploitips: *After a quiet couple of years, Zeitgeist (like New Yorker) is growing its portfolio.*

NO WAY HOME

A prison inmate on his release makes a disturbing discovery when he joins his brother and sister-in-law. Tim Roth, James Russo and Deborah Unger star. Buddy Giovazzo directs. (Live, Sept. undated)

Exploitips: *The strongest element is the Roth name.*

LA RENCONTRE

French filmmaker Alain Cavalier uses objects and conversations to tell the story of a relationship. (Artistic License, Sept. undated)

Exploitips: *Our Telluride critic gave this a two-star review; see our March issue.*

WASHINGTON SQUARE

Adapted from Henry James' classic novella set in 19th-century New York, this drama tells the life story of Catherine

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Prods. with American Zoetrope. *See this issue's Cover Story.* (Paramount, 11/21)

Exploitips: *This is the seventh Grisham-based film in just five years, and the last one ("The Chamber") was received coolly. Given "A Time to Kill's" response, though, that might have been an aberration rather than a sign of audience overdose. Expectations are that Damon might be the next McConaughey (who leaped to fame with "A Time to Kill"), and the supporting cast is solid. Of course, Coppola remains a name that draws attention.*

Mortal Kombat: Annihilation

A group of courageous warriors must survive new challenges when they do battle with an evil warlord who wants to rule Earth. Christopher Lambert, Robin Shou and Talisa Soto return for the sequel; supermodel Irina Pantaeva co-stars. John Leonetti ("Child's Play 3") directs; Brent V. Friedman ("Hellbound") scripts with Bryce Zable; Larry Kasanoff produces. (New Line, 11/21 wide)

Exploitips: *"Mortal Kombat," directed by Paul Anderson, generated $70.4 million in summer '95. This second iteration, originally skedded for August (when New Line successfully birthed "Spawn"), should draw the same arcade/videogame aficionados hitting the malls over the Thanksgiving break.*

Liar

In this psychological thriller, a Charleston blueblood ("Hoodlum's" Tim Roth) who might have brutally killed a prostitute ("Jerry Maguire's" Renee Zellweger) uses his bril-

Slaper, whose birth caused her mother's death and whase life her wealthy father has never forgiven her for. Jennifer Jason Leigh and Albert Finney star. Agnieszka Holland ("Total Eclipse") directs the Caravan production. (Buena Vista, Oct. undated)

Exploitips: *Buena Vista advanced "Washington Square's" release date, perhaps to take advantage of good press generated at the Toronto fest. Exhibitors might be wary of the Caravan name (think "Gone Fishin'"), but this is excellent filmmaking; see our review, this issue.*

Most Wanted

In this R-rated action/adventure, a Gulf War hero ("Glimmer Man's" Keenen Ivory Wayans) is framed far assassinating the First Lady. He must find an eyewitness (Jill Hennessey) to clear his name. Eric Roberts, Paul Sorvino and Jon Voight co-star. David Hogan ("Barb Wire") directs; Wayans scripts. (New Line, Oct. undated)

Exploitips: *The casting, rating and genre make this fare for twentysomething and urban males, so highlight the presence of Wayans, whose late-night talk show has raised his profile with that demo further.*

Marian

In this Czech-language drama, institutionalized violence and abuse leads an abandoned gypsy boy to grow up to be a criminal. Petr Vaclav directs and co-scripts. (Turbulent Arts, 10/3 Chi)

Exploitips: *Our Toronto critic gave this a one-star review (April), but this promotably won a Silver Leopard at the Locarno fest.*

Nick and Jane

An executive and a cab driver try to make love work. Dana Wheeler-Nicholson and James McCaffrey star. Rich Mauro directs and co-scripts. (CFP, 10/10)

Exploitips: *Our Santa Barbara critic gave this two stars (June '96); still, everyone loves a love story, so hype the genre.*

Beaumarchais

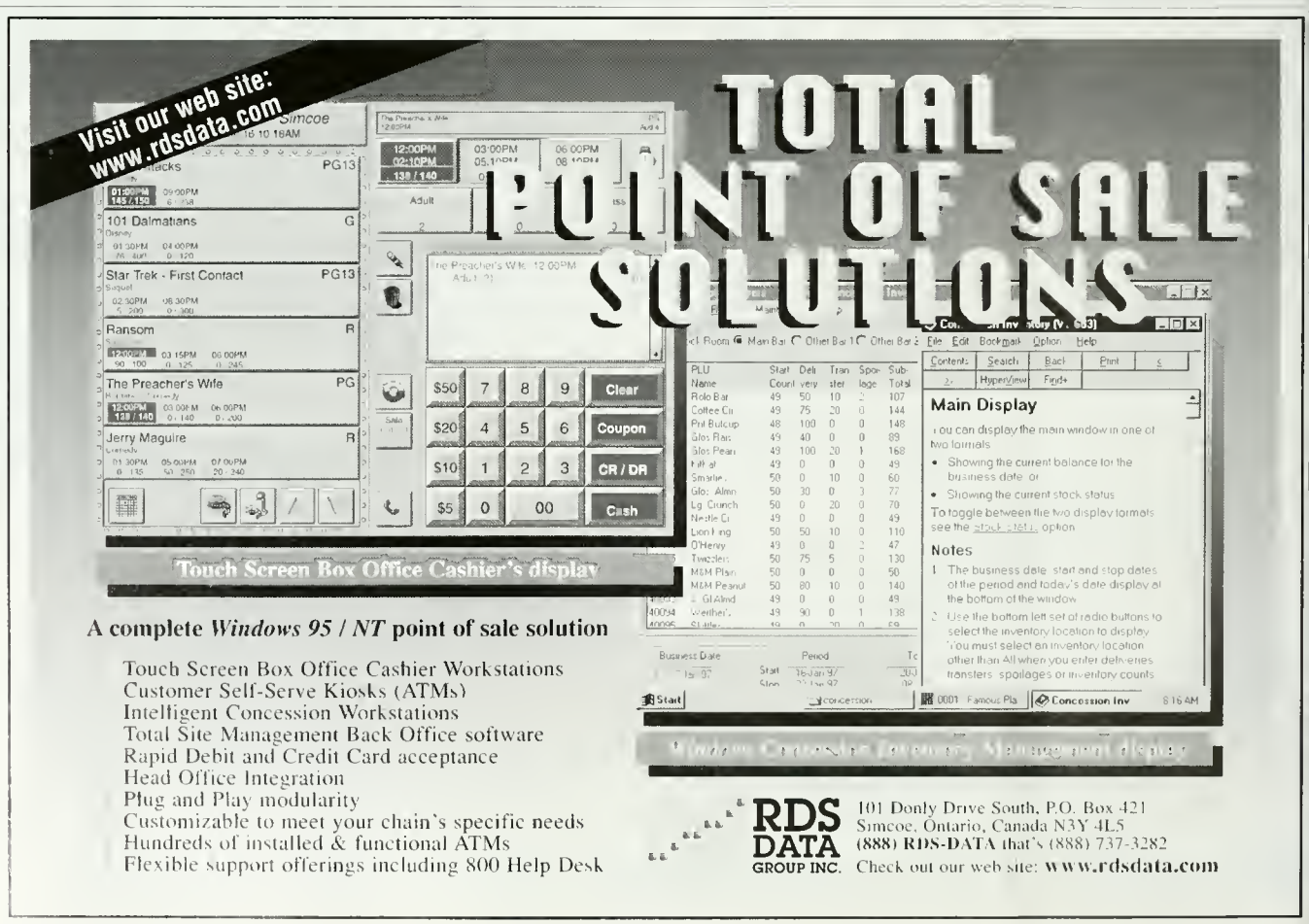
This French-language comedy set in 1770s France tells the story of the humbly-born man who grew into a writer, inventor, businessman and court favorite. Fabrice Luchini, Sandrine Kiberlain and Manuel Blanc star. Edouard Milinaro directs and co-scripts. (New Yorker, 10/24)

Exploitips: *See our four-star review in this issue. New Yorker has been expanding, and this looks to be a triumph for the small house, which advanced this when indie fare looked headed for a Christmas crush.*

Son of Gascogne

Jean-Claude Dreyfus stars in this French comedy. Pascal Aubier directs. (Filmpolis, 10/24)

Exploitips: *Highlight the film's French-language nature and its comedy genre to attract the more light-hearted sophisticates among the arthouse set.*



SWITCHBACK

In this R-rated thriller (aka "Going West in America"), a serial killer is being tracked by an FBI agent. Dennis Quaid and Danny Glover star for debut director Jeb Stuart (scripter of "Die Hard"). Gale Anne Hurd produces. (Paramount, 10/31)

Exploitips: *Now set to open vs. the similar-genre "Incognito," this might move to 11/7—but the draw is even worse there.*

HAPPY TOGETHER

Asian sex symbols Leslie Cheung and Tony Leung Chiu-Wai star as gay lovers in a tumultuous relationship. Wong Kar-Wai directs. (Kino, Oct. undated NY)

Exploitips: *This nabbed a best director prize at Cannes, though our reviewer (Sept.) accorded the film just two stars.*

TELLING LIES IN AMERICA

Kevin Bacon and Brad Renfro star in this story of a Hungarian immigrant boy's experiences in America. Screenwriter Joe Eszterhas ("Showgirls," usw) bases this personal tale on his childhood. (Banner, Oct. undated ltd, mid-Nov. exp)

Exploitips: *The Bacon, Renfro and Eszterhas names will raise this one's profile.*

FORGOTTEN SILVER

Co-directors/scripters Peter Jackson ("The Frighteners") and Costa Botes spoof the craze for discovering obscure films and neglected filmmakers in this mockumentary about a New Zealand film pioneer who used sound and color in movies years before Hollywood. (First Run, Oct. undated NY)

Exploitips: *We gave this a 3 1/2-star review (March). Exhibitors might also program shorts; "Forgotten Silver" runs 52 min.*

A GUN FOR JENNIFER

Producer/co-scripter Deborah Twiss stars as a battered housewife who takes up with vicious women. (Greycat, Oct. undated)

Exploitips: *Expect a mature female turnout here, though males might be intrigued.*

THE BUTCHER BOY

In a small Irish town in the early 1960s, a young boy (Eamon Owens) with an alcoholic father ("Michael Collins'" Stephen Rea) and a manic-depressive mother (Aisling O'Sullivan) but one good friend (Alan Boyle) has his life turn for the worse when all three exit his life. Neil Jordan (also "Michael Collins") directs and produces, and he scripts with Patrick McCabe. (Warner Bros., fall)

Exploitips: *In a four-star review (Sept. issue), our Galway fest critic said Jordan's 10th film is "an extraordinary piece of cinema.... [N]ot only are the performances stunning; so is Jordan's direction, of the caliber that says 'Oscar.'" The R rating makes this one for adult audiences, probably in the same number that attended "Michael Collins" ($11 million).*

liance to play mental games with two detectives ("Mulholland Falls'" Chris Penn and "Trigger Effect's" Michael Rooker). Ellen Burstyn and Rosanna Arquette co-star. Jonas and Josh Pate direct and script; Peter Glatzer produces for MDP. (MGM, 11/21 ltd)

Exploitips: *An acquisition to help fill out the Lion's slate, "Liar" (a tentative title) faces no new genre competition on its limited rollout, though it will have to battle holdover business for the higher-wattage "The Jackal." As leads, the players here are more arthouse names, so expect a specialized level of turnout. Some extra media attention is likely given the fact that the directors are twins.*

Matchmaker

When a jaded political professional ("The Truth about Cats and Dogs'" Janeane Garofalo) arrives in Ireland to track down the homespun Irish relatives of a senator (Jay O. Sanders) to help his U.S. re-election campaign, she finds herself in the middle of an annual matchmaking festival. Romantic complications ensue. David O'Hara, Denis Leary ("Wide Awake") and Milo O'Shea co-star. Mark Joffe directs; the "Father Ted" duo, Karen Janszen and Louis Nowra, script; Eric Fellner and Tim Bevan ("Bean") and Luc Roeg produce for Working Title. (Gramercy, 11/21)

Exploitips: *Despite the sleeper status of her Fox hit, Garofalo is not a mainstream marquee pull; that and the foreign setting make "Matchmaker" (aka "The Strangest Places") something of a specialty title. That element—along with its salable romance genre—means the film's key competition will be...*

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Sliding Doors

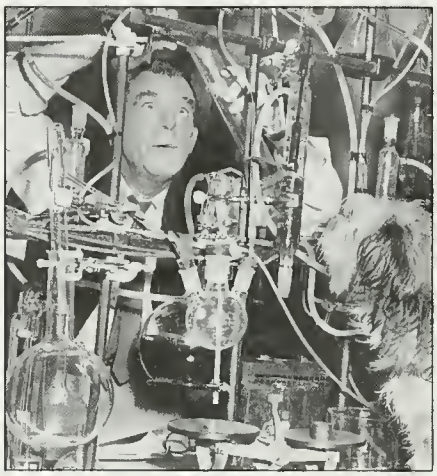
Gwyneth Paltrow ("Emma") stars in this contemporary love story about Helen, a young woman whose destiny is about to be changed by the sliding doors of a London subway train. From that moment, the film bisects to tell the two parallel stories of what happens if Helen makes the train and if she doesn't. John Hannah, John Lynch ("Nothing Personal") and Jeanne Tripplehorn ("'Til There Was You") co-star. Peter Howitt directs and scripts; Sydney Pollack produces for Mirage with William Horberg and Philippa Braithwaite. (Miramax, 11/21 NY/LA)

Exploitips: *Like "Matchmaker," this will be distaff-driven. Given the similarity of the two film's elements (genre, setting, lead's gender), the boxoffice question could come down to Paltrow vs. Garofalo. That, plus Miramax's marketing power, could give "Sliding Doors" the advantage in its markets.*

NOVEMBER 28

Flubber

Robin Williams takes on the role originated by Fred MacMurray (see photo) in this remake of the 1961 family comedy "The Absent-Minded Professor." Williams plays a scientist who invents Flubber (a rubbery substance with anti-gravity powers); Christopher MacDonald ("The Rich Man's Wife") plays the prof's nemesis who tries to purloin the putty. Marcia Gay Harden ("The First Wives Club") plays his long-suffering fiancee, now updated to college president, and there's a flying robot assistant named WEEBO. Les Mayfield ("Encino Man") directs; John Hughes scripts, and he produces with former Hollywood Pictures head Ricardo Mestres. (Buena Vista, 11/26)



Exploitips: *Four years (and two days) ago, Williams and Hughes protege Chris Columbus launched the family comedy "Mrs. Doubtfire" to Thanksgiving-through-New Year success and a very domestic $220 million. Clearly, Disney hopes for that kind of number, vs. that for its previous Williams starrer, the 8/96 "Jack" ($59 million). The chances? Especially given its predictable PG rating (for slapstick action and mild language), not bad. Expect "Alien Resurrection" and "Red Corner" to draw the non-competing SF and adult demos, and the same-genre "The Man Who Knew Too Little" to perhaps prove its title by going up against "Flubber."*

Alien Resurrection

Sigourney Weaver as Ripley again battles malevolent extraterrestrials in this fourth installment of the "Alien" franchise. This time out, evil scientists clone our hero to access the alien queen that died inside her body when Ripley suicided in "Alien^3." Winona Ryder co-stars with Dan Hedaya, Brad Dourif and two from "The City of Lost Children," Ron Perlman and Dominique Pinon. Jean-Pierre Jeunet (also "The City of Lost Children") directs; Joss Whedon ("Toy Story") scripts; David Giler, Walter Hill, Gordon Carroll and Bill Badalato produce. (Fox, 11/26)

Exploitips: *Fox goes for the gusto in its directing choices for this franchise. Though the artfully dark vision of David Fincher (who went on to make "Seven") of 1992's "Alien^3" didn't win wide audience support, the studio (after winning and then losing "Shallow Grave's" Danny Boyle) went with Jeunet, whose offkilter vision (with co-director Marc Caro) drew foreign-language fans to "The City of Lost Children" and "Delicatessen." Will the arthouse aficionado fare well on the megaplex screen? That this is one of only two sequels this month should help; even as "Mortal Kombat: Annihilation" draws younger, this R-rater (for strong sci-fi violence and gore, some grotesque images and language) should trend older.*

Red Corner

In this thriller, a savvy entertainment lawyer (Richard Gere) comes to China to broker a big TV deal. While celebrating, he seduces a beautiful Chinese woman. Awaking the next morning, he finds himself accused of raping

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nd murdering her. Caught in a legal system at affords no presumption of innocence and ven a skeptical court-appointed attorney (Bai ng), he faces imminent execution. Jon Avnet The War") directs, and he produces with rdan Kerner, Rosalie Swedlin and Charles ulvehill; Ron Koslow ("Last Dance") scripts ith Robert King. (MGM/UA, 11/26)

Exploitips: *This could be a bit boxed into a orner, Gere having just appeared earlier this nonth in "The Jackal" and the similar-demo Alien Resurrection" boasting a presold title. vnet (who also directed "Fried Green Toma- oes") makes quality films, though, so this ould benefit from word of mouth.*

he Man Who Knew Too Little

Aka "Watch That Man," this caper comedy ells the story of an American (Bill Murray) who attends a London interactive stage show hat puts participants in the middle of crime-olving adventures. Without his knowledge, he Yank becomes embroiled in a real case of nternational espionage. Peter Gallagher ("To Gillian on Her 37th Birthday") and Joanne Whalley ("Trial by Jury") co-star for director on Amiel, with whom they worked on "Tune n Tomorrow" and "The Singing Detective," espectively. Robert Farrar adapts his novel; on Amiel produces with Mark Tarlov, Mi-hael Nathanson and Arnon Milchan for New Legency. (Warner Bros., 11/28)

Exploitips: *Amiel ("Copycat," "Sommers-by") is adept at various genres; the question mark is whether the talented Murray, of Ghostbusters" and "Groundhog Day" fame, can draw substantial audiences after "King-pin" and "Larger Than Life." Despite the rating here, PG (for language, innuendo, comic violence and sensuality), the release timing*



against "Flubber" virtually precludes family attendance, so try to maximize turnout by teenagers resistant to the Disney name.

NOVEMBER UNDATED

Kiss or Kill

Down Under helmer Bill Bennett ("Two If By Sea") directs "Love and Other Catastrophes'" Frances O'Connor and Matt Day in this dramatic thriller about a grifter couple running from police across Australia's Nullarbor Desert. When a series of murders occur along their route, each suspects the other. Bennett also scripts and produces. (October Films, Nov. undated)

Exploitips: *Emphasize the Aussie heritage of this arthouse entry, along with its genre.*

Body Count

A "Jade" re-teaming, Linda Fiorentino and David Caruso star in this film about an art heist gone wrong. Ving Rhames ("Rosewood"), Forest Whitaker ("Species"), John Leguizamo ("The Pest") and Donnie Wahlberg ("Ransom") co-star. Robert Patton Spruill ("The Squeeze") directs. (Gramercy, Nov. undated)

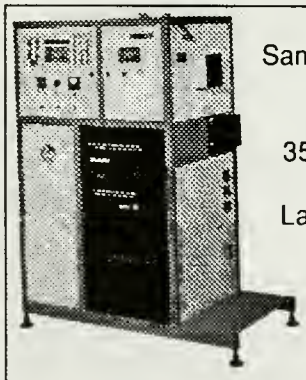
Exploitips: *Unlike the similar-genre "Kiss or Kill," this has salable stateside star wattage; expect some crossover. Rated R (for strong violence and pervasive strong language).*

The Leading Man

In this drama set amid London's theatre world, a playwright (Lambert Wilson) sleeping with his leading lady ("The Journey of August King's" Thandie Newton) asks his leading man ("Moonlight & Valentino's" Jon Bon Jovi) to sleep with his Italian wife ("The Hairdresser's Husband's" Anna Galiena)—to unexpected results. John Duigan (also "The Journey of August King") directs; Virginia Duigan scripts; Bertil Ohlsson and Paul Raphael produce. (Legacy, Nov. undated)

Exploitips: *Screened at the 1996 Toronto fest, "The Leading Man" won a three-star review from our critic, who said that the film is "fresh and unpredictable" and that rocker-turned-actor Bon Jovi in "the Sting role" has "genuine presence and charm."*

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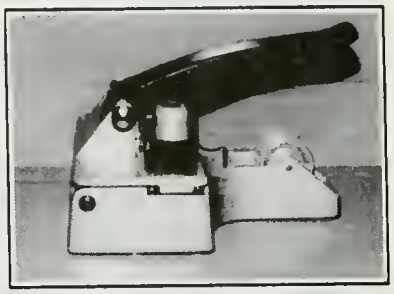
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★★★★★ OUTSTANDING
★★★★ VERY GOOD
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DAY AND DATE: OCTOBER 24

BEAUMARCHAIS, THE SCOUNDREL ★★★★

Starring Fabrice Luchini, Sandrine Kiberlain and Manuel Blanc. Directed by Edouard Molinaro. Written by Edouard Molinaro and Jean-Clause Brisville. Produced by Charles Gassot. A New Yorker release. Comedy. Not yet rated. French-language; English subtitles. Running time: 100 min. Opens 10/24 NY/LA.

In 1770s France lived an intriguing fellow known as Pierre Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais. Though of, as they say, humble birth, he was a brilliant writer, inventor and shrewd businessman, and he married well—twice (both ladies unfortunately expiring shortly after the ceremonies). His title was a purchased one, and he climbed his way into court circles, but he also was a relentless gadfly and critic of the aristocracy.



BOWING "BEAUMARCHAIS": *Fabrice Luchini stars in the New Yorker release.*

Between stints in the Bastille for his insolence, he spied for the Crown, smuggled arms to the American Revolutionary Army, had affairs, and wrote the wildly popular, poetically subversive comedy "The Marriage of Figaro," which was banned by both Louis XVI and Hitler. His life reads like a James Bond movie in a powdered wig—and now it is.

"Beaumarchais, the Scoundrel" is a lush, lavishly mounted costumer that is simply a hoot from beginning to end. Like the main character, it is sly and funny and whip-smart but never takes itself too seriously—combining the French-court intellectual intrigue of "Dangerous Liaisons" with the bravura, breezy dash of "Tom Jones." Director/co-scripter Edouard Molinaro achieves the historical/costume filmmaking grail: connecting the audience to the schoolbook characters onscreen not by making them modern but by making them human and real. One small setpiece has Beaumarchais meet with Ben Franklin, and as presented here Poor Richard is a study in eccentricity that will leave no moviegoer looking at a hundred-dollar bill in quite the same way again.

Although "Beaumarchais" sometimes plays a bit fast and loose with history, the film succeeds not only as a work of entertainment but also as a tease that makes one want to find out more about the man and his world. It presents the Age of Enlightenment as an attractive, smart, dangerous place. Hell, it makes you want to read a copy of "The Marriage of Figaro."—***Alex Albanese***

FEST REVIEWS

TORONTO

FAIRYTALE: A TRUE STORY ★★★★

Starring Florence Hoath, Elizabeth Earl, Peter O'Toole and Harvey Keitel. Directed by Charles Sturridge. Written by Ernie Contreras. Produced by Wendy Finerman and Bruce Davey. A Paramount release. Fantasy. Rated PG for brief mild language. Running time: 98 min. Opens 10/24.

In the manner of the best children's works, "FairyTale: A True Story" has a motif-packed opening section. Very quickly, the audience of this Charles Sturridge ("Where Angels Fear to Tread") film begins to feel they're in the process of watching something special.

For the most part, this Icon production is exactly that. The story—which scripter Ernie Contreras bases on real-life events—is about two young cousins, Elsie and Frances (newcomers Florence Hoath and Elizabeth Earl), who produce photographs of fairies that become the center of worldwide controversy in this century's second decade. Wisely, the filmmakers avoid the global scope, preferring quiet conversation in the intimacy of the little girls' shared room and such telling considerations as a tiny empty treehouse built for the fairies by Elsie's now-dead brother. (Frances has emotional trauma too: Her father, away in the Great War, is missing in action.)

Even more than "A Little Princess," which famously opened to lavish praise and empty theatres, this movie has a complexity of character and concept that works against a simple emotional payoff onscreen. Instead, "FairyTale: A True Story" comes close to achieving the cinematic sublime: Being a film for all ages for the ages.—*Kim Williamson*

IN AND OUT ★★★

Starring Kevin Kline, Joan Cusack, Tom Selleck and Matt Dillon. Directed by Frank Oz. Written by Paul Rudnick. Produced by Scott Rudin. A Paramount release. Comedy. Rated PG-13 for sexual content and some strong language. Running time: 90 min.

Surprisingly hilarious at some turns and overly simple at others, "In and Out" fades in and out in terms of its success as a comedy. Peppered liberally with celebrity cameos, it's a small film made to feel big while still seeming off the beaten path. The story is about a well-liked English teacher, Howard Brackett (Kevin Kline), whose impending marriage, peaceful life and personal emotions are thrown into turmoil when he is mistakenly "outed" by a former local boy-turned-superstar actor (Matt Dillon) during his Oscar acceptance speech for his portrayal of a gay war hero.

Howard tries eliminating some of his more effeminate mannerisms to help squelch the rumors, but that task proves easier said than done for this die-hard Barbra Streisand devotee. Even as Howard must sort through his own feelings, the situation is further complicated by his insecure fiancee (Joan Cusack), who's freaking out, the high school principal (Bob Newhart), who's covertly threatening Brackett's job, and by the town's populace, whose reactions are mixed.

There's not a lot of plot momentum and the denouement is a bit simplistic and patronizing, but this light-hearted fare has enough fun moments and witty social-commentary barbs to make it worthwhile—not to mention the fact that it features one of the funniest and most unexpected screen kisses in film history.—*Christine James*

WASHINGTON SQUARE ★★★1/2

Starring Jennifer Jason Leigh, Albert Finney, Ben Chaplin and Maggie Smith. Directed by Agnieszka Holland. Written by Carol Doyle. Produced by Roger Birnbaum and Julie Bergman Sender. A Buena Vista release. Drama. Rated PG for thematic elements including some sensuality, a childbirth scene and brief mild language. Running time: 115 min. Opens Oct. 10.

Agnieszka Holland's films ("Europa, Europa," "The Secret Garden") typically tell a story in which she attempts to make beauty of gloom, but in the end it's a failing fight of light against darkness. This

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time out, Holland—aided by debut scripter Carol Doyle—adapts the novella by Henry James previously reworked by William Wyler in 1949's "The Heiress." Though the new version is unlikely to bring actress Jennifer Jason Leigh (who again mistakes tics for depth) the Oscar that the Wyler film brought Olivia de Havilland, the story of Catherine Sloper—whose birth cost her mother her life, marking her unforgivably in the eyes of her wealthy father (Albert Finney)—seems tailor-made for Holland.

From the first scene, she has a lock on her theme: the mother dead on a bloody bed, the father refusing to hold the child, the infant in her crib with an incredible expression on her tiny face—a melding of lostness, devastation and dread—that virtually tells the movie in an instant. The rest is details. Those details include Catherine's growth into a woman devoted to her unyieldingly disappointed father, and her affection for a poor man ("The Truth About Cats and Dogs'" Ben Chaplin) who insists he wishes to marry her for herself and not her father's money, and which as the film's major subplot functions sufficiently but not artfully. Yet, well through the movie, when her father says to Catherine, "How obscene—that your mother should give her life so you can inhabit space on this earth," the film shows it's not moved past the point captured with the infant in the crib. Yet, having cut to the bone of one daughter/father relationship, "Washington Square" is a movie that makes a virtue of the reflexive property.—*Kim Williamson*

SUICIDE KINGS ★★★

Starring Christopher Walken, Denis Leary, Henry Thomas, Sean Patrick Flanery, Jay Mohr and Johnny Galecki. Directed by Peter O'Fallon. Written by Wayne Rice and Gina Goldman. Produced by Wayne Rice and Morrie Eisenman. A Live release. Thriller. Rated R for strong violence and language, and for some nudity and drug use. Running time: 107 min.

In this darkly comic thriller, five boys, in a desperate attempt to save one of their sisters from a gruesome fate at the hands of kidnappers, abduct former mob boss Charles Barrett (Christopher Walken) in the hopes that he can use his connections to free the girl. This rash gamble puts their own lives in danger, because, as the enraged Barrett points out, just as he could save the girl with one phone call, he could order a quintuple hit with equal ease.

The scheme is more than a little farfetched, and the boys don't adequately convey a sense of worry for the kidnapped girl that one would expect from people going to so much trouble and such peril to save her. This slackens the tension, but interest in the story is revivified with an intriguing plot twist. Also enlivening the proceedings is Walken, who is excellent as usual in portraying the darkly intimidating yet principled and wryly humored ex-crimelord. There's some sloppiness and confusion in piecing the elements together, and the story would have benefited from a closer examination of the protagonists and their motivations.—*Christine James*

YEAR OF THE HORSE ★★1/2

Directed and written by Jim Jarmusch. Produced by L.A. Johnson. An October Films release. Documentary. Not yet rated. Running time: 108 min. Opens Oct.

Although those who've become ardent fans of Neil Young and Crazy Horse through their many albums since "Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere" in 1969 on through 1996's "Broken Arrow" might well love this documentary that primarily records (onto Super-8 and 16mm) the band's 1996 tour of America and Europe, moviegoers only modestly or less enamored of such ditties as "Cinnamon Girl" and "Like a Hurricane" could find this something of a sit. Aiming to make a movie that's "100 percent Crazy Horse," Jim Jarmusch ("Dead Man") ends down in two digits.

He shows great affection for Young and his band offstage and onstage; performances of songs blessedly run full-length, with little commentary via camera cuts. (The visuals of a now 50-something Young attired in shorts and dark socks onstage, looking like an aged Macintosh dweeb, provides its own message.) It's the behind-the-scenes sections in which the film disappoints. Capturing a unique moment in time, "Woodstock" and "Monterey Pop" had a built-in electricity; "Year of the Horse" needs deep insight into Young's creative drive and into the personalities of his bandmates to have equal impact. But moviegoers will leave the theatre knowing virtually nothing more about Crazy Horse and Young than when they went in; the most interesting dialogue is provided by an on-camera appearance by Jarmusch himself. Although the addition of footage of 1976 and 1986 tours (filmed by Bernard Shakey) adds some nice grace notes, "Year of the Horse" is a pleasant but uncompelling historical curio.—*Kim Williamson*

SEATTLE

THE OTHER SIDE OF SUNDAY ★★★

Starring Marie Theisen, Bjorn Sundquist and Hildegun Riise. Directed by Berit Nesheim. Written by Berit Nesheim and Lasse Glomm. Produced by Nrk Drama. A First Look release. Drama. Norwegian-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 104 min.

If there is one binding element to all of Scandinavian cinema, it is a relentless obsession with religious angst. From Carl Dreyer to Ingmar Bergman to Bille August to Lars Von Trier, Nordic filmmakers have so thoroughly plumbed the subject over the decades that it's hard to imagine anyone bringing something new to the tableau. And yet Norwegian filmmaker Berit Nesheim has done just that in her Oscar-nominated "The Other Side of Sunday."

Set in a small Norwegian village in 1959, Nesheim's film is essentially a coming-of-age tale, told through the eyes of a restless 16-year-old girl named Maria (Marie Theisen). As the day of her confirmation draws near, Maria begins to question many of the fundamental tenets of her faith, even as she grows curious about village boys, makeup, jewelry and American rock-'n'-roll.

Adapted by Nesheim and Lasse Glomm from Reidun Nortvedt's novel "Sunday," "The Other Side of Sunday" is a warm, affectionate tale of young womanhood staged by an exceedingly sensitive director. Considerable credit also goes to a uniformly outstanding cast; in particular, young Theisen carries the film magnificently on her shoulders, her radiant face displaying a torrent of adolescent emotions.—*Wade Major*

LOVED ★★

Starring Robin Wright-Penn, William Hurt and Amy Madigan. Directed and written by Erin Dignam. Produced by Philippe Caland and Sean Penn. No stateside distributor set. Drama. Rated PG-13 for intense thematic elements, brief disturbing images, language and nudity. Running time: 103 min.

Abusive relationships are an entertainment staple. TV movies of the week, bigscreen dramas and afternoon talk shows explore and exploit the horrible subject of men beating the women they supposedly love. With "Loved," writer/director Erin Dignam works hard to make her take on the topic avoid such well-worn paths in favor of a high-minded road seeking food for thought rather than outright entertainment.

"Loved" centers on Hedda ("She's So Lovely's" Robin Wright-Penn) and her iron-clad devotion to an ex-boyfriend who scarred her. He stands accused of the death of a later girlfriend, and prosecuting attorney K.D. (William Hurt) persuades Hedda to testify at her beloved's trial. Rather than point blame, Hedda tells the court that their violent incidents weren't his fault and why she sometimes "wasn't worth hitting." K.D. and Hedda's family try to comprehend her justification of abuse. It's a frustrating experience for all, including the audience.

Dignam starts "Loved" with a wallop—the death in question—and proceeds to unravel the mental forces responsible for the action. But "Loved" soon becomes a victim of its success. By trading immediacy for temporal and emotional distance, Dignam soon exhausts the audience curiosity she had deftly constructed; frustration gives way to apathy. Wright-Penn and renowned monotone Hurt perfectly inhabit their languid roles but, as Dignam intends, "Loved" provokes thought, not the audience.—*Ian Hodder*

SECRETS OF THE HEART ★★★1/2

Starring Andoni Erburu, Carmelo Gomez, Maria Charo Lopez and Silvia Munt. Directed and written by Montxo Armendariz. Produced by Imanol Uribe and Andres Santana. A Sogepaq production; no stateside distributor set. Drama. Spanish-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 108 min.

Eight-year-old Javi (Andoni Erburu) and his older brother Juan (Alvaro Nagore) live with their spinster aunts (Maria Charo

Lopez and Vicky Pena) in provincial Spain of the early 1960s. The mischievous Juan tells Javi that the dead whisper secrets left unspoken in life; Javi is easily persuaded, and he becomes fixated on the room where his father died, always kept locked by his mother. When the brothers return on school holiday to the house where their mother, uncle and grandfather live, Javi uncovers the secrets surrounding his father's death.

Films rarely explore the world from a child's viewpoint believably. There are innate limitations; inevitably, it's an adult's clouded memory of childhood onscreen, and the reminiscence is only as good as the child actor set to the task. But Spain's "Secrets of the Heart" is a charming film that succeeds both as a coming-of-age drama and as an authentic portrayal of a child's view of the world's mysteries.—*Greg Lee*

STILL BREATHING ★1/2

Starring Brendan Fraser and Joanna Going. Directed and written by James F. Robinson. Produced by James F. Robinson and Marshall Persinger. An October Films release. Romance. Not yet rated. Running time: 109 min.

Rest assured, lonely hearts: A perfect romantic partner does indeed exist. What's hard is finding that mate. Take the case of young Fletcher ("George of the Jungle's" Brendan Fraser), a Texas street performer, and Roz ("Little City's" Joanna Going), a gold digger from Los Angeles. Despite their differences, the duo make a love connection thanks to Fletcher's psychic ability and a case of mistaken identity. It's a cruel irony, however, that the movie about their attraction fails to engage its audience.

Like an unwanted suitor, "Still Breathing" strives to make us like it. Director/writer James F. Robinson infuses the film with "Sleepless in Seattle"-style plot twists and tidbits of Hollywood mysticism a la "Forrest Gump." The problem isn't Robinson's corny script—which could succeed under better conditions—but rather the film's lifeless direction and, most of all, fatal choice of stars. As Fletcher, a puppeteer with psychic abilities and a passion for collages and stone sculptures, Fraser is more doofus than artist. (Incredibly, Fraser won best actor kudos at the Seattle fest.) As Roz, Going has the conniving bitch role down, but she never exhibits any interest in their love affair. If this is a date movie, it's one for couples on the wane.—*Ian Hodder*

NOT LOVE, JUST FRENZY ★★1/2

Starring Nancho Novo and Cayetana Guillen Cuervo. Directed and written by Alfonso Albacete, Miguel Bardem and David Menkes. Produced by Fernando Colomo and Beatriz de la Gandara. A Mainstream production; no stateside distributor set. Comedy/drama. Spanish-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 103 min.

"Frenzy" certainly describes the driving force behind the graphic, drug-fueled "Not Love, Just Frenzy." It's a comedy, a drama and raunchy erotica held together by a thin murder storyline. Despite the plot concerns, the movie barrels along at such a fast, techno-pounding pace that it's hard not to get caught up in the spectacle.

Not for the faint of heart, "Not Love, Just Frenzy" is set against the backdrop of the Madrid disco scene, where slightly shocking people do even more shocking things to and against each other. The action revolves around a gigolo framed of a sex crime by a psycho cop, the rent-boy's ex-lover and her slutty roommates. Various fluids are exchanged among the characters, but as graphic and disturbing as it can be "Not Love, Just Frenzy" is an entertaining jaunt through Madrid after dark.—*Greg Lee*

FRANCHESCA PAGE ★1/2

Starring Varla Jean Merman, Rossy de Palma and Francesca Leon. Directed and written by Kelley Sane. Produced by Pietro Cuevas and Mark Downie. No stateside distributor set. Musical comedy. Not yet rated. Running time: 101 min.

Camp - humor = tortured audience: This simple formula is the undoing of "Franchesca Page," an unfunny comedy that attempts and fails to parody the world of musicals and theatre. In it, an overbearing, dramatic stage mom/performance artist named Rita Page persuades her untalented daughter Franchesca to audition for a part in a local theatre production. Though Franchesca botches her performance, a sleazy, bondage-geared producer named Veronica hires her anyway. As cast members are mysteriously murdered, Franchesca, Rita, her neighbor Melba and the show's star must join forces to stop the killer and save the production.

Interspersed throughout the melodrama are song-and-dance numbers that are supposed to satirize the overly cheerful and frequently ridiculous nature of musicals, but the humor is annoyingly obvious. The catty screenplay by Kelley Sane, who also directs, is the biggest flaw; yet, because the actors are doing their best to deliver dead sentences with sass, it comes off as nagging. Still, costumes, sets and makeup are nothing less than inspired.—*Lea Russo*

THE ISLAND ON BIRD STREET ★★

Starring Patrick Bergin, Jordan Kiziuk, Jack Warden and Michael Byrne. Directed by Soren Kragh-Jacobsen. Written by John Goldsmith and Tony Grisoni. Produced by Rudy Cohen and Tivi Magnusson. A Gallery Motion Pictures production; no stateside distributor set. Drama. Danish-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 107 min.

Hope is good. Being homeless is bad. Some people are good. Nazis are bad. Life on the street is especially disagreeable when you're a 12-year-old Jewish kid in Nazi-occupied Poland who is ever so certain that Poppa will come back for him. Denmark's "The Island on Bird Street" is an earnest film that hopes to get all of the above across to the moviegoer in a gritty, touching narrative but, as hard as it tries to convince the viewer that it is A Story That Must Be Told, further consideration yields a less poignant conclusion: No, It Didn't.

Based on the partly autobiographical novel by Polish/Jewish author Uri Orlev, "The Island on Bird Street" succeeds more as an action flick than a drama. Director Soren Kragh-Jacobsen elicits a good performance from Jordan Kiziuk, but the boy has an annoying Oliver Twist quality about him that soon grates. And it's a feeling of coerced sentimentality that emerges most strongly from this film.—*Greg Lee*

HARD CORE LOGO ★★★1/2

Starring Hugh Dillon, Callum Keith Rennie and Bernie Coulson. Directed by Bruce McDonald. Written by Noel S. Baker. Produced by Christine Haebler and Brian Dennis. A First Run release. Drama. Unrated. Running time: 92 min.

The first films in Bruce McDonald's unofficial road trilogy ("Roadkill" and "Highway 61") were joyfully innocent and inspired pop-culture sprees that radiated high-octane energy. McDonald's new movie has some of the same drive as those, but the innocence is long gone.

"Hard Core Logo" is a mockumentary about a disbanded punk music group of that name from Vancouver. Its members decide to overcome their personal differences and exit retirement to play a benefit concert for an aging mentor, but they discover that they can never really go home. "Hard Core Logo" is harsh analysis of rock celebrity, but it's also McDonald's wistful examination of what the pleasures of moviemaking mean to him.—*Kevin Courrier*

GUY ★★★1/2

Starring Vincent D'Onofrio, Hope Davis and Kimber Riddle. Directed by Michael Lindsay-Hogg. Written by Kirby Dick. Produced by Vincent D'Onofrio and Renee Missel. A Polygram production; no stateside distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 89 min.

With last year's "The Whole Wide World," character actor and indie stalwart Vincent D'Onofrio showed he had a knack for producing even as he carried a lead role; "Guy" is no different. D'Onofrio plays an everyman who finds himself under the unrelenting gaze of a woman and her camera. The woman ("The Myth of Fingerprints'" Hope Davis) spies Guy in downtown Los Angeles and begins making a documentary about his life—without his permission. Taken aback by this intrusion into his life, Guy responds sequentially with bewilderment, anger, resignation and ardor.

Scripter Kirby Dick's controversial documentary "Sick: The Life and Death of Bob Flanagan, Supermasochist" received a special recognition award at the Sundance fest this year for its unflinching look at painful subject matter. His teaming with helmer Michael Lindsay-Hogg has crafted a startling look at our spectator society, wrought by expert watchers.—*Greg Lee*

FESTIVAL REVIEWS

SAN FRANCISCO

CARLA'S SONG ★★★

Starring Robert Carlyle, Oyanka Cabezas and Scott Glenn. Directed by Ken Loach. Written by Paul Loverty. Produced by Sally Hibbin. No stateside distributor set. Drama. English- and Spanish-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 127 min.

As he did in his award-winning "Land and Freedom," director Ken Loach continues to explore the intersection of passion and politics. This time, the focus is not the Spanish Civil War but current-day Scotland and Nicaragua. After an encounter in Glasgow, romance blooms between local bus driver George (Robert Carlyle) and Carla (Oyanka Cabezas), a Nicaraguan emigre.

Beautiful but despondent, Carla conceals a painful secret that can be unearthed only when the lovers travel to her homeland. There, George meets a disaffected ex-CIA operative (Scott Glenn) who lectures him on atrocities wrought by the American government. So defamatory is Glenn's speech, in fact, that it has been blamed for the film's failure to find stateside distribution.

Loach has fashioned a moving, rhapsodic love story that's also part political thriller, part psychodrama. As he showed in "Priest," "Trainspotting" and "The Full Monty," Carlyle is an actor of astonishing range and depth. Cabezas and Glenn are not so fortunate; she's too internalized, he's not quite credible.—*Lael Loewenstein*

THE MAKER ★★1/2

Starring Matthew Modine, Mary-Louise Parker and Jonathan Rhys-Myers. Directed by Tim Hunter. Written by Rand Ravich. Produced by Andrew Lazar and Demitri Samaha. No stateside distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 98 min.

An eerily menacing performance by Matthew Modine is a key virtue of this uneven drama by Tim Hunter ("River's Edge"). Modine plays Walter, long-lost older brother of Josh Minell ("Michael Collins'" Jonathan Rhys-Myers). Appearing on Josh's 18th birthday, Walter invites his little brother on a "business trip"—for grand theft and assault. Frightened yet intrigued, Josh must decide whether to follow him into a life of crime, not merely as a player but as "the maker": the one who makes the rules.

The film boasts a host of noteworthy performances: Fairuza Balk ("The Craft") sparkles as Josh's lesbian best friend Bella; Michael Madsen ("Species") is deliciously dark as a criminal underlord, and Mary-Louise Parker ("The Portrait of a Lady") suggests her role as a policewoman is fuller than the writing would allow. That the script is so inconsistent is one of the film's shortcomings; much of the dialogue is witty and surprisingly original, but the story feels unstructured and amateurish. Too often, Hunter resorts to shoot-'em-up action sequences when he should be spending time developing characters.—*Lael Loewenstein*

WAKE UP, LOVE ★★★1/2

Starring Dario Grandinetti, Soledad Silveyra and Juan Leyrado. Directed and written by Eliseo Subiela. Produced by Jorge Rocco and Damian Kirzna. No distributor set. Drama. Spanish-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Run time: 98 min.

A gem of a film that could shine with careful specialized distribution, "Wake Up, Love" is delightful Argentine filmmaking. Set in modern-day Buenos Aires, the story follows a group of middle-aged friends who decide to track down their old friends, stage a 25-year reunion and rekindle memories of their youth. Not quite "Romy and Michelle's High School Reunion," "Wake Up, Love" is at once more touching, more ribald, more romantic and more profound.

In the central role of Ricardo—also known as Elvis—Juan Leyrado does an impressive turn. Gray of hair but still green of spirit, Ricardo keeps in shape by dancing daily to "Jailhouse Rock." But Ana (Soledad Silveyra), his wife of 24 years, is depressed and menopausal. Ricardo decides to throw a party, inviting Ana's old flame Ernesto (Dario Grandinetti) in the hope that she might regain some of her luster. Having jilted Ana two decades earlier to pursue a political career in post-revolutionary Cuba, Ernesto has never quite forgiven himself. In renewing their friendships, Ernesto, Ana and Ricardo discover aspects of each other they had long forgotten or never known.

Cleverly, writer/director Eliseo Subiela intercuts present and past, showing how little has really changed. One teasing flashback involves a condom purchase; several others show the youths at high school dances decorated in surreal-looking neon pinks and yellows. To his credit, Subiela doesn't take the story in a predictable direction. Just when it seems Ernesto and Ana might reunite, he falls for a young Cuban cellist who seduces him with her music.

PREVIOUSLY REVIEWED: *SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER/NOVEMBER FILMS*

In light of our continuing commitment to bring you reviews as early as possible, we now provide a reader guide to upcoming releases we've already critiqued. The alphabetical list below notes the issue of BOXOFFICE in which the review appeared, gives its star rating, and provides newly updated distributor and release date information.

"Anthem" ★★★★: Zeitgeist, 9/19 NY; see Sept. 1997.
"Bandwagon" ★★★1/2: CFP, 9/12 ltd; see April 1997.
"Bean" ★★★1/2: Gramercy, 11/7 wide; see Sept. 1997.
"Breaking Up" ★★★: Warner Bros., 9/26 NY/LA/Tor; see Sept. 1997.
"Deep Crimson" ★★★★: New Yorker, 10/8; see April 1997.
"The Delta" ★: Strand, Sept. undated exp; see July 1997.
"Different for Girls" ★★: First Look, 9/12 NY/LA/SF; see March 1997.
"The Disappearance of Garcia Lorca" ★★1/2: Sony Releasing, 9/12 ltd; see Sept. 1997.
"The End of Violence" ★★★: MGM, 9/12; see Aug. 1997.
"Fast, Cheap & Out of Control" ★★★: Sony Classics, 10/3 NY/LA; see April 1997.
"Forgotten Silver" ★★★1/2: First Run, Oct. undated NY; see March 1997.
"Going All the Way" ★★★: Gramercy, 9/19 NY/LA, 9/26 exp; see April 1997.
"Gravesend" ★1/2: Manga, 9/5 NY, 9/19 LA; see Sept. 1997.
"Happy Together" ★★: Kino, Oct. undated; see Sept. 1997.
"The House of Yes" ★★★1/2: Miramax, 10/10 NY/LA, exp 10/17 & 10/24; see April 1997.
"Hurricane Streets" ★★★: UA, 10/24; see April 1997.
"The Ice Storm" ★★1/2: Fox Searchlight, 9/26 NY, 10/17 exp; see July 1997.
"In a Strange City" ★★★1/2: Filmopolis, Sept. undated; see July 1996.
"Intimate Relations" ★★: Fox Searchlight, 9/5; see Sept. 1996.
"I Was a Jewish Sex Worker" ★★1/2: Greycat, 10/17 NY; see April 1997.
"Kicked in the Head" ★★: October Films, 9/26; see Aug. 1997.
"L.A. Confidential" ★★★1/2: Warner Bros., 9/19; see Aug. 1997.
"La Rencontre" ★★: Artistic License, Sept. undated; see March 1997.
"Lilies" ★: Turbulent Arts, 10/10 SF, 10/17 NY, 10/24 LA; see April 1997.
"The Long Way Home" ★★★: Seventh Art, 9/17 LA, 9/19 NY; see Sept. 1997.
"Love Always" ★1/2: Legacy, 9/26 ltd; see April 1997.
"Marian" ★: Turbulent Arts, 10/3 Chi; see April 1997.
"Mouth to Mouth" ★★★1/2: Miramax, 9/5 NY/LA; see Sept. 1996.
"My Sex Life..." ★★★: Zeitgeist, 9/17 NY; see Aug. 1996.
"The Myth of Fingerprints" ★★★1/2: Sony Classics, 9/17 NY; see Apr. 1997.
"Nenette et Boni" ★★★: Strand, 10/3 NY, 10/10 LA; see April 1997.
"Nick and Jane" ★★: CFP, 10/10; see June 1996.
"Omaha: the movie" ★★1/2: Movieworld, 9/26 reissue; see April 1996.
"Parallel Sons" ★★★: Greycat, Nov. undated; see May 1997.
"Riding the Rails" ★★★★: Artistic License, 9/5 LA, 9/12 NY; see July 1997.
"A Self Made Hero" ★★★★: Strand, 9/26 LA; see March 1997.
"Slaves to the Underground" ★1/2: First Look, 11/14 NY; see April 1997.
"Talk of Angels" ★★★: Miramax, 9/12 NY/LA; see Sept. 1997.
"Timeless" ★★★: Phaedra, Oct. undated; see April 1996.
"Trojan Eddie" ★★: Castle Hill, early Sept. LA; see April 1997.
"Welcome to Sarajevo" ★★★1/2: Miramax, 11/14 NY/LA; see July 1997.
"Wide Awake" ★★★: Miramax, 9/19; see Sept. 1997.

FESTS

Indeed, music is an important element in "Wake Up, Love": Both the haunting strains of Bach sonatas and the hip-swiveling beats of Elvis will resonate long after the film ends.—*Lael Loewenstein*

PIZZICATA ★★★

Starring Cosimo Cinieri, Fabio Frascaro and Chiara Torelli. Directed and written by Edoardo Winspeare. Produced by Edoardo Winspeare, Dieter Horres and Jean-Jacques Varret. No stateside distributor set. Drama. Italian-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 93 min.

This lyrical and delicate pastoral romance tells a story of forbidden love in Southern Italy, circa 1943. When the plane of an Italian-American fighter pilot (Fabio Frascaro) crashes on an elderly widower's property, his daughter Cosima (Chiara Torelli) falls for the youth. Her desire poses a considerable dilemma, as she is promised to another. In the strict Catholic community, the would-be lovers can express their affection only by dancing the ritualistic Pizzica, a suggestive interplay in which the man and woman's bodies never touch.

"Pizzicata" has an earnest simplicity that comes through in its performances, production design and cinematography. With the cast's thick Salentino accents and austere garments and the aged-looking sepia film stock, the movie seems almost to have come from another era. It lacks a satisfactory resolution—some plotlines are abandoned outright—but it's an absorbing and carefully rendered tale.—*Lael Loewenstein*

A MOMENT OF INNOCENCE ★★

Starring Ali Bakhshi, Mirhadi Tayebi and Mohsen Makhmalbaf. Directed and written by Mohsen Makhmalbaf. Produced by Abofazl Alagheband. No stateside distributor set. Drama. Farsi-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 78 min.

In this autobiographical story, Iranian filmmaker Mohsen Makhmalbaf revisits his youth—with a twist. Some 20 years earlier, then-teenager Makhmalbaf stabbed a young policeman to demonstrate his opposition to the Shah's regime. After a prison stint, he became a filmmaker. An open casting call for one of his movies prompts a strange coincidence: Among the auditioners is the policeman Makhmalbaf attacked. Inspired to restage the event onscreen, Makhmalbaf hires the ex-cop as a consultant and casts two eager young men to play the combatants.

Initially, the film's tone is unclear, but when the policeman objects to the casting choice (he wants a better-looking actor to play himself) it veers into absurdist comedy. A clever script, surprisingly, doesn't lose its wit in the translation, though it seems overlong. Makhmalbaf uses different camera angles, slow motion and sound, presumably to show the prismatic patterns of memory. Some of these stylistic devices work; more often they feel whimsical and lack motivation.—*Lael Loewenstein*

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FLASHBACK: *MAY 12, 1956*
What BOXOFFICE *said about...*

GODZILLA, KING OF THE MONSTERS

[The filmmaking duo behind "Stargate" and "Independence Day" are now turning their attention to one of the most famous monsters of all (see our "Godzilla" article in this issue), with the result set to open on U.S. screens May 20, 1998. Here's what BOXOFFICE *had to say about the Embassy-Toho release that started it all.]*



Combining most of the frightening features of "King Kong" and the more recent "Creature" and "Monster" pictures, this Japanese-made horror melodrama is a natural for sensational exploitation and should attract the hordes of film fans who delight in pictures that will make them shudder. It is ideal for action houses. Raymond Burr, the only Hollywood actor in the cast, narrates and appears in a few scenes that are obviously added to the original. The Japanese players in the story either speak English or their voices are dubbed into English. A Toho production by Tomoyuki Tanaka, "Gojira" (as it was titled during its 1954 Japanese run) was directed by Terry Morse and Ishiro Honda, and the original story is based on an old Japanese legend about a mammoth creature 50 stories high that has been awakened from a prehistoric past beneath the sea (here, by H-Bomb explosions). Utterly fantastic, of course, the special photographic effects of this 400-foot creature emerging from the sea to stalk on land and crush the tall buildings of Tokyo should elicit gasps or shrieks from youngsters or from the more susceptible women patrons—even though they really love it. Momoko Kochi is a pretty heroine, and the other Japanese actors are adequate. Takashi Shimura, Akira Takarada, Akihiko Hirata and Sachio Sakai co-star.

EXPLOITIPS:

With Raymond Burr, featured villain in "Rear Window" and dozens of other Hollywood films, as the only familiar player, this picture must be sold on its sensational angles. Use cutouts of Godzilla or papier-mache reproductions of this monster to attract the horror fans. Compare it to "King Kong," "The Creature From Beneath the Sea" and other famed film monsters.

CATCHLINES:

Raging Through the World on a Rampage of Destruction ... Civilization Crumbles As A Monster's Death Rays Blast a City From the Face of the Earth ... See Every Earth-Shaking, Screen-Shattering Thrill.

REVIEWS

THE TWILIGHT OF THE GOLDS ★★

Starring Jennifer Beals, Brendan Fraser, Faye Dunaway and Garry Marshall. Directed by Ross Marks. Written by Jonathan Tolins and Seth Bass. Produced by Paul Colichman, John Davimos and Mark Harris. A CFP release. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 93 min. Opens 10/24.

Based on a play and initially aired on cable TV, "The Twilight of the Golds" strives for more controversy and concerns than it achieves. The trick-question premise, which explores the concept of a family's confrontation with the possibility that the next addition to their genetic circle is likely to be born gay, remains throughout a conceit around which the actors act up. Every now and then the surface is pierced, but in the main the impact resonates only on the scale of interesting dilemma, never delivering the weight a confrontation with the issues of genetic testing should carry.

The cast tries hard to bring complexity to stock characters, but ultimately without the writing to sustain their choices those who choose bold strokes fare best for themselves, if not for the film as a whole. As the potential grandparents, Faye Dunaway and Garry Marshall (who is also the executive producer) are nothing if not lively and attention grabbing. Jennifer Beals ("Devil in a Blue Dress"), as their pregnant daughter, and Brendan Fraser ("George of the Jungle"), as their gay son, don't really have room to be fully formed.—*Bridget Byrne*

THE PEACEMAKER ★★★1/2

Starring George Clooney and Nicole Kidman. Directed by Mimi Leder. Written by Michael Schiffer. Produced by Walter Parkes and Branko Lustig. A DreamWorks release. Action. Not yet rated. Running time: 122 min.

DreamWorks SKG, the studio led by Steven Spielberg, Jeffrey Katzenberg and David Geffen, makes itself proud with a successful launch with "The Peacemaker." Although the action genre has recently seemed to be played out, the producers here—longtime Amblin-eers Walter Parkes and Branko Lustig—made a decision that pays off in spades onscreen: They tapped a woman for the director's chair. Although TV director Mimi Leder ("ER") likewise is making her theatrical debut, it's an assured one. From the opening sequence—a train ride through Russian countryside (with all aboard not knowing they are doomed), shot with a seriousness of purpose and attention to humanity that recalls David Lean's effort on "Dr. Zhivago"—"The Peacemaker" places itself outside the orbit of actioners more interested in smirky jokes and calisthenic explosions.

Still, this is an action film, so the plotline—a no-nonsense U.S. intelligence operative ("Batman & Robin's" George Clooney) and the new head of the White House's nuclear anti-smuggling group ("The Portrait of a Woman's" Nicole Kidman) go on a mission to retrieve stolen warheads—is effectively intense, if nothing earthshaking. A careful choice of malefactors—a Bosnian diplomat (Romanian actor Marcel Iures) who wants to make Americans suffer the wages of war for which he feels they bear some responsibility—is part and parcel of the filmmakers' serious approach, but in the end it's unnecessary, given the genre's limitations, which hardly make for "Before the Rain" territory.—*Kim Williamson*

THE EDGE ★★★

Starring Anthony Hopkins and Alec Baldwin. Directed by Lee Tamahori. Written by David Mamet. Produced by Art Linson. A Fox release. Drama. Rated R for language and some adventure gore/violence. Running time: 118 min.

What would happen if David Mamet, he of the plays and movies ("Glengarry Glen Ross") most widely known for their violence of language and cojones characterizations, tried to write a standard Hollywood movie? The result, apparently, would be a standard Hollywood movie with a difference. "The Edge," more of a drama than the action/thriller it's being billed as, exhibits a restrained literateness that's quite effective.

Mamet blends two narrative conventions—man vs. man, and man vs. nature—in this story of two men whose plane crashes in the Alaskan wilderness. One, an older billionaire (Anthony Hopkins), has a beautiful model (Elle Macpherson) for a wife and a memory that never forgets information he comes across in his virtually nonstop reading; the other is a handsome fashion photographer (Alec Baldwin) who might or might not desire the rich man's wealth and woman.

Hopkins as the bookworm (the project's early title) and Baldwin as the man who would be king are excellent. Director Lee Tamahori (finding a "Once Were Warriors" level of success after his "Mulholland Falls" misstep) pays assured attention to the minutiae of character.—*Kim Williamson*

REVIEWS

EAVE IT TO BEAVER ★★1/2

Starring Christopher McDonald, Jane Turner and Cameron Finley. Directed Andy Cadiff. Written by Brian Levant nd Lon Diamond. Produced by Robert monds. A Universal release. Comedy. ated G. Running time: 87 min.

Baby boomers who grew up with TV's ost beloved family, the Cleavers, will be little disappointed by this modern-day m, which models itself after the popular 950s TV series "Leave It to Beaver." oday's children, however, will probably njoy it for comedy's sake.

The premise for the film is that many of e vignettes created in the '50s TV series ill still be funny today—with an updated ist of characters and cool contemporary ngo. Although the storyline by screenriter Briant Levant (who directed epiodes of TV's 1983-88 "The New Leave It Beaver") and Lon Diamond seeks to reserve the integrity of the original, copies f an original never quite measure up to the al thing. As Ward Cleaver, Christopher IcDonald ("A Smile Like Yours") proides a role closely resembling that popurized by the late Hugh Beaumont, and rik von Detten as the Beaver's brother is perfect Wally. As mom June Cleaver, owever, Janine Turner ("Cliffhanger") akes certain liberties with her role, and 'ameron Finley ("What's Eating Gilbert irape") as the Beaver fails to emote much ersonality or screen appeal.—*Pat Kramer*

MONEY TALKS ★★

Starring Charlie Sheen and Chris ucker. Directed by Brett Ratner. Written y Joel Cohen, Alec Sokolow and Vince McKuen. Produced by Walter Coblenz. A New Line release. Action/comedy. Rated R or graphic violence and pervasive strong anguage. Running time: 92 min.

Because a struggling investigative journalist, James ("The Arrival's" Charlie Sheen), needs a major story to save his career, he sets up a smartaleck motor-mouth ticket scalper, Franklin ("The Fifth Element's" Chris Tucker). While Franklin s being transported to jail, an elaborate prisoner break results in casualties, and Franklin gets blamed. Now he needs James' elp to clear his name; he agrees, in exchange for an exclusive story. It all sounds ike a fair trade—until they're chased and hot at and James is accused of murder.

In "Money Talks," Sheen and Tucker ock horns in various scenarios that set the wheels in motion for an onslaught of comic acial slurs and humorous stereotypical situations. Making his directing debut, Brett Ratner attempts (if not successfully) to assemble an interracial action/comic duo worthy of comparison to Snipes & Harrelson, Murphy & Nolte or Gibson & Glover.

His usual onscreen self, Sheen holds his own, if barely; the manic Tucker steals the show. His comedic timing is the real element holding the film together. When he opens his mouth, it's like a pinata bursting after being hit, sending out a barrage of colorful comic treats.—*Dwayne E. Leslie*

MASTERMINDS ★★1/2

Starring Vincent Kartheiser, Patrick Stewart and Brenda Fricker. Directed by Roger Christian. Written by Floyd Byars, Alex Siskin and Chris Black. Produced by Floyd Byars and Robert Dudelson. A Triumph release. Action/comedy. Rated PG-13 for violence included in a children hostage situation, and for language. Running time: 105 min.

"This is a 'Die Hard' situation," exclaims 14-year-old Ozzie ("Alaska's" Vincent Kartheiser) when he finds himself trapped in an affluent private school that's been commandeered by a sophisticated security system expert gone bad ("Star Trek: First Contact's" Patrick Stewart) and his army. The plot: to extort a ransom for each child from their wealthy parents. But not if Ozzie can help it. A charming genius with a proclivity for troublemaking, Ozzie sets about mucking up the carefully crafted plan.

Wanting to be the "Die Hard" for the teenage set, "Masterminds" unfortunately does not nearly measure up to the film to which it admits its debt. The charismatic hero and villain keep the momentum going but, given "Masterminds'" plural title, more direct conflict of an ascendingly ingenious caliber was needed between nemesis and hero, rather than the fairly routine manner in which our young rogue dispatches of the goons.—*Christine James*

FREE WILLY 3: THE RESCUE ★★★

Starring Jason James Richter, August Schellenberg, Annie Corley and Vincent Berry. Directed by Sam Pillsbury. Written by John Mattson. Produced by Jennie Lew Tugend. A Warner Bros. release. Drama. Rated PG for thematic elements involving whale hunting, and for brief mild language. Running time: 86 min.

Jason James Richter and August Schellenberg reprise their roles as adopted son Jesse and father Randolph for this third installment in the Willy orca saga. This time out, a 10 percent decline in the local killer-whale population has two possible explanations: Either there is a natural cause, or a black-market price of $200 per pound of orca meat has drawn poachers.

Willy, freed in installment #1 and returned home for #2, in this episode (as its title implies) must be rescued. (What's next: "In Search of ..."?) The heart of the story actually is a subplot: A little boy named Max (Vincent Berry) for the first time sees what his father (Patrick Kilpatrick) does for a living—kill animals. Max becomes torn between accepting his dad's chosen way of life and doing what he feels is right.

This anti orca-killing movie has excellent up-close underwater photography, and new animatronic whale replicas created by Walt Conti's team at Edge Innovations are even more convincing than before. In addressing controversial animal-rights matters, "Free Willy 3: The Rescue" succeeds in giving audiences an environmental jolt, but some moviegoers might remain cool to a secondary message, that it's okay to risk your job by breaking rules.—*Dwayne E. Leslie*

EVENT HORIZON ★1/2

Starring Laurence Fishburne, Sam Neill, Kathleen Quinlan and Joely Richardson. Directed by Paul Anderson. Written by Philip Eisner. Produced by Lawrence Gordon and Lloyd Levin. A Paramount release. SF/horror. Rated R for strong violence and gore, language and some nudity. Running time: 96 min.

The Event Horizon is a deep-space research vessel sent in the year 2040 to explore the boundaries of the solar system, only to disappear without a trace. Seven years later, a distress call is received from the missing ship, which has suddenly reemerged near Neptune. A team is sent to rescue any survivors and salvage the vessel—but what they don't know is that the craft now carries an unseen alien entity that is pure evil. Unfortunately, the scariest thing about this sci-fi/horror film will be its abysmal boxoffice receipts after word of mouth makes this film a non-"Event."

An uncompelling cast makes up the unsympathetic team of misfits who seem not at all qualified for the mission. Laurence Fishburne as the crew leader is somnambulistic even at moments of crisis. The plot's twists and turns are derivative of horror schlock fare that even cable's campy "Tales From the Crypt" would be embarrassed to use. Scripter Philip Eisner begins with a premise overflowing with potential but does not follow through, and his blood-and-gore scare tactics are more yawn-inducing than pulse-racing.—*Christine James*

CONSPIRACY THEORY ★★★1/2

Starring Mel Gibson, Julia Roberts and Patrick Stewart. Directed by Richard Donner. Written by Brian Helgeland. Produced by Joel Silver and Richard Donner. A Warner release. Suspense/thriller. Rated R for some violence. Running time: 135 min.

As a cab driver who believes in numerous conspiracy theories, from covert black helicopters to earthquake weapons in space to the real reason why the government puts fluoride in the water, Jerry Fletcher (Mel Gibson) seems to be just another eccentric element of New York's urban landscape. His one real (if reluctant) confidante is Alice Sutton (Julia Roberts), an employee of the Justice Department who has some of her own ghosts to haunt her. Alice listens out of compassion but doesn't believe a word of his stories. Yet, when he publishes his hypotheses, he finds his life endangered by people he's inadvertently exposed.

Gibson is admirably up to the task of portraying the complexly layered character of Jerry, who is alternately tragic, hilarious, ingenious and heroic. Roberts is both strong and sympathetic as her character wrestles with conflicting emotions and instincts. As malevolent Dr. Jonas, Patrick Stewart exudes pure cold evil. But several backstory elements could have been explained more clearly, and a more fully elucidated exposition of the truth would have increased the narrative's implications and thereby its tension. Still, "Conspiracy Theory" is fast-paced and exciting.—*Christine James*

REVIEWS

AIR BUD ★★★

Starring Kevin Zegers. Directed by Charles Martin Smith. Written by Paul Tamasy and Aaron Mendelsohn. Produced by Robert Vince and William Vince. A Buena Vista release. Comedy. Rated PG for brief mild language. Running time: 98 min.

"Air Bud's" Buddy the dog never slam-dunks or twirls a basketball on his paw—although he can hit a shot from the free-throw line. And that attention to realism is to the good. Still, if "Air Bud" were more about that lovable golden retriever instead about his new owner Josh (Kevin Zegers), a boy who must come to grips (somewhat predictably) with a new life in a new town, the film could have been a family classic. Yet children will fall in love with Buddy, and a slow-starting narrative eventually concludes on a high note.—***Dwayne E. Leslie***

SPECIAL FORMATS

MARVIN THE MARTIAN IN THE 3RD DIMENSION ★★1/2

Directed by Douglas McCarthy. Written by Keith Baxter, Timothy Cahill, Charles Carney, Mark Eades, Ryan Harmon, Kathleen Helppie-Shipley, Douglas McCarthy, Julie McNally and Chris Otsuki. Produced by Kathleen Helppie-Shipley and Mark Eades. A Warner Bros. release. Animation. Unrated. Running time: 13 min.

Now playing on Manhattan's Fifth Avenue is a fight to the death between two giants. Look, up in the sky—not a bird, not a plane, not even Godzilla vs. Megatron, but two new multi-story flagship studio stores, located but a block apart. There are few better commodities than fond childhood memories; on Fifth, Disney and Warner are clashing and cashing-in on them in deluxe style. The Mouse House has been at this for generations, but the Wabbit is coming up fast, and one of his secret weapons is the premiere animated presentation of "Marvin the Martian in the 3rd Dimension," in an open-ended engagement in the eighth-floor screening room at the Warner Bros. Studio Store. Purists might still scoff, but this establishment's elaborate environment, along with many of the items for sale, perfectly captures some of that old Looney Tune spirit. And, really, it's okay; Bugs never pretended to be anything but the ultimate conman-on-the-make anyway. Several tall sculptural murals (including one that serves as a marquee for the short film), clever sight gags, displays, videowalls, and interactive ACME thingamabobs provide suitable atmosphere. The store also boasts a restaurant, an animation art gallery and a glass elevator with shifting views of snooty Van Cleef & Arpels across the Avenue. Patrons can have a fine time without buying anything.

Unfortunately, that idiosyncratic Merrie Melody mix of attitude and mayhem is doing better on the glassware than on the silver screen. To wit, then: the fillum. The store is currently the only North American venue for Marvin's 70mm 3-D experience, sponsored by Toshiba. (The CGI short can also be seen at Warner's Movie World park in Germany and opens this Christmas at the Movie World in Australia.) Admission to the 13-minute show is $2; along with receiving a ticket and a cardboard pair of polarized glasses, moviegoers get a pleasantly hefty Marvin the Martian souvenir coin (which one can keep or use for a $2 discount off most store merchandise). The program runs continuously at 20-minute intervals, and while waiting to enter the 74-seat theatre ticketholders stand in a stylish, retro-yet-futuristic lobby and are entertained by the classic Chuck Jones cartoon "Duck Dodgers in the 24 1/2 Century" on several large monitors. But that is the structure's one fatal flaw. The new Marvin the Martian movie, for all its computer-generoted and multi-dimensional wonders, can't live up to its predecessor, and it suffers all the more mightily when placed in such proximity.

Upon reinspection, "Duck Dodgers" proves to be comprised of a series of blackout vignettes built on jokes that were corny four decades ago. But the result is a knowing lunacy that's endlessly entertaining, because the gags are enacted by an ensemble of broadly drawn yet subtly shaded characters with superb comic timing. In "MM 3-D," as with the recent full-length "Space Jam," it seems the current custodians of Warner's classic characters don't fully understand them.

In the 3-D effort, Daffy stutters and spritzes as megalomaniacally as ever but, without Bugs (or "Duck Dodgers'" Porky) along as a knowing foil, the humor is undercut by more than half. Marvin is still intent an universal domination, but the comic fundamentals of that creature from another world (who was so deeply touched by Porky's "birthday" gift of a beribboned bomb in "Duck Dodgers") are nowhere to be found here. Daffy's periodic outburst, "Duck Dodgers in the 24th and one-half century!" was self-aggrandizement as satire; here, when he sputters, "Duck Dodgers in the 3rd dimension!" it's just a shill for something we've already paid for. The (mostly recycled) gags are bigger and shinier, but not as deft.

"Marvin the Martian in the 3rd Dimension" is one long, loud, sometimes luscious, unrelieved chase sequence. It could have been a beaut, a real humdinger, but it's ultimately just another soulless thrill ride a la "Twister." Or, to put it another way, it's a derivative sitdown break from a good shopping experience. In this wisenheimer empire that wasn't built on a claying mouse, that is dessshpicable.—***Alex Albanese***

BRIEFS

NEVER ALONE ★★★1/2

Starring Scott Cervine and Mark McKeel. Directed and written by Scott Cervine. Produced by R. Harold Smith and Mark Kirby. A Bindu Films release. Drama. Unrated. Running time: 83 min.

Described as "a modern-day quest for meaning, inner peace and the perfect cup of coffee," "Never Alone" is the type of film that leaves a strong impression behind while entertaining and enlightening its audience, as much in what it does say as in what it doesn't. As the first feature film produced by Bindu Films partners R. Harold Smith and Scott Cervine, "Never Alone" is a richly funny black comedy with a sense of depth, light and hope that goes beyond the scope of most commercially produced films.

Presented as a pseudo-documentary, it is the story of independent filmmaker Sam Kelley (Scott Cervine) who, in a sudden, tragic twist of fate, loses his beloved wife Ellie (Leah Leddy) to a hit-and-run driver. Wrought by despair and searching for meaning in life, he begins to experience "otherworldly" contact. Despite a barebones approach, "Never Alone" is an exciting film for those who aspire to a higher consciousness—or just want to laugh a lot.—***Pat Kramer***

STAG ★

Starring Mario Van Peebles, Andrew McCarthy and Kevin Dillon. Directed by Gavin Wilding. Written by Evan Taylor and Pat Bermell. Produced by John Dunning and Mike Pasoernak. A CFP/Avalanche release. Drama. Unrated. Running time: 93 min.

Ten men come together inside a big, empty house for a bachelor party. Party favors include drugs, liquor, two strippers and their handler. After an accident kills one of the girls, the men desperately try to escape the consequences, creating a situation that's irredeemably worse. This group of very good actors led by Mario Van Peebles (and also including Ben Gazarra, Gerald Anthony and John Stockwell) creates energy, but the script by Evan Taylor and Pat Bermell focuses on character degeneration and fails to create interest.—***Karen Achenbach***

SLEEPY HEADS (no stars)

Starring Eugene Nomura and Sayuri Higuchi Emerson. Directed and written by Yoshifumi Hosoya. Produced by Yuko Yoshikawa. A Phaedra release. Comedy. Japanese-language; English subtitles. Unrated. Running time: 87 min.

Remorselessly strained and unfunny, "Sleepy Heads" (an apt description of the experience) tries to be a perceptive cultural assimilation comedy; the result is virtually unwatchable. The seriocomic travails of three young Japanese im-

REVIEW BRIEFS

migrants trying to survive in New York City becomes a poor man's "Trouble With Harry" when one of their friends dies of a drug overdose and they attempt to dispose of the body.

Nothing in Yoshifumi Kosoya's writing and directing shows even slight comic or romantic sense. With its inept acting, flat characterizations, misfired humor, idiotic farce and narrative pointlessness, "Sleepy Heads" is as tiring as they come.—***Dale Winogura***

THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE: THE NEXT GENERATION ★★

Starring Renee Zellweger and Matthew McConaughey. Directed and written by Kim Henkel. Produced by Robert J. Kuhn and Kim Henkel. A CFP/Avalanche release. Horror. Unrated. Running time: 87 min.

It's prom night in a small Texas town. Four teens cruise in a car, bickering with a "next generation" modernity; it's a wonderful sequence. Only later, as they blithely walk into horror after horror, do audiences realize these "modern" teens have never been to the movies.

Although sometimes funny at the film's expense, much of this 1994 production contains clever humor built through snappy dialogue and the creation of incongruent characters. Even so, its current main attraction will be its stars—native Texans Renee Zellweger and Matthew McConaughey, in their second film and in their second film together (both debuted in "Dazed and Confused").—***Karen Achenbach***

BUTCH CAMP ★★

Starring Judy Tenuta and Paul Denniston. Directed and written by Alessandro de Gaetano. Produced by Timothy E. Sabo and Steven Gellman. A Billingsgate release. Comedy. Unrated. Running time: 101 min.

Michael J. Fox lookalike Paul Denniston plays Matthew Grabowski, a sensitive gay man beset by a multitude of problems, including having a delightfully better vocabulary than anyone else in the film. He enrolls in a Butch Camp, humorously commanded by Judy Tenuta, in order to develop the skills to deal with "hetero oppressors" and all other difficulties.

"Butch Camp" is wildly uneven in tone. Its target audience could find it very funny, but others will find it hard to overlook poor production values, ragged interweaving of plot elements, and underdeveloped characters.—***Karen Achenbach***

RATCHET ★

Starring Tom Gilroy and Margaret Welsh. Directed and written by John Johnson. Produced by George Belshaw and John Johnson. A Phaedra release. Suspense. Unrated. Running time: 112 min.

A nasty, muddled film noir, inspired by Jim Thompson and the Coen brothers, "Ratchet" tells the story of a hack Tinseltown screenwriter traveling to Nantucket to work on a script, where he gets into a senseless mess of murder, blackmail and police coverups.

Tepid suspense, wan mystery and hopelessly convoluted plotting in John Johnson's script are rendered even more vacuous by his murky, gimmicky direction, and verbose dialogue and ambling pace don't convey a sense of danger.—***Dale Winogura***

HAPPINESS IS IN THE FIELD ★★

Starring Michel Serrault and Carmen Maura. Directed and written by Etienne Chatiliez. An Artificial Eye release. Comedy. Unrated. Run time: 107 min.

It used to be that French filmmaker Etienne Chatiliez offered up movies, like "Life Is a Long Quiet River" and "Tatie Danielle," that were cynical and caustic, a breath of fresh air among the sticky French comedies of his peers. With his latest film, he's gone soft, to the detriment of his story and the audience's enjoyment.

Michel Serrault plays a toilet-seat manufacturer beset by strikers at work and a wife and daughter who hold him in contempt at home. When he sees a TV show about a lookalike who left his family years before, never to return, he decides to pose as that man in order to escape his oppressive lot.

It's a good idea for a film, but Chatiliez doesn't take it anywhere. Everyone gets what he or she wants, blunting the edge.—***Shlomo Schwartzberg***

Review Digest

Story-type key: (Ac) Action; (Ad) Adventure; (An) Animated; (C) Comedy; (D) Drama; (Doc) Documentary; (F) Fantasy; (Hor) Horror; (M) Musical; (My) Mystery; (R) Romance; (Sat) Satire; (SF) Science Fiction; (Sus) Suspense; (Th) Thriller; (W) Western.

TITLE/MPAA DISTRIBUTOR	5 Excellent 4 Very Good 3 Good 2 Fair 1 Poor	RUN TIME	GENRE	REVIEWED IN ISSUE	BOXOFFICE VARIETY	H. REPORTER	L.A. TIMES	N.Y. TIMES	USA TODAY	AVERAGE	TOTAL BOXOFFICE$*	
Addicted to Love **R** (WB)		*100*	R C	7-97	3	3	3	2	2	3	2.7	34.7
Air Bud **PG** (BV)		*98*	C	10-97	3	3	3	3	2	2	2.8	17.2
Air Force One **R** (Col)		*120*	Ac	9-97	3	3	4	4	2		3.2	130.4
Anaconda **PG-13** (Col)		*90*	Adv	6-97	2	2	3	3	3	3	2.7	65.3
Austin Powers **PG-13** (NL)		*89*	C	7-97	3	3	4	2	3	3	3.0	53.5
Batman & Robin **PG-13** (WB)		*124*	AcAd	8-97	2	3	3	2	2	3	2.5	105.7
Brassed Off (Mir)		*107*	C	3-97	3	3	3	3	3	3	3.0	2.6
Breakdown **R** (Par)		*95*	Th	7-97	4	4	3	3	3	4	3.5	50.1
Buddy **PG** (Col)		*84*	C D	7-97	2	2	2	3	2	2	2.2	10.0
Career Girls (Oct)		*91*	C D	8-97	5	3	4	3	3		3.6	0.4
Chasing Amy (Mir)		*105*	D	4-97	3	3	4	4	3	3	3.3	11.7
Con Air **R** (BV)		*115*	Ac	8-97	2	3	3	2	2	2	2.3	96.7
Conspiracy Theory **R** (WB)		*134*	Th	10-97	3	2	4	2	2	4	2.8	40.7
Contact **PG** (WB)		*150*	SF D	9-97	3	3	2	3	3	3	2.8	88.6
Cop Land **R** (Mir)			D	9-97	3	3	3			4	3.3	13.5
English Patient **R** (Mir)		*159*	R	1-97	3	3	4	4	4	4	3.7	78.3
Event Horizon **R** (Par)		*96*	Hor	10-97	2	2	2			3	2.2	9.5
Face/Off **R** (Par)		*139*	Ac	8-97	4	3	4	4	4		3.8	107.7
Fifth Element **PG-13** (Col)		*125*	SF	7-97	3	2	2	3	2	2	2.3	63.0
Free Willy 3 **PG** (WB)		*86*	D	10-97	3	3	3	2	3		2.8	2.3
The Full Monty (FS)		*90*	C	4-97	4	4	3	3			3.5	0.2
George of the Jungle **PG** (BV)			C	8-97	2	3	4	3	3		3.0	84.6
Gone Fishin' **PG** (BV)		*94*	C	8-97	1	1	1	2			1.3	19.2
Good Burger **PG** (Par)		*95*	C	9-97	3	4	3	3	3		3.2	20.4
Grosse Pointe Blank **R** (BV)		*107*	C	5-97	4	4	3	3	3	3	3.3	28.0
Hercules **G** (BV)			Ani	8-97	3	4	4	4	4	4	3.8	91.0
How to Be A Player **R** (Gra)			C	9-97	2	1	2	2	1		1.6	10.0
Jungle 2 Jungle **PG** (BV)		*105*	C	5-97	2	3	3	3	2	2	2.5	59.7
Kiss Me Guido **R** (Par)		*90*	C	9-97	3		3	3	3		3.0	0.9
Liar Liar **PG-13** (Uni)		*86*	C	5-97	3	4	4	3	3	3	3.3	180.0
Lost World **PG-13** (Uni)		*129*	Adv	7-97	4	3	3	3	2	3	3.0	226.4
love jones **R** (NL)		*110*	R C	5-97	3			2	3		2.7	12.5
Men In Black **PG-13** (Col)		*96*	SFAc	8-97	3	4	3	4	4		3.6	225.3
Mrs. Brown **PG** (Mir)		*103*	D	8-97	4	4		4	4	4	4.0	2.7
My Best Friend's Wedding **PG-13** (TS)		*107*	RC	8-97	3	3	4	3	3	3	3.2	116.1
Nothing To Lose **R** (BV)		*98*	C	9-97	3	3	3	2	2	3	2.7	40.3
187 **R** (WB)			D	9-97	2	2	3	2	3		2.4	5.4
Operation Condor **PG-13** (Mir)		*103*	AcAd	9-97	4	2	4	3	2		3.0	10.3
Out To Sea **PG-13** (Fox)		*105*	C	9-97	3	3	4	4	2		3.2	26.5
Picture Perfect **PG-13** (Fox)		*102*	R C	9-97	2	2	2	3	2	3	2.3	23.7
The Pillow Book (CFP)		*126*	D	7-96	3			2	4		3.0	2.3
Romy and Michele **R** (BV)		*91*	C	7-97	4	2	3	3	3	2	2.8	29.2
Shall We Dance? **PG** (Mir)		*122*	C	5-97	3		4	3	3		3.2	3.6
A Simple Wish **PG** (Uni)		*90*	C	9-97	2	2	3	3	2	3	2.5	8.0
Spawn **PG-13** (NL)		*95*	SFAc	9-97	3	2	2		1	2	2.0	46.7
Speed 2: Cruise Control **PG-13** (Fox)		*120*	Ac	8-97	2	2	2	2		2	2.0	47.8
Star Maps **R** (FS)		*87*	D	9-97	2		2	3	3		2.5	0.4
Thrill Ride **G** (SC)		*38*	Imax	9-97	2	2	2	3	3		2.4	0.5
Ulee's Gold (Ori)		*113*	D	4-97	4	4		4	4	4	4.0	7.5
Wild America **PG** (WB)		*103*	Ad	9-97	3	3	3	3	3		3.0	7.3

** Total boxoffice, in millions, as of August 19, 1997.*

NATIONAL NEWS

LATE SUMMER B.O. HEATWAVE

The touch-and-go summer of 1997 came back unexpectedly strongly in late July and August, rescuing early summer results that were the worst in five years and pushing domestic boxoffice past the $4 billion plateau two weeks earlier than during record-setting 1996.

The strong showings by mid-to-late summer titles like "Face/Off," "Men in Black," "George of the Jungle" and "Air Force One" seemed to draw into question the studio practice of front-loading the summer with supposedly "can't miss" sequels and formula films. With the notable and predictable exception of "The Lost World: Jurassic Park," sequel after sequel underperformed, from the disastrous "Speed 2: Cruise Control" (gross: less than $50 million) to the mediocre "Batman and Robin," the least successful film to date in Warner's franchise, and a title which had to struggle to top the $100 million mark.

Then there were the films that weren't sequels but which *felt* like they were: "Hercules" and "Con Air" (aka "The Rock 2"). Though a better film than its immediate animated Disney predecessors, "Hercules" was struggling to get near the $100 million mark at press time, with the possibility existing that it would be the film that finally broke the blockbuster boxoffice streak Disney animation has been on since "Beauty and the Beast." A two-part theory about why "Hercules" didn't show much boxoffice strength: with Disney releasing at least one major animated title per year and saturation reached in the children's video market, it's more and more difficult to make a Disney animation project seem so "new" it has to be seen in a theatre. At the same time, mainstream titles that might have been released with an R-rating five years ago are making themselves more and more family friendly: Just as the PG-13 rated "Independence Day" siphoned off "Hunchback's" audience in 1996, "Men in Black" (also PG-13) undermined "Hercules" in '97.

What audiences seemed to be craving in '97 were movies with quirky ideas that re-invigorated old formulas or created new ones. When those films arrived, moviegoers found their way back to America's moviehouses. Here's hoping studio decision-makers were paying attention, and that the lessons of summer '97 are now lessons learned.

NEW LINE CREDIT LINE: $400 MIL.

The long wrangle over the future of New Line Cinema appears to have ended. The target of much speculation over ownership in the aftermath of Time Warner's buyout of parent company Turner Broadcasting, the company, which had been on the block as recently as the first quarter of 1997, has secured $400 million in new production financing and will operate as an autonomous division under the Time Warner umbrella.

The announcement marked the end of a volatile year for New Line, which had its worst performance ever in fiscal '96, thanks to expensive flops like "The Long Kiss Goodnight" and "Island of Dr. Moreau." The $400 million, raised from a coalition of international banks, will give New Line the funding to produce and release films with a wide range of budgets through the end of fiscal 1999.

The new monies would be used for annual slates according to the following formula: four to five pictures a year in the $40-plus million range; eight pictures a year in the $20 to $40 million range; and four to five titles per year made for under $20 million. Unspecified production and acquisitions requirements relative to Fine Line, New Line's specialty "art-house" arm, would also be met.

New Line's boxoffice slump, meanwhile, appeared to turn the corner this summer. The sleeper successes of "Austin Powers" and "Spawn" have helped contribute to a sense within the Hollywood community that New Line is once again emerging as a force to be reckoned with.

UNCIVIL MASS. ACTION

MPAA president Jack Valenti assailed a bill recently passed by the Massachusetts legislature which would make it illegal to use the name, portrait, picture, voice or any part of an individual's life story without first securing written permission.

The bill was introduced as part of an effort to block the filming of a controversial Touchstone feature entitled "A Civil Action," based on author Jonathan Harr's 1995 book of the same name. "A Civil Action," which is to star John Travolta, tells the true story of a crusading lawyer in Woburn, Mass. who risked his career by filing a toxic waste dumping lawsuit against Beatrice Foods and W.R. Grace company, two of the largest companies in Massachusetts. The original civil suit alleged that a group of families had lost children to leukemia thanks to unsafe toxic waste handling by the companies named. Ironically, the new bill was introduced on behalf of eight of those families seeking compensation for their role in Harr's retelling of the story.

Valenti lashed out at the bill. "Under [this proposal], every name and picture utilized in a single issue of [any] publication would have to be cleared by the individual described," Valenti said. "The ramifications are endless and hostile to the rights of reporters and creators of all media."

In a late development, acting Mass. governor Paul Cellucci said he intended to veto the bill if it reached his desk on grounds that it represented a disincentive for film companies doing business in Massachusetts. Touchstone's "A Civil Action" is set to begin filming Oct. 1 in Toronto and Boston.

CINEMANIA WEB UNPLUGGED?

Cinemania, one of the most popular movie-related websites on the internet and an offshoot of a highly successful Microsoft CD-ROM research tool, may or may not be "disappeared" from the internet.

The possible move, which caught many observers by surprise, was yet another indication of the difficulties even major companies like Microsoft are having making heavy investment in the internet pay off. More than half Cinemania's staff was let go, with remaining writers and staffers possibly to be reassigned within Microsoft, many to "Sidewalk," another Microsoft internet publication.

DREAMWORKS' MOMENT OF TRUTH

After much speculation that the planned DreamWorks studio site in Playa Vista, Calif. might be abandoned thanks to environmental lawsuits and financial troubles at development company Maguire Partners, rumors were circulating that a viable new ownership agreement was in the offing.

The DreamWorks facility had been in doubt thanks to its status as an "anchor" for a larger development which has been in bankruptcy since mid-summer, though the investment banks involved had, at press time, not yet foreclosed. DreamWorks, meanwhile, was still housing 1,420 employees in a variety of buildings throughout the Los Angeles area, and had looked at alternative sites, including one in Glendale, Calif. adjacent to DreamWorks' animation facility, scheduled for completion in December, 1997.

A string of recent court decisions fortifying DreamWorks building plans as environmentally sound were also contributing factors in the upbeat mood surrounding the Playa Vista development. DreamWorks spokespersons were optimistic but cautious, pointing out that financing for the larger development and DreamWorks' decision to ultimately build there were separate issues. An L.A. city official called DreamWorks' stance a tactic to gain leverage in future negotiations.

MIRAMAX WIELDING AX

Staffing volatility at specialty powerhouse Miramax Films continues to rage unchecked, thanks to "growing pains" within the mega-successful company and talent raids by other distributors seeking to break down Miramax's lock on the specialty market.

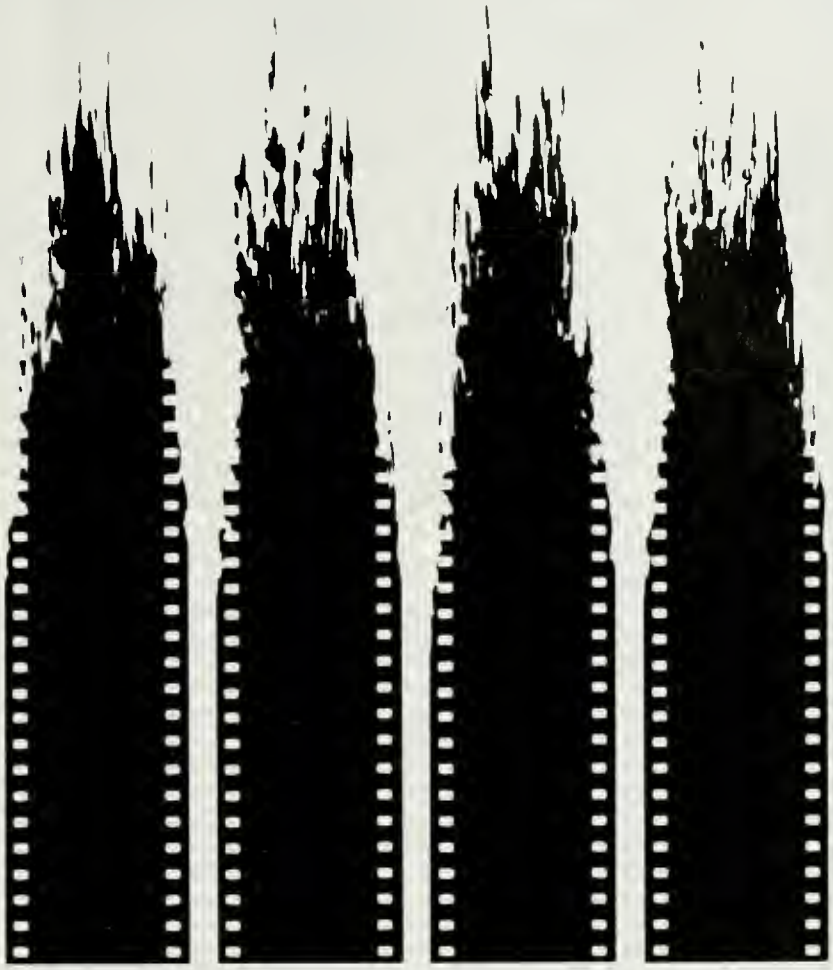
Recent executive departures included John Logigian and Scott Greenstein, Miramax' former exec. vp of business and legal affairs and its senior vp of publishing, music and new media, respectively. Business and legal affairs have subsequently been reorganized under the direction of exec. vp of business and legal affairs Neil Sacker.

To assist Sacker, Miramax has promoted vp of business and legal affairs Vicki Cherkas to the level of senior vp—the highest ranking post below Sacker. Andrew Herwitz and Steven Hutensky have also been promoted to senior vps of business and legal affairs.

Replacing Sacker in L.A. is Cary Meadows, vp of business and legal affairs.

In other Miramax news, the company notched a major achievement when "Cop-Land," a gritty ensemble film starring Sylvester Stallone and Robert De Niro, racked up Miramax's best opening weekend ever, pulling in an estimated $13 million over the weekend of August 15. Miramax's previous record holder, "Pulp Fiction," grabbed a $9.3 million opening in the much less competitive fall season back in October of 1994.

The achievement was all the more impressive given Stallone's unimpressive recent boxoffice track record, plus the strong hold-over competition from "Air Force One" and "Conspiracy Theory" which "Cop Land" had to face down.



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EXHIBITION BRIEFINGS

UATC MAY GO UP FOR SALE

United Artists Theatre Circuit has announced that it has retained Merrill Lynch & Co. to assist the chain in "investing strategic alternatives with respect to its ownership and capital structure," according to a prepared statement issued by the company. Alternatives being weighed include the possible sale of the privately held stock of UATC's parent company, OSCAR I Corp. Says UATC chief operating officer Kurt Hall, "The restructuring of the group's ownership and/or capital structure has always been part of the company's medium-term plan...this process is being accelerated as a result of the improved operating performance of the company combined with the very favorable financial markets." He added that although the ownership and capital structure may change, "it is not expected to have any effect on the company's day-to-day operations, or its recently announced development plans." UATC's recent restructuring cut corporate expenses by 25 percent for a $10 million annual savings; additionally, the chain has sold many of its international properties and will sell 70 underperforming domestic theatres with a total of 280 screens. The revenue from these sales will help fund UATC's investment of $175 million to build 450 new screens and renovate existing theatres in key markets, including New York, Philadelphia and San Francisco. UATC is the second-largest chain in North America with 2,300 screens.

ACT III ON THE BLOCK?

Act III, the 10th-largest exhibitor in the nation with 673 screens, will likely be put up for sale by former television producer Norman Lear, who owns 68 percent of the company. Act III, which is being valued at $550 million, is expected to generate much interest from U.S. exhibitors, foreign exhibitors or financial investors. Act III's 122 sites are located in the Pacific Northwest, Texas and Nevada.

NAC ELECTS OFFICERS

At its annual membership meeting in Anaheim, Calif., the National Association of Concessionaires elected new officers and directors to the NAC board. Norman Chesler of Theatre Candy Distributing was elected for a two-year term as president of the board of directors. Chesler has previously served in many positions for the NAC, including director, treasurer, regional vice president, vice president and, most recently, president elect. David Scoco of Creative Concession Concepts has moved from NAC president to chairman of the board. Skip Stefansen of Metropolitan Concessions Inc. goes from treasurer to president elect, and R. Evan Gordon Jr. of Gordon Consulting has moved from a director at large to treasurer. Newly elected directors include Maria Angles of Cinemark USA Inc., Francine Greco of Odeum Sports Expo, and Carmen Torzon of Service America Corp. as directors at large; Wally Helton of CinAmerica as regional vice president, Pacific Southwest; Ron Krueger II of Wehrenberg Theatres as regional vice president, Mountain Central; and Sheila Parisien of Calgary Flames Hockey as regional vice president, Western Canada. Bill Rector, former chairman of the board, joins the NAC's council of past presidents.

WIRED WORLD EXTRA: SPECIAL FORMAT NEWS

IWERKS, SHOWSCAN MERGE

Iwerks Entertainment and Showscan Entertainment have announced that they have signed a definitive agreement to merge, thereby becoming the world's largest provider of ride simulators and software, with a combined 160 sites and a library of 68 ride simulation titles. As well as expanding its motion simulator business, the merged company plans to increase its presence in the giant-screen market.

IMAX SETS SALES RECORD

Orders from Knoxville, Tenn.'s Regal Cinemas; Newport Beach, Calif.'s Edwards Theatre Circuit Inc.; Redondo Beach, Calif.'s Krikorian Premiere Theatres; Halifax, Nova Scotia's Empire Theatres; and Marcus Corp. of Milwaukee, Wis., have helped Toronto-based Imax Corp. achieve record sales in 1997. Regal and Edwards both inked agreements for 10 Imax 3-D systems, marking the largest signings in the history of Imax; Krikorian and Empire ordered one each; and Marcus will install two. These 24 sales, all of which were made within just over a month, nearly equal Imax's total 1996 sales of 29 systems.

In a related item, Imax has announced an ambitious film release schedule, with plans to have five new titles on screens before the end of 1998 and 20 additional projects in development. Imax will release its 3-D version of "The Nutcracker" in November.

DICKINSON GETS O.K. FOR OK SITE

Dickinson Theatres has received approval from the Bixby, Okla. city council to build a 64,000-square-foot entertainment center with a 3,200-seat, 20-screen theatre. The cinema, scheduled to open in May 1998, will offer advance ticketing sales at a futuristic boxoffice; all three digital sound systems; stadium seating with high-back rocker chairs and upholstered cupholder armrests; spacious legroom; and wall-to-wall screens. Dickinson operates 211 theatres in Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma.

REGAL BUILDS

In addition to its numerous recent acquisitions, including Cobb Theatres, Magic Cinemas, Krikorian Premiere Theatres and Georgia State Theatres, Regal is adding dozens of new screens to its kingdom. The most recently announced include a 16-plex in Antioch, Calif.; a 20-plex in Dublin, Calif.; a 16-plex in Oceanside, Calif.; an 18-plex in Columbus, Ohio; a 22-plex in Dayton, Ohio; a 22-plex in Atlanta, Ga.; an 18-plex in North Brunswick, N.J.; a 14-plex in Vineland, N.J.; and a 22-plex in Charlotte, N.C.

Regal will also be building a 16-plex and FunScape entertainment center in Wilmington, Del. The circuit most recently opened a 16-plex in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.; a 14-plex in Bel Air, Md.; and a 12-plex in Virginia Beach, Va.

AMC, MBK IN CO

MBK Real Estate Ltd. announced it has commenced construction on two 24-screen AMC theatre complexes in the Denver metro area. The Westminster Promenade and the Highlands Ranch sites will feature the most advanced sight, sound and comfort features, including stadium seating, generous row spacing, love seats, SDDS sound, and wall-to-wall screens. Says MBK president Richard P. Kraus, "These projects are not only the finest of their kind, but both are in locations that define the center of growth in their respective areas."

GCC'S NEW LANDMARK

General Cinema Theatres will open a 16-screen, 80,000-square-foot megaplex at Landmark Center, a 950,000-square-foot office/retail project in Boston. The theatre will feature wall-to-wall screens, digital and THX sound, stadium seating and love seats. A wide variety of concession products will be offered, including Unos pizza and soft pretzels, and a sit-down cafe will have Starbucks coffee and gourmet pastries. To speed customer service, the concession stand will employ a unique three-tiered design developed by General Cinema, a self-serve option, and state-of-the-art computer cash registers that use touch-screen technology so theatre staff can process transactions more quickly. The Landmark Theatre is part of General Cinema's $250 million growth plan to add over 300 new screens to its circuit by 1999.

CLEARVIEW BEACONS TO PATRONS

Clearview Cinemas has opened its 17th location in the Metro New York area, the Beacon Hill 5 in downtown Summit. The five-plex has state-of-the-art digital sound, high-back and rocker seating with cupholder armrests, computerized ticketing and concession stand terminals, and a courtesy phone. Also scheduled to open soon are Clearview's Chester 6 and Bayonne Cinema 10. Clearview mixes first-run commercial and art movies, and its core audience is comprised of both sophisticated moviegoers and families with young children.

CONSOLIDATED EXPANDS IN OAHU

Pacific Theatres subsidiary Consolidated Theatres will build a state-of-the-art eight-plex in the Koko Marina Shopping Center in Oahu, Hawaii, and will add five screens to

the nearby Pearlridge West Theatre, expanding it to 21 screens. All new screens will feature the latest technologies and amenities, including DTS, SDDS and Dolby Digital sound systems; stadium seating; love seats; and wall-to-wall screens.

MARCUS MOVES TO OHIO

Marcus Theatres Corp., the largest theatre circuit in Wisconsin and the 19th largest in the country, broke ground July 17 in Pickerington, Ohio on the first of two 16-screen movie theatre complexes planned for the Columbus Metropolitan Area. The state-of-the-art theatre with its almost 3,000 seats is scheduled to open by Easter season 1998 at the southeast corner of the intersection of State Rts. 256 and 204. The site, at more than 18 acres, is large enough to accommodate additional screens in the future. The second Ohio site, being built on the north side of Columbus, will have well over 4,000 seats.

This Ohio expansion is part of Marcus Theatres' recently accelerated growth plan, which calls for 500 screens by the year 2000. Marcus Theatres, a division of the Milwaukee-based Marcus Corp., currently operates 297 screens in Wisconsin and Illinois. Bruce J. Olson, president of Marcus Theatres and vice president of Marcus Corp., says, "We're confident that moviegoers in metropolitan Columbus will be enthusiastic about our all-stadium-seating auditoriums and the many other exclusive amenities that we offer."

WILLMING REAMS POLICY TRAILER MAKES ITS 'MARK

Willming Reams Animation has completed the animated Cinemark USA Policy Trailer, which features digital stereo surround sound in DTS, SDDS and Dolby SR-D. In their recurring roles, animated characters Front Row Joe, Popcorn Penny, Elton and Clyde take a 3-D journey through the magic of the movies. The trailer combines cel animation with 3-D environments and feature singing and dancing to an original score, evoking the concept of a pre-feature animated short.

SHOWMINDER CONVENTION CALENDAR

Remember to save the following dates: **ShowEast,** Oct. 20-23, Trump Taj Mahal, Atlantic City, N.J. Call 212-246-6460... **CineAsia,** Dec. 3-5, Singapore International Convention and Exhibition Centre. Call 212-246-6460...**ShoWest**, March 9-12, 1998, Bally's Hotel and Casino, Las Vegas, Nev. Call 310-657-7724...**ShowCanada,** May 10-14, 1998, Victoria, British Columbia. Call 416-969-7057...**Cinema Expo,** June 15-19, 1998, Amsterdam. Call 212-246-6460...**Australian Movie Convention,** August 18-22, 1998, Royal Pines Resort, Gold Coast. Call 011-617-33-56-5671 ...**NAC Expo,** Sept. 15-18, 1998, Radisson Twin, Orlando, Fla. Call 312-236-3858.

Q&A: *WIRED WORLD EXTRA:* DISNEY'S NEW VR GAME CENTERS

Disney's newest foray in the world of entertainment brings the Mouse House into the digital domain. DisneyQuest, a project three years in the works, will bring 20-30 virtual reality entertainment centers to various sites around the world, the first of which will open in summer 1998 in Florida's DisneyWorld. As DisneyQuest executive producer Joe DiNunzio tells* Boxoffice*, patrons will be able to ride a virtual motion-simulated roller coaster of their own design, take a trip to the Cretaceous Period on the Virtual Jungle Cruise, soar on Aladdin's magic carpet, and do virtual battle with Disney villains, all in the space of a few hundred thousand square feet and in the span of a few hours. With an electronic debit card required for entrance, the term E-Ticket Ride takes on a whole new meaning.

Boxoffice: Tell me about some of the new forms of entertainment that will be found at DisneyQuest.

JOE DINUNZIO: With DisneyQuest, we're taking some of our experience as entertainers in the theme park business and some of our experience as entertainers in the film business, and we're creating a fundamentally different kind of entertainment—an environment where guests can literally dictate the kind of experience they have using interactive technology.

Boxoffice: What's unique about the technology?

DINUNZIO: We started with an R&D project about three years ago called Aladdin's Magic Carpet Ride. Aladdin's Magic Carpet Ride was an attempt to understand whether we could put guests inside Aladdin's world and create an environment where they believed they were really there, they were really in the animated world of Aladdin, where they could interact with characters and have an experience as if they were flown into that world. What was magical about that for us was that that's a place that you can't otherwise go to. You can get on a plane and fly to Egypt and see the pyramids, but you can't get on a plane and fly anywhere to see [Aladdin's world], because it's only in our imagination and on celluloid. When we tried to do Aladdin's Magic Carpet Ride three years ago, there was no possible way for that to make economic sense. The technology wasn't there yet. Now it is. And now we've created an experience where you can get the sense of what it would be like to fly on a magic carpet, interact with Aladdin and Jasmine and all the characters from "Aladdin," and have an experience in this world that otherwise you could never possibly go to.

Boxoffice: To what degree can people interact?

DINUNZIO: We have an attraction called Virtual Jungle Cruise that pays homage to the great Jungle Cruise attraction at Disneyland. We said, "What would happen if you could actually steer the vehicle in Jungle Cruise?" And that led us to think, "What if you could go someplace that you couldn't actually go to? What if we could send you back in time?" And ultimately, we came up with the idea of, "Let's send people 60 million years back in time to when dinosaurs were still on earth." We put them in an environment where they can actually paddle a raft. Sitting in a real rubber raft, using real wooden paddles, based on how they paddle, they determine whether they go left or right down the stream, go down the rapids, go down the calm spot, look at the Tyrannosaurus rex, avoid getting eaten by a velociraptor. They basically have the ability to move anywhere in that environment.

Boxoffice: One attraction is described as hand-to-hand combat with Disney's most notorious villains. How else will DisneyQuest be incorporating movie characters?

DINUNZIO: We certainly with DisneyQuest plan on leveraging very aggressively our library of characters. Obviously, feature animation is an incredible source for us. As new characters and new stories come out, we will certainly look to find ways to create attractions that utilize those characters and stories. One of the great things about DisneyQuest is we can upgrade, change the software, bring new characters in, or slightly change the characters that are in there—we have a lot of opportunity to play with it. Part of the basic design of DisneyQuest is we will constantly evolve the product. Every four to five years, much if not most of DisneyQuest will have been changed out and will be in some way, shape or form refreshed.

Boxoffice: Are you charging individually per game or will there be an entrance fee?

DINUNZIO: The way we've structured it is there is ticketing outside of the facility, and guests will buy a debit card, and you'll have choices about how many credits you want to put on your card at the gate. In some ways it's a little bit like the old ticket books at Disneyland, with the A, B, C, D and E tickets, except it's electronic.

Boxoffice: How much is the average game?

DINUNZIO: We haven't made those determinations yet.

Boxoffice: Should exhibitors be worried that you're vying for the same entertainment dollar?

DINUNZIO: I sure don't think so. There is a broad opportunity in the entertainment business to provide great, engaging experiences for guests. My personal belief is that there are synergistic opportunities. For instance, I'm incredibly happy to know that there's an AMC theatre near our first site in DisneyWorld, because I think there's a [mutual benefit] in having cinemas near where we are. [At DisneyQuest's second site] in Chicago, we are diagonally across the street from a Cineplex Odeon. We love that. It's great. It's fantastic. In both locations we have announced, we're within yards of exhibitors. So we do not see that as competition—we see it as an opportunity for synergy.—***Christine James***

BOXOFFICE

	July	August	September	OCTOBER (Current)
Buena Vista (818) 567-5000 (212) 593-8900	**George of the Jungle**, 7/16, Live Act, PG, 92 min, Dolby SR-D,DTS, SDDS, Flat. Brendan Fraser, Leslie Mann, Thomas Hayden Church. Abraham Benrubi. Dir: Sam Weisman **Nothing to Lose**, 7/18, Com, R, 98 min, Dolby SR-D, SDDS, Flat Martin Lawrence, Tim Robbins, John C McGinley, Giancarlo Esposito, Kelly Preston. Dir: Steve Dedekerk	**Air Bud**, 8/1, Com, 97 min, Dolby SR, Flat Kevin Zegers, Michael Jeter, Bill Cobbs. Dir: Charles Martin Smith. **G.I. Jane** (formerly In Pursuit of Honor, Navy Cross), 8/15, Act, R, 120 min, Dolby SR & SR-D, SDDS, Anamorphic. Demi Moore, Viggo Mortensen, Anne Bancroft, Jason Beghe, Daniel Von Bargen. Dir: Ridley Scott.	**A Thousand Acres**, 9/19, Dra, Flat. Jessica Lange, Michelle Pfeiffer, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Jason Robards, Keith Carradine. Dir: Jocelyn Moorhouse	**An American Werewolf in Paris**, 10/3, Hor. Julie Delpy Dir. Anthony Waller. **Rocket Man** (formerly Space Cadet), 10/10, Com, Flat. Harland Williams, Beau Bridges, Shelley Duvall. Dir: Stuart Gillard **Playing God**, 10/17, Dra, R, Dolby SR, SR-D, Flat. David Duchovny. Dir: Andy Wilson. **Washington Square**, Dra. Jennifer Jason Leigh, Albert Finney. Dir: Agnieszka Holland.
Columbia (310) 244-4000 (212) 833-8500	**Men In Black**, 7/2, SF, PG-13, 98 min, Dolby A & SR, SDDS, Flat Tommy Lee Jones, Will Smith, Linda Fiorentino, Rip Torn Dir: Barry Sonnenfeld **Air Force One**, 7/25, Act/Dra, R, 118 min, Dolby A & SR, SDDS, DTS, Anamorphic. Harrison Ford, Gary Oldman, Glenn Close, Wendy Crewson, Jurgen Prochnow. Dir: Wolfgang Petersen.	**Excess Baggage**, 8/29, Act/Adv, PG-13, 90 min, SDDS, Flat. Alicia Silverstone, Benicio del Toro, Christopher Walken, Jack Thompson, Nicholas Turturro. Dir: Marco Brambilla.		**I Know What You Did Last Summer**, 10/17, Dra, SDDS. Jamie Lee Curtis, Sara Michelle Gellar, Jennifer Love Hewitt, Freddie Prinze Jr. Dir: Jim Gillespie. **Gattaca** (formerly The Eighth Day), 10/24, SF, 108 min, SDDS, Anamorphic. Ethan Hawke, Uma Thurman, Jude Law, Alan Arkin, Loren Dean, Gore Vidal, Ernest Borgnine. Dir: Andrew Niccol.
MGM/UA (310) 449-3000 (212) 708-0300		**Paperback Romance**, 8/1, Rom/Com. Gia Carides, Anthony LaPaglia. Dir: Ben Lewin. (Goldwyn Division) **Hoodlum** (formerly Hoods), 8/29, Dra, R, 142 min, DTS, Flat. Laurence Fishburne, Tim Roth, Andy Garcia, Vanessa Williams. Dir: Bill Duke.	**The End of Violence**, 9/12, Dra, R, DTS. Gabriel Byrne, Bill Pullman, Andie MacDowell, Traci Lind. Dir. Wim Wenders. **The Locusts**, 9/26, Dra. Kate Capshaw, Jeremy Davies, Vince Vaughn, Ashley Judd. Dir: John Patrick Kelly. (Orion Division)	**Gang Related** (formerly Criminal Intent), 10/10, Dra. James Belushi, Tupac Shakur. Dir: Jim Kouf (Orion) **Hurricane Streets**, 10/10, Dra, R. Brendan Sexton III, Kit Carson, Shawn Elliot. Dir: Morgan J. Freeman. **Napoleon**, 10/10, Fam. Voices: Adam Wylie, Bronson Pinchot. Dir: Mario Andreacchio. (Goldwyn)
Miramax (212) 941-3800 (213) 951-4200	**Shall We Dance** (Japan), 7/11NY/LA, exp 7/18, 7/25 & 8/8, Com, PG. Koji Yasuyo Dir: Masayuki Suo. **Operation Condor** (Hong Kong), 7/18 wide, Act/Adv, PG-13 Dir/Star: Jackie Chan. **Mrs. Brown**, 7/18 NY/LA, exp 7/25 & 8/1, Dra, PG Judi Dench, Billy Connolly. Dir: John Madden.	**Love Serenade** (Australia), 8/1 NY/LA, 8/8 exp, Com/Dra, R, 101 min. Miranda Otto. Dir: Shirley Barrett. **Copland**, 8/15 wide, Dra. Sylvester Stallone, Robert De Niro, Harvey Keitel, Ray Liotta. Dir: James Mangold. **Mimic**, 8/22 wide, SF/Thr. Mira Sorvino, Josh Brolin. Dir: Guillermo del Toro. **She's So Lovely**, 8/29 500 scr, Dra. Sean Penn, Robin Wright, John Travolta. Dir: Nick Cassavetes	**Mouth to Mouth** (Spain), 9/5 NY/LA, Com, R. Javier Bardem. Dir. Manuel Gomez Pereira **Nightwatch**, 9/12 wide. Ewan McGregor, Nick Nolte. **Talk of Angels**, 9/12 NY/LA, Dra, PG-13, 97 min. Polly Walker, Vincent Perez. Dir: Nick Hamm. **Seven Notes in Black** (Italy), 9/19 NY/LA Jennifer O'Neill. Dir. Lucio Fulci. **Wide Awake**, 9/19, Dra, PG Dir: M. Night Shyamalan. **Little City**, 9/26 Annabella Sciorra.	**The House of Yes**, 10/10 NY/LA, Dra/Com. Parker Posey, Josh Hamilton. Dir: Mark Waters **Phantoms**, 10/24 wide, Hor. Peter O'Toole, Joanna Going. Dir: Joe Chappelle.
New Line (310) 854-5811 (212) 649-4900		**Spawn**, 8/1, SF, R, 97 min, Dolby SR, DTS, SDDS, Flat. Michael Jai White, John Leguizamo, D.B. Sweeney, Martin Sheen. Dir. Mark Dippe. **love jones** (reissue), 8/8, Rom/Com, 113 min. Larenz Tate. Dir: Theodore Witcher. **Money Talks**, 8/20, Act/Com, R, 92 min, Dolby SR, DTS, SDDS, Anamorphic. Charlie Sheen, Chris Tucker, Heather Locklear. Dir. Brett Ratner.		**Boogie Nights**, 10/3 ltd, 10/10 exp, Com/Dra, Dolby SR & SR-D, SDDS, Anamorphic. Mark Wahlberg, Julianne Moore, Burt Reynolds. Dir: Paul Thomas Anderson. **Most Wanted** (formerly America's Most Wanted), 10/10, Act/Com, R. Keenen Ivory Wayans. Dir: David Hogan.
Paramount (213) 956-5000 (212) 373-7000	**Kiss Me Guido**. 7/18 ltd. Com, R, 89 min. Nick Scotti, Anthony Barrile Dir Tony Vitale. **Good Burger**, 7/25, Com, PG, 94 min Kel Mitchell, Kenan Thompson, Abe Vigoda. Dir Brian Robbins.	**Event Horizon**, 8/15, SF/Thr, R, 97 min, Dolby SR-D, DTS, Anamorphic. Laurence Fishburne, Sam Neill, Kathleen Quinlan. Dir: Paul Anderson. **A Smile Like Yours**, 8/22, Rom/Com, R, 99 min, Dolby SR-D, DTS, Anamorphic. Greg Kinnear, Lauren Holly, Jay Thomas. Dir Keith Samples.	**In and Out**, 9/19, Com, PG-13, 90 min, SR-D, DTS. Flat. Kevin Kline, Tom Selleck, Joan Cusack, Debbie Reynolds, Wilford Brimley, Greg Jbara. Dir: Frank Oz.	**Kiss the Girls**, 10/3, Thr, R, 113 min, DTS, Anamorphic. Morgan Freeman, Ashley Judd, Alex McArthur, Cary Elwes. Dir Gary Fleder. **FairyTale: A True Story** (formerly Illumination), 10/24, Dra, PG. Peter O'Toole. Dir: Charles Sturridge.
TriStar (310) 244-4000 (212) 833-8500				**U-Turn** (formerly Stray Dogs), 10/3, Flat. Sean Penn, Billy Bob Thornton, Jennifer Lopez, Nick Nolte, Powers Boothe. Dir: Oliver Stone **Seven Years in Tibet**, 10/8, Dra, Anamorphic Brad Pitt Dir: Jean-Jacques Annaud **Swept From the Sea** (formerly To Love and Be Loved, Forever), 10/24 ltd., Dra Vincent Perez, Rachel Weisz, Dir: Beeban Kidron.
20th Century Fox (310) 369-1000 (212) 556-2400	**Out to Sea**, 7/2, Com, PG-13, 106 min, Dolby SR, Flat. Walter Matthau, Jack Lemmon, Brent Spiner, Dyan Cannon, Elaine Stritch, Hal Linden, Donald O'Connor, Alexandra Powers. Dir Martha Coolidge.	**Picture Perfect**, 8/1, Rom/Com, PG-13, 105 min, Dolby SR & SR-D, Flat. Jennifer Aniston, Kevin Bacon, Olympia Dukakis, Jay Mohr, Illeana Douglas. Dir: Glenn Gordon Caron.	**The Edge** (formerly The Wild, Bookworm), 9/26, Act/Thr, R, 117 min, Dolby SR & SR-D, Anamorphic. Anthony Hopkins, Alec Baldwin, Elle Macpherson, L.Q. Jones, Harold Pennneau. Dir: Lee Tamahori.	**Soul Food**, 10/10, Dra, R, 114 min, Dolby SR, SR-D, Flat. Vanessa Williams, Mehki Phifer, Nia Long Dir: George Tillman Jr. **A Life Less Ordinary**, 10/24, Dra, R, Dolby SR, SR-D, Flat. Cameron Diaz, Holly Hunter, Ewan McGregor. Dir: Danny Boyle.
Universal (818) 777-1000 (212) 759-7500	**A Simple Wish** (formerly The Fairy Godmother), 7/11, Com, PG, 95 min, DTS, Flat Mara Wilson, Martin Short, Kathleen Turner, Robert Pastorelli Dir: Michael Ritchie.	**Leave It to Beaver**, 8/22, Com, PG, ~88 min, DTS, Flat. Janine Turner, Christopher McDonald, Cameron Finley, Erik Von Detten. Dir. Andy Cadiff. **Kull the Conqueror**, 8/29. Adv, PG-13, ~90 min, DTS, Anamorphic. Kevin Sorbo, Tia Carrere. Dir: John Nicoella.		
Warner Bros. (818) 954-6000 (212) 484-8000	**Wild America**, 7/2, Adv, PG. 107 min, Dolby SR & SR-D. Jonathan Taylor Thomas. Dir: Bill Dear. **Contact**, 7/11, Thr, PG, 150 min, SDDS, DTS. Jodie Foster, Matthew McConaughey, John Hurt Dir: Robert Zemeckis. **187**, 7/30, Dra, R, DTS. Samuel L. Jackson, Kelly Rowan, John Heard Dir. Kevin Reynolds.	**Conspiracy Theory**, 8/8, Thr, R, 135 min, DTS, Anamorphic. Mel Gibson, Julia Roberts, Patrick Stewart. Dir. Richard Donner. **Free Willy 3: The Rescue**, 8/8, Fam/Adv, PG, 89 min, DTS, Flat. Jason James Richter, August Schellenberg, Annie Corley. Dir: Sam Pillsbury. **Steel**, 8/15, Act/Adv, PG-13, 105 min, Dolby SR-D, DTS, SDDS, Flat. Shaquille O'Neal.	**Fire Down Below**, 9/12, Act, R, Dolby SR-D, DTS, SDDS, Flat. Steven Seagal, Marg Helgenberger. Dir: Felix Enriquez Alcala. **L.A. Confidential**, 9/19, Dra, R, 138 min, Dolby SR-D, DTS, SDDS, Anamorphic. Kevin Spacey, Kim Basinger, James Cromwell, Danny DeVito. Dir: Curtis Hanson. **Breaking Up**, 9/26 NY/LA/Tor, R, DTS. Russell Crowe, Salma Hayek Dir: Robert Greenwald	**The Devil's Advocate**, 10/17. Dra. Anamorphic. Al Pacino, Keanu Reeves, Charlize Theron Dir: Taylor Hackford **Incognito**, 10/31, Thr, R, Anamorphic. Jason Patric, Irene Jacob, Rod Steiger. Dir: John Badham.

FEATURE CHART — OCTOBER 1997

November	December	Forthcoming	
Little Mermaid (1989 reissue), 11/14, Ani, 9 min. Dirs: John Musker, Ron Clements. **ber**, 11/26, Com, Flat. Robin Williams. Les Mayfield.	**Kundun**, 12/25 ltd, Dra. Tenzin Thutob Tsarong, Gyurme Tethong. Dir: Martin Scorsese **The Horse Whisperer**,Dra. Robert Redford, Kristin Scott Thomas. Dir: Robert Redford. **Mr. Magoo**,Com/Live Act, Flat. Leslie Nielsen, Kelly Lynch. Dir: Stanley Tong	**An Alan Smithee Film** (working title), Com. Sylvester Stallone. Dir: Alan Smithee (Arthur Hiller). **Deep Rising** Act/Thr. Treat Williams, Famke Janssen, Wes Studi. Dir. Stephen Sommers. **Ishmael**, Dra. Dir: Jon Turteltaub. **Mighty Joe Young**, Adv. Charlize Theron, Bill Paxton. Dir: Ron Underwood. **Mulan**, Ani. Voices: Ming Na-Wen. Dirs: Barry Cook, Tony Bancroft.	**Buena Vista** (818) 567-5000 (212) 593-8900
		The Replacement Killers, 2/6, Act. Chow Yun-Fat, Mira Sorvino, Michael Rooker. Clifton Gonzales-Gonzales, Jurgen Prochnow. Dir: Antoine Fuqua. **Homegrown**, 2/98, Dra. Billy Bob Thornton, Kelly Lynch, Hank Azaria. Dir. Stephen Gyllenhall. **Shut Up and Dance**, 2/98. Vanessa Williams, Kris Kristotterson. Dir: Randa Haines. **Spice Girls Movie**, 1st Quarter '98. Richard E. Grant, Spice Girls. **Gloria**, Summer '98, Dra. Sharon Stone. **Les Miserables** Dec. '98, Liam Neeson, Uma Thurman. Dir: Bille August. **My Giant** Billy Crystal. Dir: Michael Lehmann. **Palmetto** Woody Harrelson, Elisabeth Shue. Dir. Volker Schlondorff. **Sour Grapes** Steven Weber, Craig Bierko, Karen Sillas. Dir: Larry David. **Wild Things** Kevin Bacon, Matt Dillon. Dir: John McNaughton. **Zero Effect**, Bill Pullman, Ben Stiller. Dir: Jake Kasdan.	**Columbia** (310) 244-4000 (212) 833-8500
r, 11/21, Dra/Thr. Tim Roth, Chris Penn, chael Rooker. Dir: Jonas and Joshua Pate. **d Corner**, 11/26, Dra/Thr, DTS. Richard e, Bai Ling, Byron Mann. Dir: Jon Avnet.	**Bent**, 12/5, Dra. Lutharre Bluteau, Clive Owens. Dir: Sean Mathias (Goldwyn). **Tomorrow Never Dies** (aka Bond 18), 12/19, Act/Adv, DTS. Pierce Brosnan, Michelle Yeoh, Jonathan Pryce. Dir: Roger Spottiswoode	**The Man in the Iron Mask**, 1/98. Adv. Leonardo DiCaprio, John Malkovich, Gabriel Byrne, Gerard Depardieu, Jeremy Irons. Dir: Randall Wallace. **Welcome to Woop Woop**, 1/98, Com. Dir: Stephan Elliott (Goldwyn). **Music From Another Room**, 2/6, Rom/Com. Brenda Blethyn, Jude Law. Dir: Charlie Peters (Orion). **Storefront Hitchcock** 3/27, Doc. Dir: Jonathan Demme (Orion). **Mod Squad**, 4/3. Dir: Stacy Title. **I Love You... Don't Touch Me**, 4/17, Rom/Com. Dir: Julie Davis (Goldwyn). **Species 2**, 5/15, SF. Michael Madsen, Natasha Henstridge. **Best Men** (aka Independence). Dra. Drew Barrymore, Luke Wilson, Dean Cain, Sean Patrick Flanery. Dir: Tamra Davis.	**MGM/UA** (310) 449-3000 (212) 708-0300
Wings of the Dove, 11/7 NY/LA, Dra. ena Bonham Carter, Linus Roache, Terence Stamp, Alison Elliott. Dir. Ian Softley. **come to Sarajevo** (formerly Sarajevo), 14 NY/LA, Dra. Stephen Dillane, Woody relson. Dir: Michael Winterbottom. **ling Doors**, 11/21 NY/LA. Gwyneth row.	**Scream 2**, 12/12 wide, Hor. Neve Campbell. Dir: Wes Craven. **Artemesia**, 12/19 NY/LA, 12/25 exp. Michel Serrault, Miki Manojlovic. Dir: Agnes Merlet. **The Mighty**, 12/19 NY/LA, 1/16 wide, Dra. Sharon Stone, Gena Rowlands. Dir: Peter Chelsom. **Good Will Hunting** 12/25 NY/LA, 1/9 wide. **Jackie Brown**, 12/25 wide. Pam Grier, Samuel L. Jackson. Dir: Quentin Tarantino.	**Four Days in September**, 1/23 NY/LA. **Senseless**, 1/30 wide. **B. Monkey**, 2/6, Dra. Asia Argento, Jared Harris, Rupert Everett. Dir: Michael Radford. **I-95**, 2/27. **Sonatine**, 3/6 NY/LA, Dra. Dir/Star: Takeshi Kitano. **Spanish Fly**, 3/13 NY/LA **My Life So Far**, 4/98. **Nirvana**, 4/98 wide. **Heaven**, 5/98. **Velvet Goldmine**, 6/98. **Doberman**, 7/98. **Full Tilt Boogie** Dir: Sarah Kelly. **A Price Below Rubies**, Dra. Renee Zellweger. Dir: Boaz Yakin. **The Revenger's Comedies**, Dra. Sam Neill, Helena Bonham Carter. Dir: Malcom Mowbray. **Wishful Thinking** Jennifer Beals	**Miramax** (212) 941-3800 (213) 951-4200
e Night Stand (formerly One Night), 11/14 Dra. Wesley Snipes, Nastassja Kinski. Mike Figgis. **rtal Kombat II: Annihilation**, 11/21, Act. bin Shou, Talisa Soto. Dir: John R onetti.		**Dark Empire** (aka Dark City), 1/9, Thr, Dolby SR & SR-D, SDDS. William Hurt. Dir: Alex Proyas. **Blade**, 1/30. Wesley Snipes, Stephen Dorff. Dir: Stephen Norrington. **The Wedding Singer**, 2/13, Com. Adam Sandler, Drew Barrymore. **Wag the Dog**, 2/98. Dustin Hoffman, Robert De Niro, Woody Harrelson. Dir. Barry Levinson. **Mr. Nice Guy**, 3/13 wide, Act/Adv. Jackie Chan. **Lost in Space** 4/3. William Hurt, Gary Oldman. Dir: Stephen Hopkins. **American History X**, 4/17. Edward Norton, Edward Furlong. Dir: Tony Kaye. **Players Club**, 5/22. Ice Cube, Jamie Fox. Dir. Ice Cube. **Pleasantville**, 6/98, Com. Tobey Maguire, Reese Witherspoon. Dir: Gary Ross. **The Kiss** 11/98. Danny DeVito, Holly Hunter, Queen Latifah. Dir: Richard La Gravenese. **Woo**, Rom/Com. Jada Pinkett, Tommy Davidson. Dir: Daisy Von Scherler Mayer.	**New Line** (310) 854-5811 (212) 649-4900
tchback (formerly Going West in America), 7, Thr. Dennis Quaid, Danny Glover, Jared p. Dir: Jeb Stuart. **Rainmaker**, 11/21, Dra. Matt Damon, Claire es. Dir: Francis Coppola.	**Titanic**, 12/19, Rom/Adv, DTS. Leonardo DiCaprio, Kate Winslet, Bill Paxton. Dir: James Cameron. **Untitled Robert Benton** (aka The Magic Hour). Paul Newman, Susan Sarandon. Dir: Robert Benton.	**Hard Rain** (formerly The Flood), 1/98, Act. Christian Slater, Morgan Freeman. Dir: Mikael Salomon. **Dead Man on Campus**, Com. Tom Everett Scott. Dir: Alan Cohn. **Deep Impact**, Act/Thr. Tea Leoni, Elijah Wood, Vanessa Redgrave, Robert Duvall. Dir: Mimi Leder. **The Odd Couple II: Travelin' Light**, Com. Jack Lemmon, Walter Matthau. Dir: Howard Deutch. **The Real Blonde** Matthew Modine. Dir. Tom DiCillo. **The Truman Show**,Dra, Flat. Jim Carrey, Ed Harris, Laura Linney. Dir: Peter Weir **Snake Eyes**, Thr. Nicolas Cage. Dir. Brian De Palma.	**Paramount** (213) 956-5000 (212) 373-7000
rship Troopers, 11/7, SF, SDDS. Casper n Dien, Dina Meyer, Neil Patrick Harris, Denise Richards, Jake Busey. Dir: Paul Verheven.	**Old Friends**, 12/25, Dra. Jack Nicholson, Helen Hunt, Greg Kinnear. Dir: James Brooks.	**Desperate Measures**, 1/16, Act. Michael Keaton, Andy Garcia. Dir. Barbet Schroeder. **The Mask of Zorro**, 3/98, Act/Adv. Antonio Banderas, Anthony Hopkins. Dir: Martin Campbell. **Godzilla** 5/20, Hank Azaria, Matthew Broderick, Jean Reno. Dir: Roland Emmerich. **Apt Pupil**, Dra. Ian McKellen, Brad Renfro, Kevin Pollak, Joe Morton. Dir. Bryan Singer. **Bloodline** (formerly Kilronen), Thr. Jessica Lange, Gwyneth Paltrow. Dir: Jonathan Darby. **Stinkers**, Com. B.D. Wong, Bronson Pinchot, Jennifer Coolidge. Dir: Barnet Kellman.	**TriStar** (310) 244-4000 (212) 833-8500
astasia, 11/21, Ani, Dolby SR, SR-D, Anaorphic. Voices: Meg Ryan, John Cusack. s: Don Bluth, Gary Goldman. **en Resurrection** 11/26, SF, 115 min, Dolby , SR-D, SDDS, DTS, Anamorphic. Sigourney aver, Winona Ryder, Brad Dourif, Dan daya, Dominique Pinon, Ron Perlman. Dir: un-Pierre Jeunet.	**Home Alone 3**, 12/19, Com, 110 min, Dolby SR, SR-D, Flat. Alex D. Linz. Dir: Raja Gosnell. **Great Expectations** 12/31, Dra, R, 106 min. Robert De Niro, Gwyneth Paltrow, Ethan Hawke. Dir: Alfonso Cuaron.	**Doctor Dolittle**, Com. Eddie Murphy. Dir: Betty Thomas. **Firestorm**, Act/Adv, R. Howie Long, Scott Glenn, Suzy Amis, William Forsythe. Dir: Dean Semler. **Hope Floats**, Com. Sandra Bullock. Dir. Forest Whitaker. **How Stella Got Her Groove Back**, Dra. Angela Bassett. Dir. Kevin Rodney Sullivan. **The Newton Boys** Matthew McConaughey. Dir: Richard Linklater. **Untitled Bulworth**, Warren Beatty, Oliver Platt, Halle Berry, Paul Sorvino. Dir: Warren Beatty. **The X-Files Movie** David Duchovny, Gillian Anderson, Martin Landau. Dir: Rob Bowman.	**20th Century Fox** (310) 369-1000 (212) 556-2400
e Jackal 11/14. Thr, Anamorphic. Bruce llis, Richard Gere, Sidney Potter, Diane nora, Mathilda May. Dir: Michael Caton-nes.	**For Richer Or Poorer**, 12/12, Rom/Com. Tim Allen, Kirstie Alley. Dir: Bryan Spicer. **The Boxer**, 12/26 ltd, 1/9/98 wide, Dra. Daniel Day-Lewis, Emily Watson. Dir. Jim Sheridan.	**Blues Brothers 2000**, Com. Dan Aykroyd, John Goodman. Dir: John Landis. **Half-Baked**, Com., Dave Chappelle, Jim Brewer. Dir: Tamara Davis. **Meet Joe Black**, Rom/Dra. Brad Pitt, Anthony Hopkins, Claire Forlani. Dir. Martin Brest. **Primary Colors**, Dra. John Travolta, Emma Thompson, Billy Bob Thornton. Dir. Mike Nichols. **Reach the Rock**, Dra/Com. Alessandro Nivola, William Sadler, Bruce Norris. Dir. Bill Ryan. **Simple Simon**, Thr. Bruce Willis. Dir: Harold Becker. **Virus**, Thr. Jamie Lee Curtis, Donald Sutherland, William Baldwin, Cliff Curtis. Dir: John Bruno.	**Universal** (818) 777-1000 (212) 759-7500
Man Who Knew Too Little (formerly tch That Man), 11/1, Com/Thr. Bill Murray, nne Whalley, Peter Gallagher. Dir: Jon Amiel. **d City**, 11/7, Dra, PG-13, Anamorphic. John volta, Dustin Hoffman, Mia Kirshner. Dir: nstantin Costa-Gavras.	**Sphere**, 12/12, SF. Dustin Hoffman, Sharon Stone, Samuel L. Jackson. Dir: Barry Levinson. **The Postman**, 12/25, SF. Kevin Costner, Olivia Williams, Larenz Tate. Dir. Kevin Costner. **Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil**, Xmas. Kevin Spacey, John Cusack. Dir. Clint Eastwood	**City of Angels**, Dra. Meg Ryan, Nicolas Cage. Dir: Brad Silberling. **Courtesan** (formerly Venice), Dra, R, 112 min. Catherine McCormack. Dir. Marshall Herskovitz. **Edwards and Hunt**, Com. Chris Farley, Matthew Perry. Dir: Christopher Guest. **Eyes Wide Shut**. Tom Cruise, Nicole Kidman. Dir. Stanley Kubrick. **Fallen**, Dra. Denzel Washington, John Goodman. **Goodbye, Lover**. Patricia Arquette, Ellen DeGeneres, Dermot Mulroney. Dir: Roland Joffe. **Home Fries**, Com. Drew Barrymore, Gary Busey. Dir. Dean Parisot. **U.S. Marshals**, Act. Tommy Lee Jones, Wesley Snipes. Dir. Stuart Baird. **Without Limits** (formerly Pre), Dra. Billy Crudup. Dir: Robert Towne.	**Warner Bros.** (818) 954-6000 (212) 484-8000

BOXOFFICE Independent Feature Chart OCTOBER 1997

SEPTEMBER

Artistic License
212-265-9119

La Rencontre *(France)*, Dra, 80 min. Dir: Alain Cavalier. LA
Riding the Rails, Doc. Dirs: Michael Uys, Lexy Lovell. 9/5 LA, 9/12 NY

Castle Hill
212-888-0080

Trojan Eddie, Dra, 105 min. Richard Harris, Stephen Rea. Dir: Gillies Mackinnon. Early Sept LA

CFP
212-995-9662

Bandwagon, Com/Mus, 103 min. Kevin Corrigan, Lee Holmes. Dir: John Schultz. 9/12 ltd
Aaron's Magic Village, Ani. 9/26
Stag, Dra, 94 min. Andrew McCarthy, Mario Van Peebles. Dir: Gavin Wilding. 9/26 ltd

Cinema Village
212-431-5119

Mondo Plympton, Ani, 85 min. Dir: Bill Plympton. 9/24

Dreamworks SKG
818-733-7000

The Peacemaker, Act/Adv. George Clooney, Nicole Kidman. Dir: Mimi Leder. 9/26

Filmopolis
310-914-1776

In a Strange City, Rom/Dra. Winston Chao, Kuei-mai Yang, Ronggao Gu. Dir: Chi Yin.

Fine Line
212-649-4800

Julian Po *(formerly Tears of Julian Po)*, Dra, PG-13. Christian Slater. Dir: Alan Wade. 9/5 ltd

First Look
310-855-1199

Different for Girls, Rom/Com, 97 min. Rupert Graves. Dir: Richard Spence. 9/12 NY/LA/SF

Fox Searchlight
310-369-4402

Intimate Relations, Dra, 100 min, R. Dir: Philip Goodhew. 9/5
Ice Storm, Dra, R, 112 min. Kevin Kline, Joan Allen. Dir: Ang Lee. 9/26 NY, 10/17 exp

Gramercy
310-385-4400

Going All the Way, Dra. Jeremy Davies, Ben Affleck. Dir: Mark Pellington. 9/19 NY/LA, 9/26 exp

Kino
212-629-6880

The Keeper. Giancarlo Esposito, Isaach de Bankole. Dir: Joe Brewster. 9/5 NY
Capitaine Conan *(France)*. Philippe Torreton. Dir: Bertrand Tavernier. 9/10

Legacy
213-467-3700

Love Always, Dra/Com. Marisa Ryan, Moon Zappa. Dir: Jude Pauline Eberhard. 9/26 ltd

Leisure Time
212-267-4501

Twisted, Dra, 100 min. William Hickey. Dir: Seth Michael Donsky.

Live
818-778-3174

Wes Craven Presents Wishmaster, Hor. Dir: Robert Kurtzman. 9/19
No Way Home, Dra. Tim Roth, Debra Winger, James Russo. Dir: Buddy Gioviazzo.

Manga
415-275-5405

Gravesend, Dra. Dir: Sal Stabile. 9/5 NY, 9/19 LA

Movieworld
510-244-5590

Omaha: the movie, Com. 9/26
Mary Jane's Not a Virgin Anymore, Dra. Dir: Sarah Jacobson.

October
212-539-4000

Kicked in the Head, Com. Kevin Corrigan, Linda Fiorentino. Dir: Matthew Harrison. 9/26

Phaedra
310-478-3308

Cracking Up. 9/12 LA
Sleepy Heads. Dir: Yoshifumi Hosoya. 9/12 LA
Kiss and Tell, Com. Rose McGowan. Dir: Jordan Alan.

Polygram
310-385-4000

The Game, Dra/Thr. Michael Douglas, Sean Penn. Dir: David Fincher. 9/12

Rice Arts
212-727-0249

Delinquent, Dra. Desmond Devenish, Jeff Paul. Dir: Peter Hall. 9/12 LA

Seventh Art
213-845-1455

The Long Way Home, Doc. Dir: Mark Jonathan Harris. 9/17 LA, 9/19 NY
Things I Never Told You, Rom/Com. Lili Taylor, Andrew McCarthy. Dir: Isabel Coixet.

Sony Classics
212-833-8851

The Myth of Fingerprints, Dra. Blythe Danner, Noah Wylie, Julianne Moore, Roy Scheider. Dir: Bart Freundlich. 9/19 NY

Strand
310-395-5002

Latin Boys Go to Hell. Irwin Ossa. Dir: Ela Troyano. 9/5 NY/LA
Self-Made Hero *(France)*, Dra. Dir: Jacques Audlard. 9/26 LA
The Delta, Dra. Shayne Gray, Thang Chan. Dir: Ira Sachs. Exp

Triumph
310-244-8059

The Assignment, Act. Aidan Quinn, Donald Sutherland. Dir: Christian Duguay. 9/26 ltd

Zeitgeist
212-274-1989

My Sex Life...Or How I Got Into An Argument *(France)*, Com. Dir: Arnaud Desplechin. 9/17 NY
Anthem, Doc. Dirs: Shainee Gabel, Kristin Hahn. 9/19 NY
Conspirators of Pleasure *(Czech Republic)*, Com. Dir: Jan Svankmajer. 9/19 LA

OCTOBER

Banner
213-848-7500

Telling Lies in America, Dra. Kevin Bacon, Brad Renfro. Dir: Guy Ferland. Oct ltd, mid-Nov. exp

Castle Hill
Eye of God, Dra. Martha Plimpton, Nick Stahl. Dir: Tim Blake. 10/17

CFP
Nick and Jane, Rom/Com. Dana Wheeler-Nicholson, James McCaffrey. 10/10
The Twilight of the Golds, Dra. Jennifer Beals, Brendan Fraser. Dir: Ross Marks. 10/24

Filmopolis
Son of Gascogne *(France)*, Com. Jean-Claude Dreyfus. Dir: Pascal Aubier. 10/24

Fine Line
Gummo, Dra. Chloe Sevigny, Max Perlich. Dir: Harmony Korine. 10/17 NY/LA/Tor

First Run
212-243-0600

Forgotten Silver. Mock Doc. Dirs: Peter Jackson, Costa Botes. NY

Gramercy
Bean, Com. Rowan Atkinson. Dir: Mel Smith. 10/17
Tempting Fate *(formerly Shakespeare's Sister)*, Dra. Kenneth Branagh, Madeleine Stowe. Dir: Leslie Linka Glatter.

Greycat
702-737-0670

I Was a Jewish Sex Worker, Doc, 74 min. Dir: Phillip B. Roth. 10/17 NY
David Searching, Com/Dra, 103 min. Anthony Rapp. Dir: Leslie Smith. LA/SF
A Gun for Jennifer, Thr.

Kino
Happy Together, Rom/Dra. Leslie Cheung, Tony Leung. Dir: Wong Kar-Wai.

Kit Parker
800-538-5838

Nueba Yol II, Com/Dra, 95 min. Luisito Marti. Dir: Angel Muniz.

Live
Critical Care, Dra/Thr. James Spader, Albert Brooks, Kyra Sedgwick. Dir: Sidney Lumet.

Manga
Tokyo Fist, Act. Dir/Star: Shinya Tsukamoto.

New Yorker
212-247-6110

Deep Crimson, Dra, 114 min. Daniel Gimenez, Marisa Paredes. Dir: Arturo Ripstein. 10/8
Beaumarchais *(France)*, Com, 100 min. Fabrice Luchini. Dir: Edouardo Molinaro. 10/24

Northern Arts
413-268-9301

Midaq Alley *(Mexico)*, Dra. Salma Hayek. Dir: Jorge Fons.

October
Year of the Horse, Doc. Neil Young. Dir: Jim Jarmusch.

Phaedra
Timeless, Dra. Dir: Chris Hart.

Polygram
The Gingerbread Man, Thr. Kenneth Branagh, Embeth Davidtz. Dir: Robert Altman. 10/3

Sony Classics
Fast, Cheap & Out of Control, Doc. Dir: Errol Morris. 10/3 NY/LA

Strand
Nenette et Boni *(France)*, Dra. Gregoire Colin. Dir: Claire Denis. 10/3 NY, 10/10 LA

Trimark
310-314-3040

Chairman of the Board, Com. Carrot Top, Courtney Thorne-Smith. 10/24

Turbulent Arts
415-552-1952

Marian *(Czech Republic)*, Dra. Dir: Peter Vaclev. 10/3 Chi
Lilies, Dra. Brent Carver, Marcel Sabourin. Dir: John Greyson. 10/10 SF, 10/17 NY, 10/24 LA

NOVEMBER

Castle Hill
A Further Gesture. Stephen Rea. 11/14 ltd

CFP
Sick: The Life and Death of Bob Flanagan, Supermasochist, Doc. Dir: Kirby Dick. 11/8 NY/LA

First Look
Hugo Pool, Com. Robert Downey Jr., Sean Penn. Dir: Robert Downey Sr. 11/7 NY/LA

BOXOFFICE Independent Feature Chart OCTOBER 1997

Slaves to the Underground, Dra. Dir: Kristine Petersen. 11/14 NY

Fox Searchlight
Oscar and Lucinda, Dra. Ralph Fiennes, Cate Blanchett. Dir: Gillian Armstrong. 11/14

Gramercy
Matchmaker *(formerly The Strangest Places)*, Com. Janeane Garofalo, David O'Hara. Dir: Mark Joffe. 11/21
Body Count, Act. Ving Rhames, Forest Whitaker, David Caruso. Dir: Robert Patton Spruill.

Greycat
Parallel Sons, Rom/Dra, 93 min. Dir: John G. Young.

International Pictures
212-925-0404
The Knowledge of Healing, Doc. Tanzin Gyatso (Dalai Lama). Dir: Franz Reichley. 11/5 NY

Northern Arts
Withnail and I *(U.K., 1987)*, Com, 105 min. Richard E. Grant. Dir: Bruce Robinson.

October
Kiss or Kill *(Australia)*, Dra/Thr. Matt Day, Frances O'Conner, Chris Haywood. Dir: Bill Bennett.

Phaedra
Bollywood Cinema Series *(India)*.

Sony Classics
Tango Lesson. Dir: Sally Potter. 11/14 NY/LA

Trimark
Eve's Bayou, Dra. Samuel L. Jackson, Lynn Whitfield. Dir: Kasi Lemmons. 11/7

Turbulent Arts
Never Met Picasso, Dra. Dir: Stephen Kijak. 11/28

DECEMBER

Artificial Eye
212-255-1922
The Mother and the Whore *(France, 1973)*, Dra, 210 min. Jean-Pierre Leaud. Dir: Jean Eustache.

Dreamworks SKG
Amistad *(formerly Mutiny)*, Dra. Matthew McConaughey, Morgan Freeman. Dir: Steven Spielberg. 12/12 ltd, 12/25 exp
Mousehunt, Com/Ani. Voices: Nathan Lane, Lee Evans. Dir: Gore Verbinski. 12/25

Fine Line
Deconstructing Harry, Com. Star/Dir: Woody Allen. 12/12 NY/LA/Tor, 12/24 exp, 1/9 wide
The Winter Guest, Dra. Emma Thompson, Phyllida Law. Dir: Alan Rickman. 12/19 NY/LA/Tor
The Sweet Hereafter, Dra. Ian Holm. Dir: Atom Egoyan. 12/24 NY/LA

Fox Searchlight
Cousin Bette, Dra. Jessica Lange, Bob Hoskins. Dir: Des McAnuff.

Gramercy
The Big Lebowski. Jeff Bridges, John Goodman. Dirs: Joel & Ethan Coen. 12/25 NY/LA, Jan. exp
Land Girls. Gwyneth Paltrow. Dir: David Leland.

Sony Classics
Ma Vie en Rose. Michele Laroque. Dir: Alain Berliner. 12/25 NY/LA

Strand
Office Killer, Hor. Carol Kane. Dir: Cindy Sherman. 12/3

Zeitgeist
Will It Snow for Christmas? Dir: Sandrine Veysset. 12/17 NY

JANUARY '98

Fine Line
Girl Talk, Dra/Com. Troy Beyer, Randi Ingerman. Dir: Troy Beyer.

Fox Searchlight
Hard Men *(U.K.)*, Dra. Vincent Regan. Dir: J.K. Amalou.

Kino
Fallen Angels, Thr. Leon Lai. Dir: Wong Kar-Wai.

Live
Real. LL Cool J, Snoop Doggy Dog. Dir: Darin Scott. 1/6/98
Suicide Kings *(formerly Boys Night Out)*, Thr. Christopher Walken. Dir: Peter O'Fallow.

Manga
General Chaos: Uncensored Animation, Ani. Various dirs.

Sony Classics
Afterglow, Rom/Dra. Nick Nolte, Julie Christie. Dir: Alan Rudolph.

Trimark
The Blackout. Matthew Modine, Dennis Hopper. Dir: Abel Ferrara.
Star Kid *(formerly Warrior of Waverly Street)*, SF. Joseph Mazzello. Dir: Manny Coto.

FEBRUARY '98

CFP
Love and Death on Long Island, Dra. John Hurt, Jason Priestley. Dir: Richard Kwietniowski. 2/27/98
Junk Mail, Com. Robert Skjaerstad. Dir: Pal Sletaune.

First Look
Mrs. Dalloway. Vanessa Redgrave. Dir: Marleen Gorris. 2/20 NY/LA

Fox Searchlight
Polish Wedding. Claire Danes, Gabriel Byrne, Lena Olin, Mili Avital. Dir: Theresa Connelly.

Live
Tarzan & Jane. Casper Van Dien, Jane March. Dir: Carl Schenkel. 2/27/98

Polygram
The Borrowers, Fan. John Goodman. Dir: Peter Hewitt.

Sony Classics
Nil by Mouth. Kathy Burke, Edna Dore. Dir: Gary Oldman.

Strand
The Mummy. Alison Elliot. Dir: Michael Almereyda. 2/13/98
Nights of Cabiria *(Italy, 1957)*, Dra. Dir: Federico Fellini.

MARCH '98

Fox Searchlight
Slaves of Beverly Hills. Alan Arkin, Marisa Tomei.

Sony Classics
A Friend of the Deceased *(Ukraine)*, Dra/Thr. Alexandre Lazarev. Dir: Vyacheslav Krishtofovich.
Men With Guns, Dra. Frederico Luppi. Dir: John Sayles.

FORTHCOMING

Artistic License
Color of a Brisk and Leaping Day, Dra. Dir: Christopher Munch. Fall '97
Other Voices, Other Rooms, Dra. Dir: David Rocksavage.

Cinema Village
Cartoon Noir, Ani, 85 min. Fall '97

Dove
310-786-1600
Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, Com/SF. Douglas Adams.

Dreamworks SKG
Paulie: A Parrot's Tale. Dir: John Roberts. 3/20/98
Saving Private Ryan, Dra. Tom Hanks, Ed Burns, Tom Sizemore. Dir: Steven Spielberg. 6/12/98
Small Soldiers. 7/10/98
Neanderthal. Summer '98
Blue Vision. Annette Bening. Dir: Neil Jordan. Fall '98
The Prince of Egypt, Ani. Voices: Val Kilmer, Steve Martin. Nov '98
Ants, Ani. Voices: Woody Allen, Danny Glover, Sylvester Stallone.
El Dorado: City of Gold, Ani. Voices: Kevin Kline, Kenneth Branagh, Rosie Perez. Dir: Will Finn.
I Wish I Were Audrey Hepburn Tea Leoni.
The Newports. Dir: Steven Spielberg.

Fine Line
Red Violin. Samuel L. Jackson. Dir: Francois Girard. June '98
Pecker. Dir: John Waters. Aug '98
The Legend of the Pianist on the Ocean, Dra. Tim Roth. Dir: Giuseppe Tornatore. Sep '98
The Kiss. Nov '98
Didier *(France)*. D/S: Alain Chabat.
When I Close My Eyes *(Japan)* *(formerly Letters of Love, Love Letter)*, Dra. Dir: Shunji Iwai. '98

First Look
Keep the Aspidistra Flying, Dra/Com. Richard E. Grant.
The Other Side of Sunday *(Norway)*, Dra. Dir: Berit Nesheim.
This Is the Sea, Dra. Richard Harris, Gabriel Byrne, John Lynch.

Fox Searchlight
Ship of Fools *(aka Shooting Fish)*, Dra/Com. Tony Shalhoub. Dir/Star: Stanley Tucci. Apr '98

Gramercy
Photographing Fairies.

Gurney
212-838-2929
Follow the Bitch, Com.

Legacy
The Leading Man. Jon Bon Jovi. Dir: John Duigan. Fall '97

Live
The Substitute 2. Treat Williams. Dir: Steven Pearl. 4/3/98
The Second Arrival, SF. Patrick Muldoon. Dir: Kevin Tenny. 5/8/98
The Breakup. Bridget Fonda.
Joyride. Benecio Del Toro.

October
Condo Painting, Doc. Dir: John McNaughton. '98
Hearts and Minds, Thr, R, 105 min. Dir: Ralph Ziman. '98
Three Seasons, Dra. Harvey Keitel. Dir: Tony Bui. '98
Untitled Todd Solondz. '98

Polygram
Barney's Great Adventures. Apr '98

Shooting Gallery
212-431-6759
illtown, Dra. Michael Rapaport, Lili Taylor. Early '98

Shadow
207-872-5111
La Petite Apocalypse *(France)*, Com/Dra, 110 min. Pierre Arditi. Dir: Constantin Costa-Gavras.

Strand
Full Speed *(aka Toute Vitesse) (France)*, Dra. Elodie Bouchez. Dir: Gael Murel. Late fall '97
La Sentinelle *(France)*, Thr. Dir: Arnaud Desplechin. Late fall '97
Ayn Rand: A Sense of Life, Doc.
The Mouse. John Savage, Angelica Torn. Dir: Dan Adams.

Trimark
Bombshell. Henry Thomas, Frank Whaley. Dir: Paul Wayne.

Triumph
Baby Geniuses. Kathleen Turner, Kim Cattrall. Dir: Bob Clark.

Zeitgeist
Murders and Murders.

HOME RELEASE CHART

BOXOFFICE

OCTOBER 1997

HOME VIDEO RELEASE DATE	TITLE	BOXOFFICE (MILLIONS)	SCREENS	THEATRICAL RELEASE	THEATRICAL/VIDEO DISTRIBUTOR
September 9	Fathers' Day	$28.5	2,507	May 9	Warner Bros.
September 14	Double Team	$11.3	2,203	April 4	Columbia/Col. TriStar
September 16	The Saint	$61.3	2,500	April 4	Paramount
September 23	The English Patient	$78.0	683	November 15	Miramax/BuenaVista
September 23	Selena	$34.9	1,873	March 21	Warner Bros.
September 23	Warriors of Virtue	$6.5	1,559	May 2	MGM/UA
September 30	B.A.P.S.	$7.3	2,277	March 28	New Line
September 30	Liar Liar	$179.4+	2,909	March 21	MCA/Universal
September 30	Volcano	$47.0	2,777	April 25	Fox
October 7	Anaconda	$65.1+	2,456	April 11	Columbia/Col. TriStar
October 7	That Old Feeling	$16.1	1,599	April 4	MCA/Universal
October 14	Breakdown	$50.1+	2,348	May 2	Paramount
October 14	Grosse Pointe Blank	$28.1+	1,242	April 11	Hollywood/Buena Vista
October 14	Night Falls On Manhattan	$9.8+	758	May 16	Paramount
October 21	Austin Powers	$53.0+	2,187	May 2	New Line
October 21	Batman & Robin	$105.5+	5,348	June 20	Warner Bros.
October 21	The 6th Man	$14.7+	2,319	March 28	Touchstone/Buena Vista
October 28	Addicted to Love	$34.6+	2,021	May 23	Warner Bros.
October 28	The Fifth Element	$62.7+	2,500	May 9	Columbia/Col. TriStar
October 28	Jingle All the Way	$60.6	2,404	November 22	Fox
October	Wings of Courage	$12.7+	11	April 21	Sony Classics
November 4	The Lost World: Jurassic Park	$225.0+	3,565	May 23	MCA/Universal
November 4	Romy and Michele's...	$29.2+	1,607	April 25	Hollywood/Buena Vista
November 11	Gone Fishing	$18.7+	1,846	May 30	Touchstone/Buena Vista
November	Brassed Off	$2.6+	231	May 23	Miramax/Buena Vista
November	Chasing Amy	$11.6+	553	April 4	Miramax/Buena Vista
November	Con Air	$96.3+	2,941	June 6	Touchstone/Buena Vista
November	Face/Off	$105.7+	2,851	June 27	Paramount
November	My Best Friend's Wedding	$113.1+	2,134	June 20	Warner Bros.
November	Speed II: Cruise Control	$47.4+	2,625	June 13	Fox
November	Sprung	$7.5	780	May 14	Trimark/Vidmark
November	Three Heads in a Duffle Bag	$3.6	1,533	April 18	Orion
November	'Til There Was You	$3.5	753	May 30	Paramount
November	Trial and Error	$13.6	2,298	May 30	New Line
December	Buddy	$9.8	2,113	June 6	Columbia/Col. TriStar
December	Hercules	$88.7+	2,930	June 15	Walt Disney/Buena Vista

Compiled by BOXOFFICE MAGAZINE. Numbers for ***Boxoffice Gross*** represent total domestic boxoffice grosses to the nearest $100,000; + signs indicate that films remain in theatrical release. Number of ***Screens*** indicates the maximum number of screens in widest, simultaneous release. Entries in the ***Theatrical/Video Distributor*** column list two names when the video releasing company is different from (or releases through a subsidiary different from) the theatrical distributor. Exact day-and-date specific entries for ***Home Video Release*** are confirmed; in all other cases, the month indicated for a release is forecast by the editors of BOXOFFICE. BOXOFFICE is not liable for errors or omissions in the chart.

Boxoffice Magazine presents



MovieFone's Moviegoer Activity Report

For the Month of July 1997

MovieFone® (777-FILM®) and its sister service, MovieLink® Online, are now the single largest source of movie showtime information in the country, providing information to over 12 million moviegoers each month. The following information represents the most requested theatres and exhibitors on MovieFone.

Top 10 Exhibitors & Theatres

Most Requested Exhibitors

Rank	Exhibitor	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
1	United Artists	1,025,488	1
2	AMC	792,679	2
3	Cineplex Odeon	773,123	3
4	Sony	765,482	4
5	General Cinema	492,730	5
6	Century	358,909	6
7	Cinemark	258,178	7
8	Regal	203,631	8
9	Mann	198,102	9
10	National Amusements	181,868	11

Most Requested Theatres

Rank	Market	Theatre	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
1	NY	Sony Lincoln Square	73,252	1
2	NY	Sony Orpheum	47,553	3
3	BO	Sony Cheri	46,382	5
4	NY	Sony 19th St. East	38,910	16
5	PH	UA Cheltenham	37,867	18
6	PH	UA Riverview Plaza	37,606	9
7	BO	Sony Assembly Square	34,841	14
8	LA	AMC Century 14	34,665	2
9	MI	Cobb Palace 18	34,046	7
10	PH	Regal Huntington Valley 14	30,578	17

Most Requested Theatres Per Screen

Total Requests	Rank	Theatre (# screens)	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
New York	1	Sony Lincoln Square (13)	73,252	1
1,470,799	2	Sony Orpheum (7)	47,553	2
	3	Sony 19th St. East (6)	38,910	6
Los Angeles	1	AMC Century 14 (14)	34,665	1
805,175	2	GCC Beverly Connection (6)	23,642	2
	3	CO Beverly Center (13)	22,917	4
Dallas	1	Sony Cityplace (14)	26,791	3
764,694	2	Cinmk Tinseltown USA (20)	26,663	2
	3	AMC The Grand (24)	26,543	1
San Francisco	1	Century Plaza (10)	23,224	4
471,047	2	Century Empire (4)	20,234	7
	3	Century Century Park (12)	20,055	3
Miami	1	Cobb Palace (18)	34,046	1
449,056	2	Cobb Miami Lakes (10)	28,339	3
	3	UA Movies at the Falls (12)	28,024	2
Philadelphia	1	UA Cheltenham (8)	37,867	3
414,188	2	UA Riverview (11)	37,606	1
	3	Regal Huntington Valley (14)	30,578	2
Boston	1	Sony Cheri (4)	46,382	1
298,531	2	Sony Assembly Sq. (12)	34,841	3
	3	Sony Copley Place (11)	22,472	2
Phoenix	1	Century Glendale 9 D-I (9)	24,014	1
285,922	2	Harkins Christown (11)	12,999	9
	3	Harkins Shea (14)	12,949	3
Chicago	1	Sony Webster Place (8)	25,207	2
282,085	2	CO Lincoln Vilage 1-6 (6)	11,636	4
	3	CO 600 North Michigan (9)	9,861	6
Toronto	1	Famous Coliseum (10)	24,429	1
250,666	2	Famous Yorkdale (6)	15,159	5
	3	CO Erin Mills Town Ctr (5)	13,638	2
Houston	1	CO River Oaks Plaza (12)	20,620	1
245,987	2	Cinmk Hollywood (16)	20,058	2
	3	Cinmk Tinseltown (24)	14,019	3
Kansas City	1	Dksn Westglen (12)	18,820	1
165,832	2	Dksn Southglen (12)	16,745	2
	3	Dksn Glenwood (4)	11,379	5

Total Requests	Rank	Theatre (# screens)	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
San Diego	1	UA Horton Plaza (14)	11,069	4
154,699	2	CinStar Chula Vista (10)	8,526	5
	3	Pacific Town Square (14)	7,862	7
Denver	1	Mann Olde Town (14)	9,563	3
137,630	2	UA Greenwood Plaza (12)	8,215	1
	3	UA Continental (6)	8,174	2
Atlanta	1	AMC Colonial (18)	6,884	1
137,390	2	Regal Riverdale (14)	6,297	2
	3	Regal Austell Rd (10)	6,051	4
Seattle	1	Act III Mountlake (9)	12,043	1
127,088	2	Act III Crossroads (8)	10,681	3
	3	CO Meridian (16)	8,911	2
Nashville	1	Carmike Galleria Cool Sp. (10)	9,817	1
110,139	2	Carmike Hickory (8)	8,946	10
	3	Carmike Fountain Sq. (14)	8,868	4
Minneapolis	1	GCC Mall of America (14)	7,873	1
105,581	2	UA Pavilion at Crossroads (7)	4,801	11
	3	GCC Har-Mar-Eleven (11)	4,681	2
San Antonio	1	Act III Galaxy (14)	15,735	1
103,306	2	Act III Embassy (14)	11,945	3
	3	Act III Northwest (14)	10,570	4
Cleveland	1	Regal Severance Movies (8)	8,300	3
87,293	2	GCC Ridge Pk. Sq. (8)	7,381	2
	3	Regal Middleburg Hts (12)	5,796	4
Las Vegas	1	Century Cinedome (12)	10,725	3
83,250	2	UA Showcase (8)	9,326	1
	3	Century Las Vegas 6 D-I (6)	8,010	2
Washington, DC	1	AMC Courthouse (8)	4,481	3
75,213	2	CO Rio (14)	3,937	2
	3	AMC Union Station (9)	3,402	5
Sacramento	1	Century Complex (12)	10,767	2
69,815	2	Century Cinedome Sac. (9)	8,273	3
	3	UA Laguna Village (12)	6,544	11
Tampa	1	Muvico Palm Harbor (10)	4,918	1
53,497	2	AMC Varsity (6)	4,185	9
	3	AMC Regency (20)	3,860	3

Top 3 Actively* Requested Theatres:

1. CO Worldwide — New York, NY
2. Sony Lincoln Sq. — New York, NY
3. Famous Coliseum 10 — Toronto, Canada

*Caller specifically requested theatre

Key to Exhibitors

AMC	AMC Theatres, Inc.	CO	Cineplex Odeon Corp.	Hollywood	Hollywood Theatres	NA	National Amusements		
Act III	Act III Theatres	Cobb	Cobb Theatres	Landmk	Landmark Theatre Corp.	Pacific	Pacific Theatres		
Carmike	Carmike Cinemas, Inc	Dksn	Dickinson Theatres	Laemmle	Laemmle Theatres	Regal	Regal Cinemas		
Century	Century Theatres	Famous	Famous Players	Mann MN	Mann Minneapolis	Sony	Sony Theatres		
CinAm	CinAmerica Theatres, LP	GCC	General Cinema Theatres	Met	Metropolitan Theatres Corp	Star	Loews-Star Theatres		
Cinmk	Cinemark Theatres	General	General Theatres	MJR	MJR Theatre Service	SupSav	Super Saver Cinemas		
CinStar	CinemaStar	Hark	Harkins Theatres	Muvico	Muvico Theatres	UA	United Artists Theatre Circuit		

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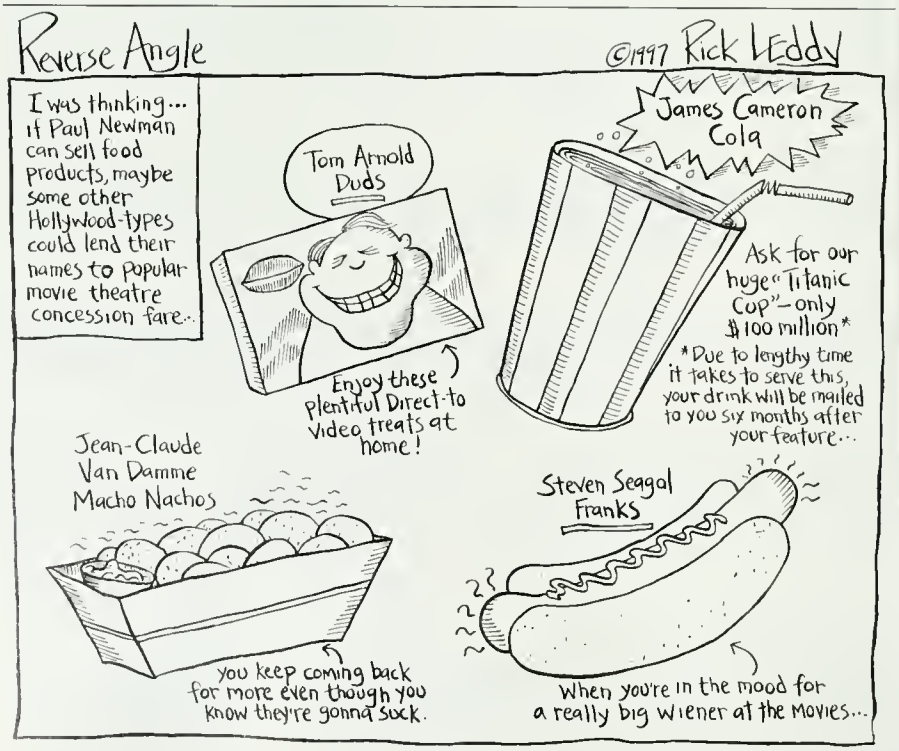
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The Big Picture

Some ideas die because they're bad ideas, and some ideas die because they're too far ahead of their time. The conventional wisdom about what Francis Coppola and his American Zoetrope production arm tried to do back in the early 1980s is that Coppola had it all wrong. His dream of a state-of-the-art production entity operating outside traditional studio channels was hubristic to most observers—a byproduct of Coppola's unparalleled critical and commercial status in the aftermath of the first two "Godfather" movies, "The Conversation" and "Apocalypse Now."

Certainly Coppola was feeling his oats, and he had a right to. He had made his name as the finest of a young generation of American directors who were redefining the boundaries of content for American movies. He had received more Oscars (a total of five) by the age of 37 than almost any other creative personality in movie history. And he had done so without relinquishing his hold over the mass audience—the achievement the Hollywood powers-that-be usually respect the most.



But Coppola's dream had many facets. He wanted to make a home for young talent, where it wouldn't be exploited the way he felt he had been on his way up. He wanted to prove that there was a market for indigenous American movies characterized by serious themes which the public had come to associate with subtitling and a European distribution credit spliced to the front of a print. Hollywood was still editing most theatrical features using horse-and-buggy systems like the upright Moviola—a laborious process involving workprint, splices, and that most precious of movieland commodities: a great deal of time. Coppola wanted to take the next logical step and create an environment where the data storage capabilities of computers would make it possible for editing to be done completely in the digital realm—a commonplace today, a revolutionary idea back in 1982. Most of all, Coppola wanted to own his copyrights—in other words, to work in the movie medium the way artists in other media do, by retaining possession of the fruits of his intellectual labors.

Some of Coppola's ideas were idealistic, and his brief dream has been written off in the movie history books as a monumental mistake. He ran aground when he overspent and borrowed millions to complete "One From the Heart"—an actually quite charming romantic comedy, made in something resembling the style of the "magical realist" writers, crossed with the studio artifices of a classic musical from MGM. "One From the Heart" (which starred Terri Garr, pictured) has been somewhat unjustly dismissed as a complete debacle, mainly by people who haven't seen it, and largely because it broke what was never an exceptionally well-capitalized bank in the first place. Its $37 million production cost—a scandal in 1982—seems the soul of frugality as the $100 million studio budget becomes something like the norm today.

Though Coppola himself bore an enormous fiscal burden in the aftermath of the collapse of his ambitious Hollywood dream, and although it is one of the great tragedies of the past two decades that much of the time, one of our finest filmmakers has had to busy himself with projects that were often accepted on the basis of financial need, the dream itself seems overdue for a reassessment. The success of Miramax in the past decade proves, for example, what Coppola always proclaimed and was in part mocked for: that there is in fact a sizeable audience for American-made art films, capable of providing distributors with enormous grosses for interesting, out-of-the-mainstream fare. And the rhetoric of DreamWorks SKG—the desire to create a studio from the ground up, to find a home where a community of like-minded artists can flourish, to use state-of-the-art technologies to streamline the creation and distribution of films—all has a familiar ring to it for anyone who watched what Francis Coppola was up to some 15 years ago.

The great difference, though, is that Coppola was and remains a cinematic artist first and foremost, and an empire builder only secondarily. If his great, arduous, perhaps even noble attempt to refashion American moviemaking priorities to his own specifications was ultimately a failure, it was a failure of the noblest kind.

Coppola himself sensed this when he finally got around to making his last real "dream" project: the 1988 film "Tucker," in which an American automotive visionary tried to get a new car manufacturing company off the ground only to be beaten down by the power of the existing industrial system, coupled with his own rather outsized character flaws. There was a touch of self-pity to the analogy. Coppola can't really believe that the studios that had given him carte blanche for so long ganged up on him, the way the car companies did on the real Preston Tucker, or that shadowy forces were at work behind the scenes to foster what ultimately was the relatively explicable commercial failure of Zoetrope's studio. Still, it is interesting to note that, in making "Tucker," Coppola showed himself to be bloody but unbowed; of all the films he's made in its aftermath, it is visually and narratively most similar to the approach used in "One From the Heart."

The great good news is that Coppola has at last emerged from the near-bankrupcy into which the collapse of the Zoetrope studio complex pitched him, and that he is talking ambitiously about the future again. Though often dismissed and overlooked, his output of the last decade and a half has been almost always visually audacious, and often far more narratively complex than it has been given credit for. At 58, Coppola is still a relatively young man with many movies ahead of him. It should be fascinating to see where his restless, inventive spirit takes him—and maybe the whole movie medium—next.—***Ray Greene***

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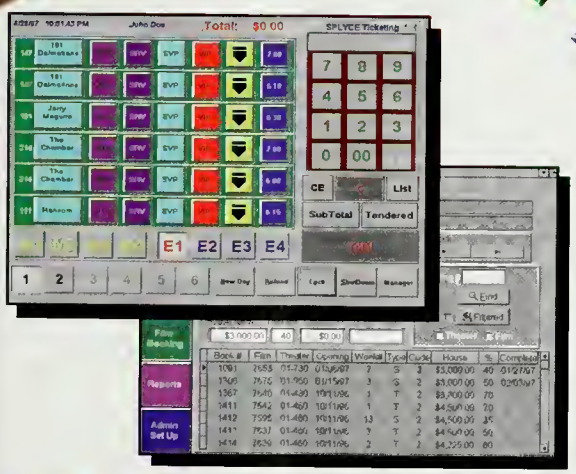
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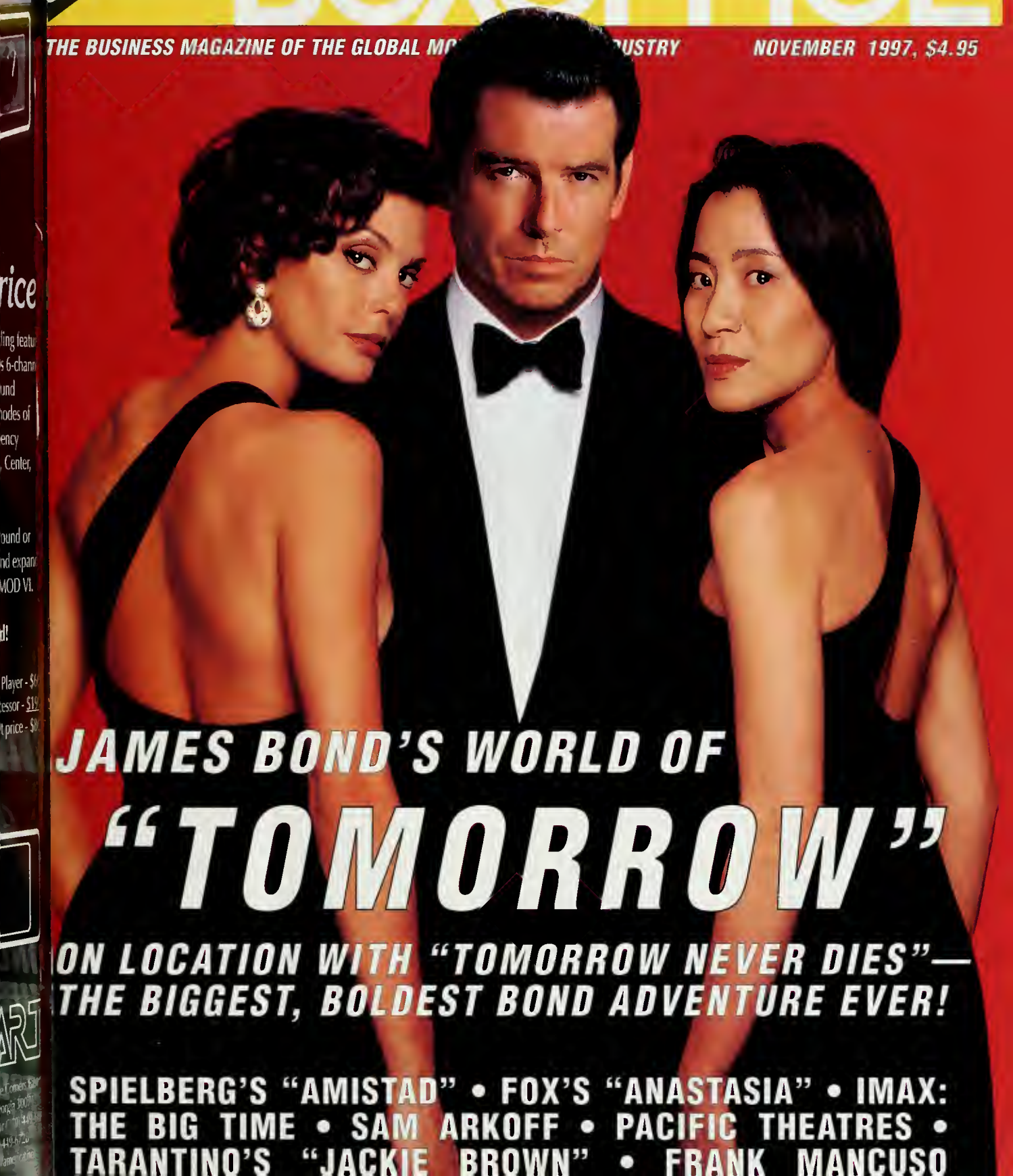
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HOLIDAY PREVIEW/
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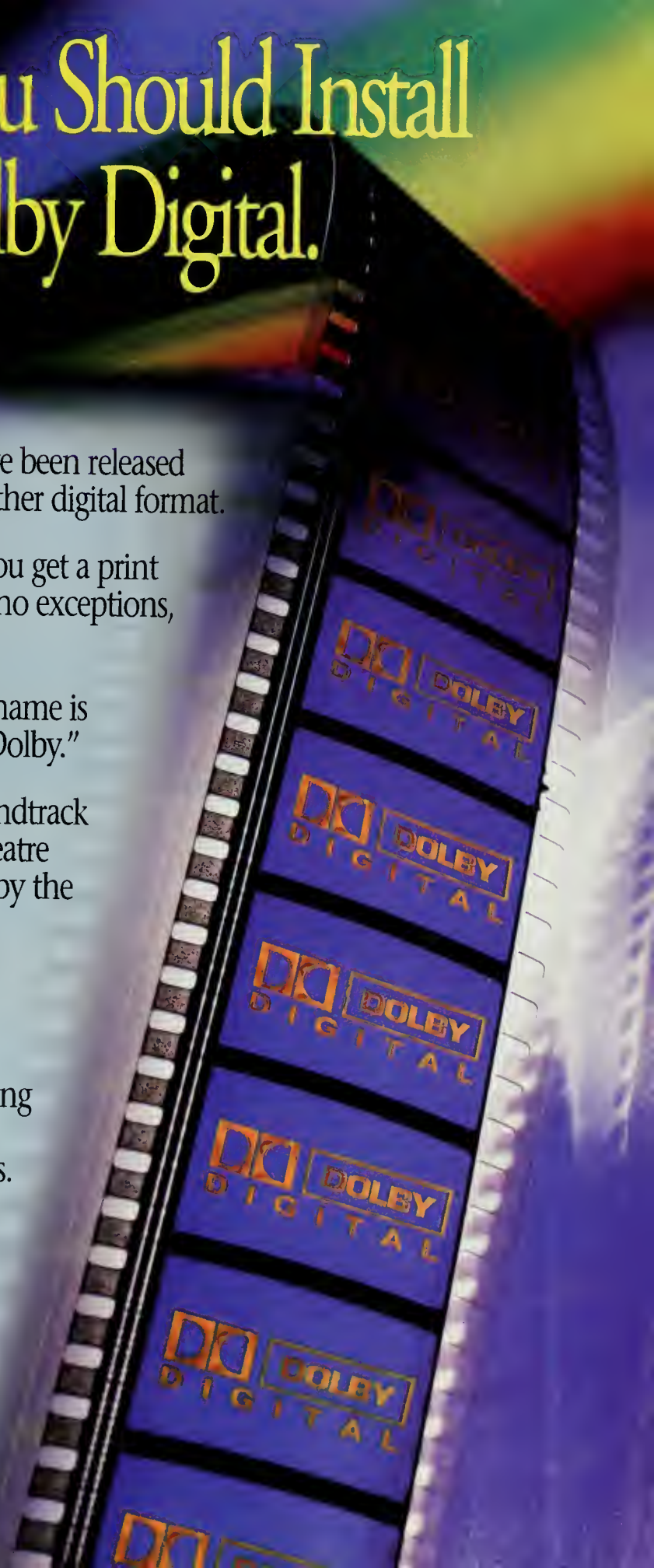
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Response No. 95

THE LONG, SLOW



Despite the fact that she was a political rather than a cinematic celebrity, the death of Princess Diana was a time of much soul-searching for those of us involved in even the business side of the entertainment press. Every journalist on the regular editorial staff of **BOXOFFICE** has had his or her brush with a world famous personality. Although it is official policy here that the personal lives of major film actors, directors, writers and producers are of interest in these pages not at all, we've all seen the looks on the faces of friends and loved ones when they've been informed of just who we spent the day having a conversation with, and perhaps we've even borrowed a bit of stardom's reflected glory, if for nothing else than to add a bit of anecdotal lustre to a cocktail conversation.

On one of my earliest assignments for **BOXOFFICE MAGAZINE**, I got my first up close and personal look at paparazzi photographers in action. Previously, I had always regarded tabloid "shooters" as members of a colorful if somewhat venomous profession—not the kind of people I'd personally choose to spend time with, but a fascinating phenomenon created out of a weird intersection between the public's insatiable interest in celebrity and the expansive safeguards granted to information gatherers under the U.S. Constitution.

Like most journalists, I fetishize the First Amendment, and while I recognized the sleaziness inherent in the paparazzi profession, I was at the time (and I remain) unwilling to impose restrictions on what to me is the most fundamental right Americans enjoy merely because I find aspects of the way that freedom is utilized personally distasteful. Since I had never spent time with freelance celebrity photographers, I had an uninformed perspective on their behavior. On the day five years ago when I found myself in their midst, I initially viewed them as being, if not exactly benign, than at least essentially harmless.

I discovered otherwise. The occasion was an awards event at which Tom Cruise was being given an important trophy. The dais was packed with people who were there to wish him well—friends, co-workers, celebrity acquaintances—and Cruise was his usual photogenic self. From where I was sitting, he was indistinct—a blur of white teeth, great hair and charisma, looking for all the world like a long-lost Kennedy.

The paparazzi were stationed directly in front of my table, in a severely restricted area that allowed them to grab a quick shot as each celebrity walked to the stage. Their pleading, first-name-basis entreaties for "just one more shot" were both monotonous and comical, and they seemed essentially helpless behind the stanchions that marked off their limited access. It would have been hard to imagine that somewhere among all those potbellies, flak jackets and Nikons slumbered anything resembling a dark side.

Halfway through lunch, a famous actress got up to go to the bathroom. She was inherently newsworthy to the tabloid press—beautiful, young, rumored to be more than a little troubled. A photographer broke ranks and started following her, and suddenly, all bets were off.

I will never forget the looks on those paparazzi faces as this poor woman made her way to the bathroom and back. It's been fashionable since Princess Diana's death to dehumanize whole segments of the entertainment press, and generalizations are usually inaccurate if not downright wrong. But "bestial" is the only word I can think of to accurately describe those faces as they clambered over each other, elbows flared, shoving and pulling and gouging each other out of the way as they tried for that one good shot.

I remember the wave of repulsion that swept over me. I remember how much I wanted to believe that what was going on had nothing to do with my profession. I remember asking myself: of what news value is a woman's decision to freshen her makeup or take a pee?

The worst came later. Cruise was in production on a major feature film, and couldn't arrange his schedule so that he could get away long enough to stay for the entire event. His award was given to him; he made a short, charming speech. Then his presenter made what should have been a forgivable mistake: He announced that Tom would be leaving momentarily, forgetting that there was essentially just one way out. From the direction of the regrouped photographers, I swear I felt them giving off heat.

They were on Cruise the minute he left the stage, of course—shouting, jockeying for position, pinning him in their flashes. Cruise stiffened perceptibly, but kept going until one particularly industrious shooter spotted the trophy in his hand and shouted, "Just one with the award, Tom!"

Courtesy got the better of Cruise, and he stopped and turned, smiling. In seconds, the

FADE TO BLACK

photographers had encircled him completely, virtually trapping him against the wall he was standing in front of. He turned his face obligingly from one lens to the next; still they kept shooting. He made another circuit, offering every photographer a perfect angle. Still they kept shooting. A look of fear came into his eyes, and the hand holding the trophy started to shake. Still they kept shooting. And they began pressing in.

Watching from the sidelines, I was seized with an almost unbearable sense of vicarious claustrophobia. The situation was in the process of getting out of hand, but no one other than the immediate participants seemed to know it. I watched Cruise try to continue his original path toward the exit. The photographers closed in tighter, literally beating him back. Several of the faces in my field of vision were beginning to take on characteristics of gloating. Some of the photographers were beginning to recognize that they had one of the biggest stars in the world at their mercy, and you could tell they were enjoying the feeling.

> "It's been fashionable since Princess Diana's death to dehumanize whole segments of the entertainment press, and generalizations are usually inaccurate. But 'bestial' is the only word I can think of to accurately describe those faces as they clambered over each other, elbows flared, shoving and pulling and gouging each other out of the way as they tried for that one good shot."

I was outraged, and I wasn't alone. Before I knew what I was doing, I was on my feet along with two other reporters at my table. Journalists aren't supposed to involve themselves in events; they are there merely to report on them, and anything else is deemed unethical. Ethics became secondary for me and two other writers that night, who felt soiled by what was being perpetrated right in front of our eyes, supposedly in the name of our profession.

We pushed our way into the mob, which seemed to half expect security of some sort to take action. A corridor of space opened up, and Tom Cruise moved through it at double speed. When the photographers figured out we were journalists like them and not "events staff" or bodyguards, they gave us dirty looks.

It felt good.

Years later, when I interviewed Tom Cruise for this magazine, I thought about the complexity of that moment. On the one hand, Cruise, like all media superstars, was in many ways a creation of publicity. Without promotion, without a certain willingness to use the magnetic attraction of his celebrity to focus attention on his creative pursuits, he would vanish overnight into the limbo of movie trivia games and "where are they now?"

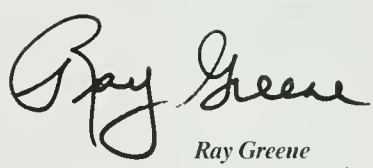
But movies and the people who populate them are not state secrets. There is no Deep Throat waiting to provide government-shattering disclosures about "Jerry Maguire" or "Eyes Wide Shut." Entertainment journalists like to view themselves as hard-bitten cynics in part because so much of what they report on is handed to them by publicists or as staged events. Many envy the people they cover, and so they aggrandize their own occupations by pursuing their subjects with an almost vicious disregard for their humanity, figuring that the tougher their professional behavior, the more they can demonstrate (to themselves at least) that they're as vitally important as Woodward and Bernstein were back in 1973.

There are extenuating circumstances in the death of Princess Diana—a drunken driver who may or may not have shouted "catch me if you can;" a freewheeling boyfriend known as a man who loved to take risks; a car that may have been going as much as four to six times the speed limit as it skidded into a cement tunnel support somewhere along the Seine. But what lingers in the mind is the image of men with cameras descending on a spectacle of blood and wreckage and people dying before their eyes, and having the inhuman callousness to frame and compose 20 rolls worth of what, in the deepest sense, can only be called pornographic shots.

I was unsurprised that it was Tom Cruise who was the first celebrity to go public with his outrage via a phone interview on CNN conducted as doctors were still fighting for Diana's life. He had been chased in that very tunnel, and me? I had seen the look on his face five years ago, and come to realize that in a very real sense, he and those who share the public hazards of his occupation were being chased every minute of their lives.

So the next time you find yourself in a supermarket checkout line eyeballing surveillance camera images of the indiscretions of Frank Gifford and Kathie Lee; the next time you stop flipping channels to view "news" footage of murder and accident victims, of war casualties, plane crashes and homes ravaged by fire and flood, gunshots, bombs, bayonets, or a defective light on some unlucky family's Christmas tree, it might be a good thing, a humanizing thing, to ask yourself: Who are all those people caught in the momentary glare of all those dispassionate and cold-blooded cameras really running from? The paparazzi? Or you and me?

Until next time,



Ray Greene
Editor-in-Chief

BOXOFFICE
NOVEMBER, 1997 VOL. 133 NO. 11

DOUBLE FEATURE: HOLIDAY PREVIEW/SHOWEAST '97

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HOLLYWOOD UPDATES

Oscar: Mann About Town? Destination center developer **TrizecHahn** is in negotiations with the **Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences** to permanently move the Academy Award ceremony to a site on Hollywood Boulevard. The proposed 3,300-seat venue would be located in the 500,000-square-foot entertainment center TrizecHahn is currently building next to Mann's Chinese Theatre (see BOXOFFICE, October 1997). The center, which will also house 14 new screens to be added to the Chinese, is part of a major revitalization of Hollywood and will be completed by the year 2000. The Academy Awards were first held in the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel in 1929; for the last 30 years, the 3,200-seat Dorothy Chandler Pavilion and the 6,300-seat Shrine Auditorium have alternated as the ceremony's venue.

Grammy-winning composer **Danny Elfman,** who created unique ambient moods with his soundtracks for movies like "Batman," "Beetlejuice" and "Edward Scissorhands," has signed a multi-picture agreement with the **Walt Disney Motion Picture Group.** Under the deal, Elfman will make his debut as a filmmaker by directing, writing and producing movies on a first-look basis for the studio. Elfman, former frontman and founder of the band "Oingo Boingo," is currently composing the score for Disney's "Flubber."

'Fox'-y Lady: **Drew Barrymore,** star of **Fox's** "Cinderella," has inked a two-year, first-look production deal with the studio. Barrymore and production partner Nancy Juvonen will produce "Born to Shop" for Fox 2000 through their company Flower Films. Barrymore also plans to star as a girl who's a shopaholic. However, when she's suddenly killed by a bus, her disembodied spirit finds she must apply her proclivity for purchasing to 'shop' for new parents before she's reincarnated.

As part of **Caravan Pictures'** restructuring, **Jonathan Glickman** has been named president of the company, announced Roger Birnbaum, chairman and CEO of Caravan. Glickman, who has been with Caravan for four years, will oversee all aspects of development and production for the company. Projects Glickman has been involved with include "While You Were Sleeping" and "Grosse Pointe Blank." Caravan's most recent releases are "Rocket Man," "Washington Square" and "G.I. Jane"; coming up are "6 Days, 7 Nights," "Holy Man"; and "A Small Miracle," an adaptation of John Irving's novel "A Prayer for Owen Meany."

Actor **George Clooney** ("The Peacemaker") and producing partner **Robert Lawrence,** who recently signed a three-year, first-look deal with **Warner Bros.,** have announced a slate of 12 pictures. Clooney and Lawrence, who have renamed their Left Bank Prods. **Maysville Pictures,** are reportedly focusing on "thinking man's character-driven action thrillers." Some of Maysville's upcoming projects include "Metal God," about a travelling salesman who moonlights as a singer for a heavy-metal band that solely covers Judas Priest tunes; "The Academy Group," about an elite team of investigators comprised of former military, law enforcement and government agents; "Move!," the true story of a choreographer who turned a group of delinquents into a dance troupe; "Zig Zag," which follows the exploits of a community of Gen X snowboarders; and "How to Build Your Own Country," in which a family tries to start its own nation after being ostracized by its neighbors.

Miramax Films has entered into a first-look co-production/distribution agreement with Los Angeles-based foreign sales and production company **Nu Image.** The two companies will co-produce up to four films annually, with Miramax distributing domestically and in all other English-speaking territories except South Africa. Nu Image was formerly allied with October Films, though most of the films under that arrangement were not released theatrically in North America.

MGM Pictures senior vice president of production **Elisabeth Seldes** has left her post to embark on a new career path as a feature producer for MGM and United Artists. Seldes joined MGM in 1993 as VP of production, moving up to senior vice president two years later. She oversaw such projects as "Moll Flanders" and "Mulholland Falls," and has been involved with "Day After Tomorrow," an action-thriller that's currently in development.

Carole J. McGorrian and **Frank Salvino** have joined production and international sales consortium **Initial Entertainment Group** as directors of production, announced IEG president Cindy Cowan. McGorrian previously held the position of director of production, finance at LIVE Entertainment; Salvino, also from LIVE, was director of post-production. IEG currently has three feature films in post-production: "Oliver Stone's Savior," an Oliver Stone/Janet Yang production starring Dennis Quaid and Nastassja Kinski; "Family Plan," starring Leslie Nielsen and Judge Reinhold; and "Montana," starring Kyra Sedgwick, Stanley Tucci, Robbie Coltrane and Robin Tunney.

The **Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum** has opened its **"Star Wars: The Magic of Myth"** exhibition, which will run through October of 1998. The exhibition examines the impact of the film "Star Wars" on world culture. "Star Wars: The Magic of Myth" features more than 200 original props, models, costumes, characters and artwork used to create the three films in the trilogy: "Star Wars" (1977), "The Empire Strikes Back" (1980) and "Return of the Jedi" (1983). Included in the display will be Yoda, Darth Vader, Boba Fett, Jabba the Hutt and Han Solo frozen in carbonite, as well as production models of X-Wing spacecrafts, the Millennium Falcon, AT-AT Walkers, TIE Fighters, and an Imperial Star Destroyer. "Magic of Myth" sponsor Bantam Books will publish an illustrated companion book by Mary Henderson, who curated the exhibition.

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HOLLYWOOD REPORT



MIRA SORVINO

In The "Money"



FATHER MERRIN

A New "Beginning"



DAVID SPADE

Heads "Kingdom"

"A CIVIL ACTION" In this drama that's based on a true story, a lawyer (John Travolta, "She's So Lovely") risks his career to represent eight families who have lost children to leukemia caused by exposure to toxic waste. Kathleen Quinlan ("Event Horizon") co-stars as the leader of the group who hires Travolta to sue the company that's responsible. Also starring are William H. Macy ("Fargo"), Tony Shalhoub ("Big Night"), Dan Hedaya ("Clueless") and James Gandolfini ("She's So Lovely"). Steve Zaillian, who wrote "Schindler's List" and directed "Searching For Bobby Fischer," scripts and helms. (Buena Vista)

"FREE MONEY" Mira Sorvino ("Mimic") plays an FBI agent investigating a murder at a prison run by a tough-as-nails warden ("The Island of Dr. Moreau's" Marlon Brando) in this black comedy. Charlie Sheen ("Money Talks") and Thomas Haden Church ("George of the Jungle") also star as two men who get the warden's 17-year-old identical twin daughters pregnant at the same time, resulting in all of them moving into the same house. (Distribution is to be set)

"P.S. I LOVE YOU" Rupert Everett ("My Best Friend's Wedding") will star in this comedy about a gay British Intelligence agent. Everett will also co-script with his writing partner, Mel Bordeaux. (TriStar)

"PARKER" This action thriller, based on "The Hunter" by Richard Stark, will re-unite Mel Gibson with "Conspiracy Theory" scribe Brian Helgeland ("Conspiracy Theory"), who wrote the adaptation and will make his directorial debut. Gibson will play the title character, a thief who is trying to track down his wife and former partner, both of whom betrayed him and ran off together. Maria Bello of TV's "ER" will play an old acquaintance who winds up helping Gibson's character. Also starring will be David Paymer ("Amistad") and James Coburn ("The Nutty Professor"). (Paramount)

"EXORCIST: THE BEGINNING" William Wisher, who co-wrote "Terminator 2" with James Cameron and recently adapted Michael Crichton's "Airframe," will scare up a script for a prequel to "The Exorcist," which will explore Father Merrin's first battle with Satan. Max von Sydow played Merrin in the original. (Warner)

"THE GOVERNESS" This romantic drama will star Minnie Driver ("Grosse Pointe Blank") as a young Jewish woman in the mid-1800s who takes a job on a remote Scottish island as a governess, and has a passionate affair with her employer. Sarah Curtis ("Mrs. Brown") will produce. (SPC)

"FROGS FOR SNAKES" Robbie Coltrane ("Nuns on the Run"), Barbara Hershey ("Portrait of a Lady"), Lisa Marie ("Mars Attacks!"), Debi Mazar ("She's So Lovely"), Ian Hart ("Michael Collins") and John Leguizamo ("Spawn") will star in this comic thriller about a gang of street thugs who are thespians at heart. (Distribution is to be set)

"KINGDOM OF THE SUN" David Spade ("Black Sheep") will voice the lead role(s) in Disney's next animated project, which will probably be released in the summer of 2000, following 1998's "Mulan" and 1999's "Tarzan." The plot is reportedly similar to that of "The Prince and the Pauper," in which two identical-looking boys from vastly different socio-economic classes inadvertently meet and decide to switch places. "Kingdom" will add an element of tension not found in "The Prince and the Pauper": a sorceress (voiced by Eartha Kitt) who threatens to turn one of the boys into a llama. Sting has signed on to compose songs. Roger Allers, who co-directed "The Lion King," will co-helm with Mark Dindal. (Buena Vista)

"A PERFECT MURDER" Loosely based on Alfred Hitchcock's "Dial M for Murder," this thriller about a man whose plan to kill his wife goes horribly awry will star Michael Douglas ("The Game") and Gwyneth Paltrow ("Sliding Doors") and will be directed by Andrew Davis ("Chain Reaction"). (Warner)

"A NIGHT AT THE ROXBURY" Another "Saturday Night Live" sketch brought to the bigscreen, "A Night At the Roxbury" will feature the amusingly obnoxious Roxbury Boys (Will Ferrell and Chris Kattan), who spend their lives club-hopping and trying desperately to convince girls to dance with them. Elisa Donovan ("Clueless") will play a supermodel who thinks the Roxbury Boys are rich and tries to bilk them out of their money. Amy Heckerling ("Clueless") helms and produces. (Paramount)

"DANCING AT LUGHNASA" Directed by Pat O'Connor ("Inventing the Abbotts"), this drama tells the story of five unmarried sisters and how their lives change when their brother, a Catholic priest who had been living in Africa, returns home. Meryl Steep ("Marvin's Room"), Catherine McCormack ("Braveheart"), Kathy Burke ("Nil By Mouth") and Sophie Thompson ("Emma") star. (SPC)

"RUNE" Dee Snider, former frontman of the heavy metal band Twister Sister, scripted this thriller and will star as a serial killer who uses the Internet to lure young girls. Kevin Gage ("G.I. Jane") will play a policeman who's also the father of one of the kidnapped girls. (Distribution is to be set)

"ENEMY OF THE STATE" Will Smith will star for director Tony Scott ("The Fan") as a charismatic Washington lawyer who's forced to go on the run when the National Security Agency frames him for a crime he didn't commit. Gene Hackman ("Absolute Power") is in talks to play a former NSA operative who helps Smith's character. (Buena Vista)

"54" Mike Myers ("Austin Powers: International Man Of Mystery") will take on a dramatic role as gadabout scenester Steve Rubell, who co-founded the infamous superstar-populated Manhattan nightclub Studio 54 in the '70s. Salma Hayek ("Fools Rush In"), Neve Campbell ("Scream"), Ryan Phillippe ("I Know What You Did Last Summer"), Sela Ward ("The Fugitive") and Heather Matarazzo ("Welcome to the Dollhouse") also star. Mark Christopher scripts and directs. (Miramax)

ET CETERA: Chevy Chase, Don Rickles and Jack Warden have joined Norm Macdonald in MGM's comedy **"Dirty Work,"** about a man who starts a business exacting revenge for clients...Anjelica Huston has been cast as the wicked stepmother in Fox's **"Cinderella,"** which stars Drew Barrymore in the title role. Dougray Scott ("Deep Impact") plays Prince Charming, and Melanie Lynsky ("Heavenly Creatures") is one of the two stepsisters...In Buena Vista's romantic comedy **"I Won't Be Home For Christmas,"** Jonathan Taylor Thomas will play a high school senior who tries to prevent his girlfriend from falling for someone else. Arlene Sanford ("A Very Brady Sequel") directs.

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TOMORROW

BOXOFFICE Goes Overseas and Undercover on the Set of "TOMORROW NEVER DIES" *by Bridget Byrne*

HERTFORDSHIRE, ENGLAND—James Bond flicks open a lady's Oriental fan. Knives fly from the struts of its painted semi-circle. Bond's eyebrow is raised barely a hairbreadth; only a slight moue flickers at the corner of his mouth as he responds with jaded amusement to this mini-secret weapon, another trick of the trade in the endless spy game that has engaged his life.

But this is not something Q has dreamed up—this is opposition gimmickry. And Bond is not on home turf; he's in a Vietnamese bicycle shop. Around him are rickshaws and tricycles; on the floor, in death or unconsciousness, lie a few coolie-clad bodies. The shop's facade has been ripped open to expose a whole cache of high-tech weaponry and a complex computer system, in front of which sits a beautiful woman, as insouciant as Bond himself.

It's a Tuesday morning in June at Eon Studios, Frogmore, Hertfordshire, just north of London, England. Bond, as embodied by Pierce Brosnan, and Michelle Yeoh, who plays Wai Lin, an agent of the Peoples External Security Force in Beijing, have been on the set since 8 a.m. to complete what callsheet No. 58 for the movie "Tomorrow Never Dies" refers to as "Int. Bicycle Shop." Prop requirements for the three scheduled scenes include "Bond's acquired gun, guns for thugs, handcuffs, concealed switch, Chinese 'Q' gadgets, ammo, chopsticks, computers, bicycles and Bond's new Walther PPK."

Already this morning, Wai Lin has fought thugs (hence the bodies on the ground). Now "confidences" are being exchanged between the beautiful Oriental spy and the British 007 agent (hence the look of understanding that passes between them as the fan explodes). Soon they will move on to a scene in front of the computer to track down a stealth boat. Together they are trying to put a stop to the evil machinations of a megalomanic media baron eager to start World War III.

As with most filmmaking, particularly anything that calls for special effects, this is all slow and tedious work, but it is accomplished by cast and crew with confident good humor and a strong sense of genuine camaraderie. The hidden wire is once again run up Brosnan's arm for another take on the exploding fan shot. Brosnan, wearing black slacks and a blue shirt, open enough to show the hair on his chest, is a gleaming presence, shiningly clean-cut through the haze of warm smoke enveloping the set. His impossibly good looks seem even more clearly delineated by the few more years under his belt and a little more heft to both his emotional and physical makeup than when he first stepped into the Bond role with "GoldenEye" in 1995. As he registers again Bond's unperturbed response to the killer fan, his eyes glint like blue steel.

"Confidence" is the word Brosnan chooses to describe both the quality that Bond must possess and the feeling he himself now has, playing this near classic role for the second time. His debut in "GoldenEye," which made him the fifth actor to play Ian Fleming's superhero (following Sean Connery, George Lazenby, Roger Moore and Timothy Dalton), was credited a success by both critics and the public, reviving interest in the character and extending the life of the Bond series begun by producers Albert R. (Cubby) Broccoli and Harry Saltzman in 1962.

As Brosnan is able to step out of the scene for a moment while camera adjustments are made, he acknowledges that it is indeed "a slow day" and uses a British schoolboy reference to describe the long shooting schedule, which has just passed the "half-term" mark. Location filming includes the French Pyrenees, Southeast Asia, Mexico and the Florida coast, but "home base" is this special studio in Frogmore, where three soundstages and adjacent facilities have been constructed (under a metal roof once used for supermarket storage) and a backlot has been transformed into a Saigon street on which a pivotal chase sequence takes place.

Second-unit shooting is also taking place nearby. The English papers, from the tabloids to The Times, feature articles this morning about a fire brigade being called to a shopping center parking lot in nearby Brent Cross the previous afternoon when a stunt involving burning cars got a little too hot to handle and black smoke necessitated evacuation. But, throughout the day on the "Bicycle Shop" set, explosions—which include an ornamental dragon belching flame and the back of a tricycle blowing off—work without mishap.



Re-wired, Brosnan stands relaxed while the camera crew make last-minute adjustments before covering themselves with protective blankets prior to the fan exploding in their direction. He's so relaxed he actually yawns, but when "action" is called the Irish-born star snaps skillfully into motion, movement and dialogue handled together with the professional grace he has demonstrated since his TV days as "Remington Steele."

> "I've signed everything: breasts, buttocks... My signature has got bigger and bolder and more open. I don't know what that means. Confidence, maybe!"

Meanwhile, co-star Yeoh has time to chat, something she does with consummate ease. "It's as though this role was written for me," says the beautiful action star, explaining that Wai Lin is "a woman of the '90s." Born in Ipoh, Malaysia, and schooled and trained in ballet in England, this former Miss Malaysia has performed her own stunts in starring roles in many Asian action films, the best known to international audiences probably being "Police Story III: Supercop" with Jackie Chan. "I always wanted to be Bond," she admits with a laugh, happy that she has landed a role that is the next best thing. She dubs Brosnan as Bond, James Bond, to be "perfect, just perfect."

Although clearly quite decorative enough to meet the sexy, gorgeous standard necessary for traditional Bond girls, this slender, sophisticated actress is something way beyond that, naturally able to meet the demands of a role that calls for a woman she



HAVING A BLAST: *Pierce Brosnan takes aim at his second manifestation of Ian Fleming's agent 007 in MGM/UA's "Tomorrow Never Dies."*

describes as "intelligent, smart, very feminine, just as physically skilled as Bond—in fact very similar to him, though she is 'East' and he is 'West.'"

So does this liaison between Bond and Wai Lin (a woman who doesn't need to be rescued because she's an expert at Bond's own game) remain just professional in "Tomorrow Never Dies," or does it turn personal? Yeoh teases the point cleverly. "It's like we are dancing, cheek to cheek. We're too busy getting fired at, shot at. We're on the run, chasing and being chased. But oh yeah, the thought is there!" is all she'll admit to.

Brosnan is clearly impressed with Yeoh's professional skills and delighted by her personal charm. Similar feelings echoed by the crew and director, Roger Spottiswoode, denote satisfaction with the casting choice, one of the fresh twists each new Bond movie needs to keep the genre vital and current. "This cast is excellent," stresses Brosnan, "and the script has real elegance and grit and is just as muscular as 'GoldenEye.' But I think you will see a real new departure in style, which Roger Spottiswoode brings to all this."

The British-born Spottiswoode has made a wide variety of films, working mainly in America both in features and television. His movie resume includes "Under Fire," "Air America," "Stop! Or My Mom Will Shoot" and "Turner + Hooch." For TV, he has helmed "And The Band Played On" and, most recently, the visually innovative "Murder Live."

In jeans and jacket, gray-haired with glasses on a beaky nose, he looks like a teacher and moves around the set unobtrusively.

When he gets a few moments to sit down to talk, Spottiswoode mentions the "confidence" he sees in Brosnan's performance, which was previously equalled only those many years ago by the original Bond, Connery. "Pierce has grace, a sense of irony—he doesn't take himself too seriously. He has assumed the character wonderfully without in any way trying to be Connery, and now this second time it is clear he has real confidence in what he is doing," says the director, who seems to be slowly warming to the task of discussing work he'd probably rather be just doing.

"The fun and the difficulty of doing a Bond film is that people have enormous expectations," Spottiswoode says. "Everyone wants to give you free advice about everything, from what new gadgets there should be to what the villain or the women should be like. Everyone has an opinion. The challenge is how to renew and change it and move it forward so that it's modern and a thriller of the '90s, but still a Bond film. And also you have the problem in that everyone else is trying to make their action films Bondish, so you are competing not only with Bond's own past but with what other people are doing now."

"I always wanted to be Bond... It's as though this role was written for me—a real woman of the '90s."

—Actress Michelle Yeoh, Wai Lin in "TND"

The director agrees that he is bringing a new visual style to this, the 18th Bond film since Her Majesty's Secret Service agent first hit the big screen in "Dr. No." Spottiswoode describes that approach as "slightly more realistic but still high style and character driven like the '60s films were, but with a lot of visual energy." One sequence of particularly high energy will be the chase scene, which was begun on Far East locations and will be completed on the adjacent backlot, which this day is nearing the end of the elaborate set dressing necessary to turn it into an oriental market through which a helicopter will chase a motorcycle. Market stalls, stuffed with food and wares, lie under overhanging roofs; elevated walkways are draped with clothing and possessions. The track for the helicopter and camera runs down the center. Mayhem looks assured.

"We have to try to do two or three scenes that have never been done before," Spottiswoode says. He reveals that, needing to think of a new twist to the "vegetable carts overturned" moments of this market chase, he recalled an incident that occurred during a stunt when he was filming "Air America." A steel tire iron held aloft was accidentally sliced through by a hovering helicopter. "No one was hurt, but remembering what a helicopter blade could do I thought it would work to use the helicopter blades to destroy this market as Pierce and Michelle are chased into a cul-de-sac and over the rooftops on their motorbike."

The script, credited to screenwriter Bruce Feirstein, reflects input from a number of the major behind-the-scenes players, including Michael G. Wilson, who co-produces with Barbara Broccoli. Wilson and Broccoli also co-produced "GoldenEye," though at that time Cubby Broccoli was still alive and available for creative consultation. Since Broccoli's death, Wilson admits, "there's a big void. He was our mentor as well as being my stepfather and Barbara's father. But we want to continue doing what he wanted to do, which was to provide good, solid, escapist entertainment so that for two hours people can forget their woes."

"GoldenEye" had the smarts to acknowledge some of Bond's anachronistic behavior, in scenes such as the tart-tongued moment when his boss, M, played by Dame Judi Dench, calls him "a sexist, misogynist dinosaur, a relic of the Cold War." The film also possessed the self-mocking humor to refer a number of times to the "boys with toys" antics of the hero and his male enemies. This new film, an Eon production, to

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be released stateside this Christmas by UA, will no doubt also recognize that Bond is functioning in a modern world of ever-changing values. Yet both Wilson and Spottiswoode admit they aren't too concerned about meeting too strict a standard of political correctness.

"Maybe sometimes a politically correct world provides opportunities to poke fun at things," Wilson says. Adds Spottiswoode, "Actually, people keep telling me, 'Don't be too politically correct,' though obviously today you couldn't get away with calling a character anything like Pussy Galore!"

villain of "GoldenEye," stops by for a lunchtime visit. A nice, rather shy, ordinary bloke, he is a far cry from the sleek, self-assured, double-dealing Cossack he played opposite Brosnan in the hit film—which grossed more than $350 million worldwide, twice that for any previous Bond. He is greeted warmly by Brosnan and those in the crew who worked with him, but out of character to casual observers he lacks the head-turning appeal that Brosnan has off camera as well as on.

Brosnan feels he's handling the overload of attention that has come with playing Bond well



PRYCE IS RIGHT: *Award-winning actor Jonathan Pryce is a media mogul bent on world domination. Take our word for it. It's not as far-fetched as it sounds.*

Media power is the chosen villain of "Tomorrow Never Dies," personified by Elliot Carver, a power-crazed mogul who steps over the line to create the news, rather than report it, by attempting to escalate weapons deals into global conflict. Carver is played by Jonathan Pryce. The British actor, who made his name internationally in the stage musical "Miss Saigon," recently played Juan Peron in the film musical "Evita" and won the best actor prize at the 1995 Cannes fest for his portrayal of the writer Lytton Strachey in "Carrington." Carter's glamorous wife Paris is played by Teri Hatcher, last seen on the bigscreen in New Line's "Heaven's Prisoners," but best known as Lois Lane in the ABC-TV series "Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman." Returning from their "GoldenEye" debuts are Dench as M and Samantha Bond as Miss Moneypenny; Desmond Llewelyn will be making his 16th appearance portraying the MI6 gadget wizard Q.

None of these actors are present this day, but Sean Bean, the British actor who was the

> ***"The challenge is how to renew it and move it forward so that it's modern and a thriller of the '90s, but still a Bond film."—Roger Spottiswoode, director***

enough. "Everyone comes at you and it can pick away at you bit by bit if you are not careful, but what you have to do is remember it's not you, it's him," Brosnan says, looking only a little rueful before chuckling as he talks about such demands of fame as signing autographs. "I've signed everything: breasts, buttocks... My signature has got bigger and bolder and more open. I don't know what that means. Confidence, maybe!" Then he steps back on set, nimbly primed to parry and return anything coming at him, whether bon mot or weapon, as the living epitome of Bond, James Bond.

"Tomorrow Never Dies." Starring Pierce Brosnan, Michelle Yeoh, Teri Hatcher. Directed by Roger Spottiswoode. Written by Bruce Feirstein. Produced by Michael G. Wilson and Barbara Broccoli. A United Artists release. Opens 12/19.

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WAR PATH

Director PAUL VERHOEVEN Returns to the Sci-Fi Genre With TriStar's Big-Budget "STARSHIP TROOPERS"

by Kim Williamson

It looked to him then, says filmmaker Paul Verhoeven, like "a special effect. For a child of two, what can you say: This looks like a lot of flames. It was interesting. Of course, you could see the Luftwaffe. They were flying over. They were bombing."

It's just past noon on an L.A.-blue day in August, and the Dutch-born Verhoeven, now aged 59, is having lunch with **BOXOFFICE** in the Rita Hayworth commissary on the famed Sony (nee MGM) lot in Culver City, Calif. Prominently displayed in a silver poster case near the restaurant's entrance, the first in a row of posters for such current and upcoming Columbia and TriStar fare as "Gattaca" and "Godzilla," is the one-sheet for Verhoeven's new "Starship Troopers." (Tagline: "A New Kind of Enemy. A New Kind of War.")

But the man who has made his Hollywood repute with films controversial for their violence and sexuality—"Flesh + Blood," "RoboCop," "Total Recall," "Basic Instinct" and "Showgirls"—is recalling a real-life moment, a half-century ago and a continent and ocean away, as a toddler during the Second World War. On May 14, 1940, his family having just relocated to Rotterdam's outskirts from his Amsterdam birthplace, Verhoeven stood witness to the brutal bombing of the port city that killed 980 people and destroyed 20,000 buildings. At the time, the German attack—which came after all Dutch resistance had ceased—stood as history's most devastating single air offensive. "We were not in the center of Rotterdam," Verhoeven says simply. "But you could see it, of course."

Yet that day was to be only a preface to his World War II experiences. In 1943, his parents and their only child moved to a new abode outside The Hague. "Our house was very close to the launching pads of the V-1 [the German rockets that rained down on southern England during the war's second half]. The V-1s would go right over our heads.

"So the English and the Americans, but mostly the English, were continuously bombing the area to destroy these launching pads," Verhoeven says. "You would see that in the night: You would open your windows, you would look up, and you would see the searchlights and the [exploding anti-aircraft] flak. Of course, you couldn't see the planes in the night, but you would see when they would be hit, and then you would see them burning and coming down. And crash."



BATTLE LINE: *In the wake of an alien attack on Buenos Aires, human dead are retrieved from among building and bug rubble.*

"I think these visions are in ['Starship Troopers']," Verhoeven concludes. "With spaceships in this case, of course. And this is against bugs, not Germans."

The evening before, entering under a refurbished pink-and-yellow neon Loews marquee that graces the studio's Cary Grant Theatre, about 100 specially invited members of the press come to see two advance reels of Verhoeven's adaptation of Robert A. Heinlein's 1959 science-fiction novel. The story: a group of high-school graduates enter the armed forces and, after a rigorous boot camp, wage intergalactic battle against insect-like warriors on distant planets. One journalist, in the dimness not seeing the black-attired Verhoeven near a mid-theatre control board, bumps into the director and apologizes. He doesn't reply.

Verhoeven was already an experienced moviemaker in his native Netherlands—where he made the likes of "Turkish Delight," Oscar-nominated for the best foreign-language film of 1973, and the 1979 "Soldier of Orange," a WWII story of Dutch university students who join the Resistance—before a phone call from Steven Spielberg in 1980 persuaded him to try his luck in America. Still, Verhoeven tonight is nervous. It's the first time footage is being shown of "Starship Troopers"—and it's his first film after his much-pilloried 1995 "Showgirls" (as one reviewer foresaw, "There will be more hooters in the audience than onscreen")—so Verhoeven's silent unease is understandable.

Moving into action at the theatre's front, though, Verhoeven seems comfortable enough to tell a joke. Explaining that what tonight's audience will be seeing begins about 60 minutes into the movie, he says the characterizations of the multitude of players onscreen will already have been developed. "That is there—but I cannot prove it to you," he says. The journalists laugh. "Remember it's a war movie," Verhoeven closes, just before the lights fade to black, "so it's not only lighthearted."

Indeed not: Although the footage includes scenes of comic fraternization and simple fisticuffs between young bucks, incipient romance among the Mobile Infantry's bi-gender ranks, and back story (Buenos Aires, home of the story's hero, Johnny Rico, has already been obliterated by enemy attack), the showcase sequence is Earth's starship invasion of the aliens' home planet of Klendathu. It's a D-Day gone horribly wrong. Plasma bugs, a sort of giant ground-based firefly that can shoot far aloft a kind of biological dynamite, bring one after another of Earth's mightiest space vessels flaming down through the atmosphere. Lander vehicles that make it safely to the planet discharge mammoth waves of infantry, only to have hundreds of thousands of those valiant soldiers cut to pieces—quite literally—by fast-moving warrior bugs. Retreat is called; the camera rests on a devastated landscape, dotted with the corpses and parts of corpses of insects and humans.

A mix of darkness and light, flesh and soil, it's a ghastly but not surprising mise en scene, coming from a filmmaker who as a child saw Germans "picking up pieces of pilots," who as an adult believes "the natural state of my mind I feel is still more war than peace."

The psychology that Verhoeven brought to the project is, of course, only prologue in bottom-line terms. The studio's focus now for the movie is in generating audience interest in going to see this first big film of the Christmas moviegoing season.

On the day of **BOXOFFICE**'s visit with Verhoeven, the Motion Picture Association of America announces the rating for the TriStar release: R for graphic sci-fi violence and gore, and for some language and nudity. The director is unfazed. "It was always an R," he says, with a finality that recalls Verhoeven's foreknowledge that "Showgirls" would be an NC-17. "There's nothing you can do about it. I mean, [deciding] 'let's change this movie completely to make it to a PG-13' would defy the whole setup of these bugs, wouldn't it? I don't know how you could make these scenes work for a PG-13. Because that's what [the bugs] do: They cut you in two. They stab you to death."

Verhoeven's previous exercises in the sci-fi genre, 1987's "RoboCop" ($53.4 million domestic) and 1990's "Total Recall" ($119.3 million), were also Rs, but their older stars—Peter Weller and Nancy Allen, and Arnold Schwarz-

BATTLE STAR

Newcomer Casper Van Dien Is a "Trooper"



Hollywood seems to have suddenly woken up to the leading-man potential of Casper Van Dien. Not surprisingly, his soldier-of-fortune good looks had earned him roles in television in the daytime drama "One Life to Live" and the nighttime soap "Beverly Hills, 90210," but now the 28-year-old is moving to the bigscreen here, there and everywhere. He's going to be the next Tarzan in Live's "Tarzan and Jane," co-starring Jane March ("Color of Night"). He's playing the screen-idol title role in "James Dean: Race With Destiny" (release pending). And, opposite Rod Steiger and Natasha Wagner, he's in a thriller, "Revenant," about hip vampires living in L.A. But first he'll be seen warring with giant bugs in Paul Verhoeven's sci-fi adventure "Starship Troopers." Van Dien, who describes himself as "an optimist" who has been "pretty lucky my whole life," called **BOXOFFICE** *from the El Paso, Texas location where he has been shooting the movie "On the Border," which he describes as a "who's-screwing-who story, in more ways than one." He talked about what a trooper he is, literally and figuratively.*

BOXOFFICE: Was it easy to act opposite giant bugs?

CASPER VAN DIEN: It was no problem to imagine them coming at you when you have Paul Verhoeven yelling and screaming "Bugs are coming! Bugs are coming!" at the top of his lungs, his arms flailing in an attack mode! But of course it is a combination of computer graphics—which means little orange markers telling you where they are—and huge models and little models and animatronics and dead bugs on the ground. You have to use your imagination, but the input they gave us with illustrations and models made it very vivid. And, as they had gotten the money to make the movie by creating a sequence [see Paul Tippett sidebar, p. 20] showing how the huge bugs attack, they were able to show us that too. I think I saw it 33 times in boot camp and before filming started.

BOXOFFICE: Why did Verhoeven take you and the other actors who play the troopers to that boot camp in Wyoming before filming started?

VAN DIEN: It put us through the rigorous physical training we needed and helped us all understand military procedure and etiquette.

BOXOFFICE: Didn't the fact you attended military school and your father and grandfathers were in the Navy mean you were ahead of the game?

VAN DIEN: Yes, I found a lot in the character of Johnny Rico to identify with, which made me certain I could do this role. I'm a pretty organized man, but I'm also a risk taker who enjoys going out on a limb. I really believe in the military. I think it gives backbone to a lot of men and women and instills respect and purpose. Military school provided the discipline you need to deal with society and to learn to work with people to get a job done. This film was run like a well-oiled military project—not over budget, smoothly, and everyone knew their job and got it done.

BOXOFFICE: What's the nastiest encounter you had with one of the bugs?

VAN DIEN: I rode on top of this tanker-size bug, 28 feet up in the air. I got a bit bruised and banged up, but it was a lot of fun and actually I was in better shape than most of the stuntmen. I had to throw a grenade at the bug and then jump on it to try to kill it. I jumped off a mountain to land on the bug and that earned me a stunt buckle.

BOXOFFICE: Is this film very violent?

VAN DIEN: There is a lot of violence but, hey, it's a movie—it's a huge cartoon. You only see two people killed by other people. Everyone else is killed by bugs! But it's also a love story, and it's about how Johnny finds himself through his success in the Mobile Infantry.

BOXOFFICE: Did you have to look in even better shape for "Tarzan and Jane"?

VAN DIEN: I do wear an itty-bitty loincloth. I was like that—barefoot and nearly naked—in the jungle for four months, so I would get up very early each day to work out. I think this "Tarzan" is going to be the closest to [Edgar Rice] Burroughs' conception. Tarzan had so often been depicted as big, strong and dumb. If he was dumb, he would have died. But this is a more "Indiana Jones"-type of Tarzan, which will be fun for the whole family.

BOXOFFICE: What do you like to do when you do have free time?

VAN DIEN: I rock climb, horseback ride, play football and baseball, and do karate and aerobics. I write, I read, I study. I love learning new things, particularly languages. I even managed to learn a little bit of Zulu when I was filming "Tarzan" in Africa. Everything you do is a stepping stone. If you don't learn something along the way, you are a fool.—***Bridget Byrne***

BUG BRAIN

Phil Tippett Again Draws on His Monster Talents



It all started with "King Kong." Phil Tippett first saw the classic creature feature on '50s TV as a child, and from that moment his future was set in motion—or stop-motion. "I had to figure out how all that stuff was done," Tippett explains. The Oscar and Emmy award-winning visual effects artist has spent his life not only figuring out how the giant ape came alive but also bringing to life many of his own creatures. Jabba the Hutt from "Return of the Jedi," the robots in "RoboCop" and the T-Rex in "Jurassic Park" are just a few among Tippett's personal monster menagerie. Today, he owns his own visual effects shop, Berkeley, Calif.-based Tippett Studio, and his latest effort is "Starship Troopers." In the futuristic war movie, the enemy is an army of, well, bugs. But large bugs. With an attitude.

BOXOFFICE: Is "Starship Troopers" the biggest film you've worked on?

PHIL TIPPETT: Yeah, by far. It's like the "Lawrence of Arabia" of sci-fi pictures.

BOXOFFICE: Is it true the studio made you shoot a test of the bugs before it would commit to the project?

TIPPETT: It's strange. The studios are just into tests now, to justify going ahead with stuff. It's not as though one's reputation or skill can justify taking the risk. So we went out to Vasquez Rocks and shot [Olympic] gold medalist Mitch Gaylord dressed up in an armored trooper's outfit. Paul directed it. [Laughs] We ripped Mitch apart.

BOXOFFICE: Is the film going to be as violent as that suggests?

TIPPETT: It's a Paul Verhoeven war/monster picture. I don't think it's going to be anything too soft and cuddly.

BOXOFFICE: "Bug movies" seem to be in these days, what with "Mimic" and "Men In Black."

TIPPETT: Part of that is a strategic decision because of the nature of the technology. The computer graphics [are better at creating] exoskeletons than continuous fleshy surfaces.

BOXOFFICE: Such as human beings. But aren't you also using computer graphics to render humans when they're being ripped apart by the bugs?

TIPPETT: Oh, sure. I characterize them as "computer graphic stunt doubles."

BOXOFFICE: That's a great term. But the bugs are obviously the main show. They're divided into different breeds, aren't they?

TIPPETT: Yes. The film pretty much follows the generic rules of World War II pictures, so the "warrior bugs" are the infantry. The "plasma bugs"—these giant three-story bugs that shoot plasma out of their butts like a big stink bug and blast spaceships down out of the sky—are kind of like the guns of Navarone, the heavy artillery. The "hoppers" are the equivalent of the air force. The "tanker bugs" are like tanks that have viscous liquid, like flame throwers, that they spray on people and melt them. The king bug—the "brain bug"—is the evil emperor. He rides on the back of his minions that are called "chariot bugs."

BOXOFFICE: It's what they used to call "a cast of thousands," except these thousands are all computer-generated. Was that the biggest challenge on "Troopers"—the sheer enormity of it?

TIPPETT: That was the main thing. The problem with special effects-type pictures is that you're dealing with a lot of virtual material. You're on the set with maybe 200 to 300 people, and you're asking them to imagine something that isn't there, that you will put in later on. It's very important that everybody be all on the same page of the choreography and the camera work. There was a tremendous amount of production meetings so that Paul and I knew what the bugs were going to do, and then for communicating that effectively with Jost Vacano, the director of photography, and then for carrying that continuity all the way through the work with the editor, Mark Goldblatt. And assembling all the material so that it would make sense later on when we started to put our bugs in the shots.

BOXOFFICE: Has this given you the urge to direct yourself?

TIPPETT: When you're safe at home in bed with the covers pulled up really close, you think about directing, yeah. But then you go out and see how these guys work, and it's a pretty tough job. It's brutal.

BOXOFFICE: What's in the future for Tippett Studio?

TIPPETT: We're in the process now of working on the Disney project "My Favorite Martian." It's got a lot of cute and funny stuff in it. And then we have a Universal project, called "Virus," that has a big scary monster-type alien thing. So we're going to be doing more of that.—***Michael Payne***

enegger and Sharon Stone, respectively—perhaps attracted adults in numbers that made up for the restrictions on under-17 attendance. But "Starship Troopers" could reverse that demo draw, as its leads are young, relative newcomers. Casper Van Dien (who plays Johnny Rico; see sidebar, p. 19) is best known from TV's "Beverly Hills, 90210"; Dina Meyer ("Dragonheart") is another "90210" alum; and both Denise Richards ("nowhere") and Patrick Muldoon are veterans of another young-teen TV favorite, "Melrose Place."

"If ['Starship Troopers'] is 'Melrose Place in Space,' I don't know. I don't think so," Verhoeven says. "[But] this is not 'Memphis Belle'"—the 1990 WWII movie that cast a decade older than the true ages of the Army Air Force pilots the film portrayed. That decision "didn't work," he says. "'Let's destroy the story and go for something different'—I don't believe in that. I don't believe in second-guessing your audience.

"This is about young people that come from high school. That's the story! They are these young kids, they're sitting in class, you introduce the audience to the society, and then we go to boot camp. And then war breaks out and they go off to die."

That "Starship Troopers" is a throwback to two types of movies familiar to older audiences could help interest them. "It really is a Second World War movie in its tone, like the movies in the '40s. You get to know certain people, you build [their characters], and then at the end of the war you look back and say, 'Well, only a couple survived,'" Verhoeven says. But "Starship Troopers" in its combination of war and humor—part boot, part camp—also recalls another well-known genre. "When I was a child, my favorite movie was 'The War of the Worlds.' But [I liked] all the science-fiction movies, even the B-movies. This is an upgraded B-movie in a way, isn't it? An animal that's big and ferocious—that's of course an element of the movies of the '50s."

Budgeted at $90+ million, "Starship Troopers" disembarks on November 7, and Verhoeven expects that the film will succeed with diverse ages. "It's not a movie for 'kid-kids,' of 12 or 10, but perhaps even them. [Ages] 14, 15, absolutely. They will see [the TV spots] and drive their parents crazy [to take them].

"And I think this movie is good enough if you're 22, and it's good even at 30. It has all of that ['Star Wars' element], but it has its own tone and its own dimension of looking at the world, at the universe. And I think it's a thrill," Verhoeven says, "to go inside that world.

"People will have the feeling that 'here is one of my ultimate fantasies.'"

"Starship Troopers." Starring Casper Van Dien, Denise Richards, Dina Meyer and Jake Busey. Directed by Paul Verhoeven. Written by Ed Neumeier. Produced by Alan Marshall and Jon Davison. A TriStar release. SF/action. Rated R. Opens 11/7 wide.



September, 1997

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FREE AT LAST

With Spielberg's "Amistad," Debbie Allen's Ship Finally Comes In

by Joseph McBride



IN THE BELLY OF THE BEAST: *Allen (r.) on the set of "Amistad."*

Behind every dream project there is a dreamer. In the case of Steven Spielberg's new film, "Amistad," opening from DreamWorks this December, that dreamer is Debbie Allen. The multi-talented choreographer, actress, director and producer spent 10 frustrating years trying to persuade studios to make the film before she took it to Spielberg.

No one else in Hollywood was interested in the story of 53 African captives who mutinied against their Spanish captors on the schooner Amistad in 1839, before being tried for murder and eventually set free in the United States. "I took it to a lot of people and I just got rejected," recalls Allen, who is African-American. "I took it personally—it was hard not to. They were saying the story wasn't important. They said, 'Nobody's interested in some slaves.'

Allen first became aware of the story in 1978. While browsing in the bookstore of her alma mater, Howard University, she found an anthology, "The Amistad I," edited by Charles Harris. She optioned William Owen's fictionalized account, "Black Mutiny," in 1984, then took the project to Spielberg after he won his 1994 Academy Award for directing "Schindler's List." Allen already was friendly with Spielberg, whose adopted African-American son, Theo, was a classmate of Allen's son, Norman Nixon Jr.

Allen brought the project to Spielberg "because I knew he would understand it," she says. "I knew his people [Spielberg is Jewish] had suffered. And I needed someone who was powerful, and I needed a great, great filmmaker. Steven was so committed and passionate. From the beginning, we were on the same page.

"I always thought 'Amistad' should be a court drama that opens people's eyes," Allen says. "The Africans uplift everyone. They uplift the Supreme Court, who were just about all pro-slavers, to make that decision. And they uplift the abolitionists, a disenfranchised group who then have an image to come together with.

"I always wanted it to be called 'Amistad' [Spanish for 'Friendship']. The title is really a double-entendre, because there's this ship called the Amistad upon which the revolt took place, a very hateful situation, and later on all these people came together who were friends of the Africans to stand up for freedom."

Spielberg's choice of the $41 million "Amistad" as his first directing project for his new studio, DreamWorks, continues his long but largely unheralded personal identification with the black struggle. As a victim of anti-Semitic persecution in high school, Spielberg was passionately interested in the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Along with 1985's "The Color Purple," based on Alice Walker's novel about an abused black woman in the early 1900s South, he directed black actors in the leads of a "Night Gallery" TV episode and his segment of "Twilight Zone—The Movie."

Despite his apparent empathy with "Color Purple's" Celie (Whoopi Goldberg), Spielberg was pilloried by many critics who accused him of a cynical ploy to use the film to win an Oscar. The film received 11 nominations, but Spielberg was conspicuously absent in the directing category. Critics also took Spielberg to task this year for giving Jeff Goldblum a black daughter in "The Lost World: Jurassic Park," accusing him of doing so only to pander to the black audience.

But that casting choice, on which the film subtly avoided comment, was hardly a stretch for Spielberg. Besides Theo, another of his seven children is black—a daughter, Mikaela, whom he and wife Kate Capshaw adopted in 1996. During the filming of "Amistad," Spielberg declared, "I am making this film for my black children *and* my white children. They all need to know this story."

Allen shares producing credit with Spielberg and Colin Wilson ("The Lost World: Jurassic Park"), and the intense, day-to-day involvement of a black creative partner might defuse criticism against Spielberg this time around. "Steven Spielberg and I have had a baby child!" Allen exults, metaphorically. But Walker's active role in the making of "The Color Purple" provided no such insulation, and Allen had to assuage Spielberg's anxieties before he committed to "Amistad."

"Steven, that was then, this is now," she told him. "I think things will be looked at differently." Allen points out that "Schindler's List" persuaded people of Spielberg's emotional depth, and that "Amistad," unlike "The Color Purple," comes at a time when there has been a relatively wide variety of films dealing with the black experience.

For those who might still question why a white director was chosen for such a project, Allen explains that not only was Spielberg the sole person willing and able to get "Amistad" made, it is not simply a "black" film. Morgan Freeman has top billing as an abolitionist leader, and the story has what Spielberg calls "only one heartbeat"—taking a single character viewpoint, that of the heroic captive Cinque (Djimon Hounsou, an actor and model from the African country of Benin). But the Africans also had prominent white allies, from ex-President John Quincy Adams (Anthony Hopkins) to their lawyer Roger Baldwin (Matthew McConaughey).

Some advance criticism has already been lodged against "Amistad" as another sign of Spielberg's alleged tendency to find uplift in unlikely subject matter, from the Holocaust to slavery ("Schindler's List." screenwriter Steven Zaillian wrote "Amistad" with David Franzoni). Calling the captives in Amistad "slaves," however, is a misnomer. In setting them free, the Supreme Court did not find slavery illegal in the U.S. but ruled instead that the Africans were not legal property of their captors and that they had a right to self-defense. Allen also points out that the denouement hardly was unambiguously happy: 18 of the captives died before being liberated. Cinque returned home to Sierra Leone to find his family vanished, and the unresolved slavery issue continued to fester until the Civil War erupted.

Given the recent inability of some serious films with black themes to find an audience, Allen declares she's "like a bloodhound on a mission to make sure the world knows that 'Amistad' is coming. [Black filmmakers] can't say, 'Hollywood is doing this to us' if 'Rosewood' doesn't make the same money as 'Booty Call.'"

Juggling two films simultaneously as he did with "Schindler's List" and "Jurassic Park," Spielberg edited "Amistad" with Michael Kahn in London this summer while filming the upcoming World War II drama "Saving Private Ryan." The director is "sensitive about how 'Amistad' comes out," Allen says, "because it's not 'Titanic,' it's not 'The Lost World.' The intelligent thing to do is to let this baby bird get its wings and fly, and I think Steven's of that mind too. He's very protective of this movie in terms of getting it so right."

STARSHIP TROOPERS

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September, 1997

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AN ANIMATED DISCUSSION

BOXOFFICE speaks with Bill Mechanic About "Anastasia," Fox's First Major Foray into Animation *by Christine James*



ROYAL RUSE: *Dimitri (voice of John Cusack) and Vladimir (Kelsey Grammer) plan to pass off an orphan girl (Meg Ryan) as the lost princess Anastasia.*

Bill Mechanic, chairman and CEO of Fox Filmed Entertainment, knows there's a lot riding on "Anastasia." "There's something going on more than just the movie," he explains. "Most movies are movies, but this one's like a whole initiative for us. We've been on it for three years now, building an animation facility, building animation talent, taking a company that has no experience or background in [animation] and trying to do great things." As the first release from the studio's new animation arm, "Anastasia" marks Fox's rejuvenated dedication to the medium that to date is still considered strictly Disney domain. Due out this Thanksgiving with abundant fanfare and promotion, "Anastasia" is being poised to shift the borders of that territory. Disney is obviously taking the threat seriously: subsidiary ABC has refused to air commercials for "Anastasia" during "The Wonderful World of Disney" show (though Fox Broadcasting continues to air "Hercules" ads).

With Meg Ryan voicing the title heroine and a supporting voice cast that includes John Cusack, Christopher Lloyd, Hank Azaria, Angela Lansbury and Kelsey Grammer, "Anastasia" is being primed as a pull-out-all-the-stops event picture. In addition to its tie-ins with Burger King and Coca-Cola, Fox has signed with numerous other promotional partners to ensure "Anastasia" has a big impact on the marketplace.

> ***"I think great movies and great stories come out of some difficult circumstances. I don't think it's all about sweetness and light."***

Of previous attempts by other studios to stake a claim in animation, Mechanic says, "I think they've been carpetbaggers. They come in trying to take from somebody else instead of being serious about what they're trying to do. They made no commitment. And if you go back, in 1984, Disney was in bad shape. They were really not succeeding in the animated business. The last few pictures had all not worked, and it was really ['Anastasia' director and former Disney employee] Don Bluth that led the way to the renaissance of the animated film. It was [Bluth's] 'American Tail' and 'Land Before Time' that were the all-time boxoffice champs at that moment."

Fox itself has released animated films in the past, but not with any cohesive development strategy—or boxoffice success. "I consider what has happened up till now as dipping a toe in the water," Mechanic observes. "So many people felt that it was only the province of Disney that they never really approached it with any kind of seriousness."

Even Mechanic is hard-pressed to name some of Fox's previous efforts in the genre. "'Pagemaster,' 'Ferngully'...um, something in the forest, what was it?—'Once Upon a Forest.' In the far past, [Fox] had done 'Wizards.' But there's no real tradition to it, and again, I think there's something about being serious about a business."

"Being serious" entails, for starters, building an animation studio in Phoenix that employs about 350 people, as well as a satellite arm in Los Angeles. Additionally, Fox is developing

projects from the ground up, as opposed to simply acquiring completed works.

"We're not just saying 'Show us the finished film and we'll decide whether we want to distribute it.' We're deeply involved in it," says Mechanic. "We've made a long-term commitment to Don Bluth and [co-director] Gary Goldman; we're in the middle of our second picture ["Planet Ice," an outer space fantasy/adventure]; and we're ready to start our third picture. So it's an ongoing process, and we've retooled a lot of the company, including licensing and merchandising, to be able to handle it, and to have everybody invested in what it is that we're trying to do."

Historically, despite their best efforts, no studio other than Disney has yet been able to achieve blockbuster success in the animation milieu. In response to industry-wide skepticism as to whether another studio can become a major player in the market, Mechanic is pragmatic—and optimistic. "I approach this as a business where everybody's going to doubt you. Which is why we didn't talk about the movie, we didn't show the movie, we didn't deal with the movie publicly for quite some time—until we could actually show people we have the goods.

"There's certainly no reason to believe that one company has the market cornered," he continues. "It is just not fathomable. It would be the same thing in reverse [when Disney was an animation-only studio] and they weren't in live-action, to say Disney couldn't do a live-action business. A company that had only one tradition could follow only that one tradition. Well, that's just not the case."

With Don Bluth having been one of Disney's former lead animators, it's not surprising that the characters in "Anastasia" have a Disneyesque look and feel (an observation Mechanic concedes is "fair to say"). Differentiating "Anastasia" from Disney fare was not a target goal, he notes. "We focused on the story we wanted to tell and what we wanted to have the movie feel like. It wasn't so much to do something the same or do something different, but to make a movie."

Mechanic cites several elements of "Anastasia" that he feels will make it a success: "The characters are very real, even though they're drawn. The emotions and the intellect—you can totally buy into it as an audience. It has great music, it's funny, and it tells a well-rounded story."

On the surface, the story of Anastasia could be viewed as a romantic fantasy fairytale: A beautiful young woman suffering from amnesia discovers she may actually be a princess. However, the predicating events—i.e., the Bolshevik uprising resulting in the slaughter of Anastasia's family—is not exactly the sort of subject matter one would associate with an animated musical. Set in Russia in the early 1900s and loosely based on the events that occurred after the slaying of Czar Nicholas Romanov II and his family—a massacre the youngest daughter was rumored to have escaped—"Anastasia's" plotline is arguably a



GOING BATTY: *Rasputin (Christopher Lloyd) literally loses face in front of Bartok the bat (Hank Azaria).*

disquieting one for the medium (though certainly no more so than, say, "The Hunchback of Notre Dame"). But the mystery of Anastasia holds a Cinderella-story allure that's a standard in the genre.

"I think great movies and great stories come out of some difficult circumstances," explains Mechanic of Fox's decision to turn this emotionally and politically tempestuous story into an animated film. "I don't think it's all about sweetness and light. And I think that's part of what people have done. They've talked down to children." Nevertheless, with regard to how closely "Anastasia" will be adhering to the historical account, it appears to have been significantly Pocahontasized. For example, in this telling, Russia's last royal family is not executed by the Bolsheviks; instead, they die at the hands of the evil wizard Rasputin and his albino bat sidekick.

"If we had children running out of the theatre, I'd say we screwed up."

But the death of Anastasia's family will be an important element, says Mechanic. "What happens to the royal family is what establishes the emotional reality of our movie. It's only a backstory, but it is there to establish who this girl is and what her loss is. It will affect people. I don't think we've brushed over it." However, given the large kiddie contingent anticipated in "Anastasia's" audiences, the harrowing elements have been kept to a minimum: "If we had children running out of the theatre, I'd say we screwed up," Mechanic says, laughing.

"If I was a historian and I wanted to judge this as a historian, I don't know that I would say 'Oooh, they really nailed the story,'" Mechanic acknowledges. "I think we took creative license with it. So I don't know if we'll pass those tests. We're making a movie. It's sort of like, somebody asked about 'Volcano,' 'Can it happen here?' Well, you know, can it happen here, is that what we're trying to do? We weren't making a documentary."

And what does Mechanic believe happened to the real Anastasia?

"I don't know," he says. "I read the books and watched with fascination last year when they applied DNA tests to the bones [of the murdered Romanovs], and luckily for us discovered that Anastasia was not found with the rest of the family, which does leave her mystery unsolved. Which I think is good for us."

"Anastasia." Voices by Meg Ryan, John Cusack and Christopher Lloyd. Directed and produced by Don Bluth and Gary Goldman. Written by Eric Tuchman and Susan Gauthier & Bruce Graham. A Fox release. Nov. 21.



PULP CONVICTION

LAWRENCE BENDER Takes Independent Producing to New Heights With His Latest Tarantino Collaboration "JACKIE BROWN"

by Wade Major

Four months into their tenancy at Miramax Pictures' new Los Angeles digs (formerly occupied by the late, great Hemdale) A Band Apart Productions is still settling in. Lawrence Bender's office is especially spare with unpacked boxes forming a series of neck-high columns. "I just barely got back," he apologizes, detailing the breakneck summer pace that has kept him juggling producing chores on three major year-end releases. "This job is so all-encompassing."

In addition to "Jackie Brown," his hotly-anticipated third teaming with pal and partner Quentin Tarantino, Bender is also putting the finishing touches on Boaz Yakin's "A Price Below Rubies," with "Jerry Maguire" star Renee Zellweger, as well as Gus Van Sant's "Good Will Hunting," starring Robin Williams and Matt Damon. "'Good Will Hunting' was greenlit in the middle of shooting 'A Price Below Rubies' in New York," recalls Bender. "And 'Good Will Hunting' shoots in Toronto and Boston. So I was caught between shooting one movie in New York in the middle of a freezing winter while having to prep and cast another movie in Toronto and Boston. Then we locked the deal for 'Jackie Brown' to start shooting three weeks before we wrapped 'Good Will Hunting.' So for 12 weeks, I'd work all day in L.A. on 'Jackie Brown,' then jump the red-eye. It was this triangle. When everything wrapped except for 'Jackie Brown,' I thought, 'Thank God! Just one location!'"

Even at a chaotic pace, it's obvious Bender loves what he does. Though more reserved and soft-spoken than his manic partner, Bender shares Tarantino's passion for the magic of moviemaking. It's hard not to see the two of them as the proverbial "kids set loose in a candy store"—with one very important distinction: these "kids" *run* the candy store.

Trained primarily as an actor, dancer and, of all things, a civil engineer, Bender has risen fast among the ranks of Hollywood's hottest producers, working increasingly with other directors on such films as "Fresh," "Killing Zoe" and "White Man's Burden." But his association with Tarantino transcends any other: "I know it sounds cliche," he says, "but Quentin and I have a really special relationship. It means a lot to both of us because we really started out together. It's a situation where one plus one equals much more than two."

"I love making movies, but I'm not 100 percent satisfied. I don't feel that all my creative muscles have been exercised as a producer."

Not surprisingly, many industry observers agree, crediting Bender as much as Tarantino for the commercial successes of "Reservoir Dogs," "Pulp Fiction" and "From Dusk Till Dawn." "When we met," remembers Bender, "Quentin had been struggling for a long time just as I certainly had. And the meeting of the two of us, somehow, is what made it happen. If someone else produces something that he does or if I work with another director, as great an experience as it is, it's never quite the same."

That explains Bender's enthusiasm for "Jackie Brown," Tarantino's first effort as a director since 1994's "Pulp Fiction." Based on the Elmore Leonard novel "Rum Punch"—the first of four Leonard novels acquired by Miramax for Tarantino—"Jackie Brown" features a quirky cast that promises to rival "Pulp Fiction's." In addition to '70s feminist action icon Pam Grier in the title role, "Jackie Brown" also stars Robert De Niro, Samuel L. Jackson, Michael Keaton, Bridget Fonda and the resilient Robert Forster. "It's very much Quentin's writing, but it's also very much Elmore Leonard's writing. It's a great synthesis of their two styles."

Not that Tarantino and Leonard are necessarily all that far apart to begin with. It was Tarantino who persuaded John Travolta to do the film version of Leonard's "Get Shorty," which some critics derided as derivative of "Pulp Fiction." The plot of "Jackie Brown," which centers on a middle-aged stewardess' scheme to defraud her gun-running partner before he can eliminate her as a potential government witness, seems tailor-made for Tarantino's sensibilities.

Some debate has arisen, however, concerning decisions to change the lead character's



Response No. 101

race and to relocate the story from Florida to the less glamorous South Bay area of Los Angeles where Tarantino grew up. "The essence of the woman is the same," says Bender in Tarantino's defense. "Quentin is a big fan of Pam's and felt this was a great role for her to play. As to why he set it in the South Bay, it's because Quentin really knows the South Bay. He's very much a regional filmmaker, even though we don't think of Southern California as having those regional aspects."

Like Tarantino, Bender is optimistic that the film will mark a new career beginning for star Grier, whose '70s era anthems to female power—"Foxy Brown," "Sheba, Baby," and "Coffy," among others—have since evolved cult followings. "It certainly will be a great comeback for her," he says. "She's so hot and so foxy in the film. I think audiences will be very impressed."

Bender remains mindful of his other projects as well, most notably "Good Will Hunting," which came his way via Miramax co-chairman Harvey Weinstein. "Harvey, around Christmas of 1995, said to me, 'I want to give you my favorite project at Miramax. This is the movie I believe in the most of any project I have right now.' So I read the script, which was written by Matt Damon and ["Chasing Amy" star] Ben Affleck. And I really responded to it." The story of a gifted but troubled youth and his relationship with a widower-therapist quickly became a magnet for A-list talent, including director Gus Van Sant and Robin Williams, who will play the therapist opposite co-writer/star Damon. "You sometimes forget what an amazing dramatic actor Robin Williams is," says Bender, "because he doesn't play those roles that often. This is going to be just a beautiful, beautiful movie."

First up, however, will be "A Price Below Rubies," Bender's second collaboration with "Fresh" director Boaz Yakin. "It's about a young Hasidic woman, played by Renee Zellweger, coming to terms with herself," Bender says. "It's about individual versus community, about a woman finding her own strength, finding something inside of herself. And Renee is just extraordinary."

Bender's plate for 1998 is already filling up fast. Two follow-ups to "From Dusk Till Dawn" are expected to go before cameras by year's end, while active development continues on new film adaptations of "Modesty Blaise" and a non-musical "Anna and the King" starring legendary Hong Kong action hero Chow Yun-Fat.

Still, despite his success, Bender confesses to a certain degree of career anxiety. "I don't know if this is the last thing I want to do in my life. I love making movies, but I'm not 100 percent satisfied. I don't feel that all my creative muscles have been exercised as a producer. I do feel, as some point, that I want to direct. And I also feel like I need to do some more acting. There's still a lot of things in life I want to do."

JACKIE SPEAKS...



In early '70s retro classics "Foxy Brown," "Sheba, Baby" and "Coffy," Pam Grier didn't just redefine screen femininity, she revolutionized it. Her gun-wielding, butt-kicking vixen persona became instantly legendary, shattering age-old racial and gender stereotypes and, in the process, inspiring a generation of impressionable, young would-be filmmakers, including a certain Quentin Tarantino.

Twenty years and a handful of supporting roles ("Mars Attacks," "Original Gangstas," "Escape From L.A.") later, the seemingly inevitable Pam and Quentin teaming has finally occurred, adding what promises to be yet another icon to her memorable gallery: Jackie Brown.

BOXOFFICE: Would you say that Jackie Brown is in some ways a throwback to your old roles or is this a step forward in a new direction?

PAM GRIER: It's a definite step forward in a new direction. Jackie is still an independent woman, she's just a little more mature. As opposed to being a character in her twenties, she's in her forties and the film looks at how all those dynamics have changed 20 years later, through the style and the humor of Quentin's writing and Elmore Leonard's flavor. I think the character's added 20 years of maturity and wisdom help make the story infinitely more exciting.

BOXOFFICE: The word "comeback" has been thrown around a lot, with some pundits already suggesting that this role may do for you what Tarantino's "Pulp Fiction" did for Travolta.

GRIER: I wish I could say it's a comeback. But the problem with African-American actresses and actresses of color is that there's not enough work. You'll work once every four years and think you're making a comeback when that's consistently the amount of work that you're offered or which you can land.

BOXOFFICE: Which probably makes it even more flattering that Quentin rewrote what was originally a white character especially for you.

GRIER: It's more than flattering. From a spiritual point of view, it's a blessing. From a human point of view, from the point of view of my craft and the type of work that I strive to do, it's so rewarding. For any actor who's dreamed of working with him, you know you'd do anything for him. So to have him rewrite this role for me is really an honor.

BOXOFFICE: And you certainly have yourself an amazing supporting cast. When you have the opportunity to act with Robert De Niro, Sam Jackson, Michael Keaton, Bridget Fonda and Robert Forster...

GRIER: ...You better kiss yourself and hope the dream doesn't end! I quiver just thinking about it. These are people I've always wanted to work with, whom I've always admired. Then suddenly I'm working with them. We really became like family. It was one of the most supportive, energetic and creative sets I've been a part of in a long time. There was a great feeling where you didn't want to go home, where you felt you could easily work 20 hours and not feel it.

BOXOFFICE: A lot of people thought you were pioneering a new feminist direction in movies during the '70s, but the rest of the industry failed to turn the corner with you. Do you think it will ever catch up?

GRIER: I really believe that I did open a door at the time and other women weren't ready to be as physical. And there was still a mindset of not being as independent. Many women wanted to still play the traditional role of being taken care of. And not until they were finally forced by the recession and the oil embargo into having to go into the work force did they realize they had to take the reins of their family's life and do something about it. That's when they really built their confidence and saw that it was okay to be tough, okay to be smart, okay to be assertive and still be feminine and soft and caring.

BOXOFFICE: So you think the opportunities are improving?

GRIER: Well, there's Sigourney Weaver in the "Alien" films. There's "La Femme Nikita." And look at "G.I. Jane." I can go on and on. But you have to have the actresses who can take it and still open a movie and still be dynamic and still be pretty and be all the fantasies. That's a lot of work. I think it's a new era and an exciting time. I don't know if I'm a part of it, I don't know if I'm opening any doors. All I know is that doors are opening for me, and for that I am grateful.—*Wade Major*


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HOLIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

It's time again for the season of green: trees, trimmings and boxoffice tills

Last year at this time, we praised Hollywood for the scheduling of its November lineup, which generally avoided genre and demo clashes on films' opening weekends. Once again, a megaplexer's fondest dreams seem to be coming true: November 1997, though seam-bursting at 37 entries, pretty much provides each major title at least one clear-shot weekend to reach its target audience. Yet it'll still be a slugfest right from the start; witness the 11/7 frame, with its "Mad City," "Starship Troopers," "Critical Care" and "Boogie Nights" all needing pieces of each other's audience to attain smash status.



But then come December's wintry winds. In December 1996, 16 studio releases were looking to open during the 12/20-12/27 period. This year, again fearing people will be too busy malling for presents, distributors are avoiding the month's first half; despite there being only one pre-12/15 big-title competitor—DreamWorks' opening of "Amistad," itself just limited until 12/25—Warner Bros. already moved its Dustin Hoffman/Sharon Stone starrer "Sphere" off 12/12 to Valentine's Day.

That quietude ends on 12/19, when James Cameron's "Titanic" and the 18th Bond film, "Tomorrow Never Dies," square off for teen/adult audiences, and Buena Vista's "Mr. Magoo" and Fox's "Home Alone 3" take aim at the family-fare demo. Among the heavyweight players each wading into the war within the week that follows are Kevin Costner ("The Postman"), Quentin Tarantino ("Jackie Brown"), Jack Nicholson ("As Good As It Gets"), Martin Scorsese ("Kundun"), Daniel Day-Lewis ("The Boxer") and Robert Redford, helming and starring in "The Horse Whisperer" (see photo above).

It doesn't take much horse sense to see what the industry's hot toy this Christmas season will be: screen space.

NOVEMBER

NOVEMBER 7

Starship Troopers

Based on the Robert A. Heinlein novel, this $90 million sci-fi actioner follows a corps of heroic men and women, all elite members of the Mobile Military, who must wage intergalactic war against aliens. Newcomer Casper Van Dien, Dina Meyer ("Johnny Mnemonic"), Jake Busey ("Twister"), Neil Patrick Harris (TV's "Doogie Howser, M.D.") and Clancy Brown ("The Shawshank Redemption") star. Paul Verhoeven ("Total Recall") directs; Ed Neumeier scripts; Alan Marshall and Jon Davison produce. *See our Sneak Preview in this issue.* (TriStar, 11/7 wide)

Exploitips: *A co-production with Buena Vista's Touchstone label, this R-rater could be a significant boxoffice factor through Thanksgiving and—depending on response to the upcoming similar-genre "Mortal Kombat: Annihilation" and especially "Alien Resurrection"—on toward Christmas. Despite his misstep with "Showgirls," Verhoeven has shown a facility with SF material. Given the casting, whose draw will include one demo (young teens) closed out by the rating, make the genre the star; that the Heinlein name is a hallowed one among SF fans will help, as will bookstore tie-ins. Key date competition: "Mad City" (see P. 31).*

Bean

Brit TV superstar Rowan Atkinson brings his Bean character to the bigscreen in a screwball comedy about his antics as a (dis)reputed art expert. Peter MacNicol and Harris Yulin (both "Ghostbusters II") and Burt Reynolds co-star. Mel Smith ("The Tall Guy") directs; Richard Curtis and Rowan Atkinson (both also "The Tall Guy") script with Robin Driscoll; "French Kiss" duo Tim Bevan and Eric Fellner produce for their Working Title with Peter Bennett-Jones. (Gramercy, 11/7 wide)

Exploitips: *Our 3 1/2-star review (Sept. issue) calls "Bean" "an incredibly entertaining piece of comic mayhem." Although what plays there doesn't necessarily play here, "Bean" has been a boxoffice smash in various overseas territories. U.S. fans of his TV series (shown on PBS) are likely 'goers; to pull wider, stage a Bean or Whistler's Mother lookalike contest—or go for media attention with a charity Whistler's Mother dunking throw.*

Critical Care

In this satire, Albert Brooks ("Mother") stars as a highly respected surgeon who becomes disillusioned with modern medicine, starts drinking and finds himself at odds with a young idealistic doctor (James Spader) who must decide the fate of a comatose man, whose daughters are fighting over whether to pull the plug. Kyra Sedgwick, Helen Mirren and Anne Bancroft co-star. Sidney Lumet ("Night Falls On Manhattan") directs; producer Steven Schwartz adapts a novel by Richard Dooling. (Live, 11/7 wide)

Exploitips: *New distributor Live, which had advanced this to October, returns it to November; for audiences looking for lighter fare, this and the ultra-light "Bean" are the date's two wide-release choices. The cast is promising and should attract audience interest; given Lumet's recent track record—his four films in the '90s have averaged only a $14 million gross—highlight the Spader and Brooks names and this release's audience-friendly comedic underpinnings.*

Eve's Bayou

In this drama, a 10-year-old girl tells the tale of her eccentric Louisiana clan. Samuel L. Jackson ("A Time to Kill") and Lynn Whitfield ("A Thin Line Between Love and Hate") star. Actress Kasi Lemmons ("Fear of a Black Hat") directs and scripts; Jackson produces with Caldecot Chubb ("The Crow"). (Trimark, 11/7 wide)

Exploitips: *After "Meet Wally Sparks" and "Chairman of the Board" now (if irresolutely) a wide-release player, Trimark continues to handle specialized fare, and this one—which opened 10/24 NY/LA—counterprograms the date's other offerings. Expect Jackson and Whitfield to pull black auds, though an R rating (for sexuality and language) nixes family demos.*

Boogie Nights

Set in the porn world's '70s heyday, this dark comedy follows a group of players hoping to revamp the industry. Mark Wahlberg ("Fear"), Julianne Moore, Burt Reynolds, Don Cheadle and William H. Macy star. Paul Thomas Anderson ("Hard 8") directs and scripts; Larry Gordon ("The

Devil's Own") produces with John Lyons, Lloyd Levin and JoAnne Sellar. (New Line, 11/7 wide)

Exploitips: *"Boogie Nights" (moved from early, then late, summer, and opened limited in mid-Oct.) could draw extra attention thanks to its sexy subject matter. But exhibitors desiring wide Baby Boomer support could hype the nostalgic '70s-era setting. The 11/7 date could be a tough one for this adult fare, with the high-profile "Mad City" and "Starship Troopers" having the limelight.*

The Wings of the Dove

Adapted by Hossein Amini ("Jude") from Henry James' turn-of-the-century romantic novel and set in London and Venice, this latest from director Iain Softley ("BackBeat," "Hackers") tells the story of a young woman (Helena Bonham Carter) from a wealthy family who falls in love with a poor journalist ("Priest's" Linus Roache). To keep him and her social standing, she asks him to romance a dying American heiress ("The Spitfire Grill's" Alison Elliot). Unexpected consequences ensue for all. David Parfitt ("Mary Shelley's Frankenstein") and Stephen Evans ("Much Ado About Nothing") produce. (Miramax, 11/7 NY/LA)

Exploitips: *The season's first key specialized title, this R-rater (for sexuality) has a good cast and producer team and a hip director (who's batting 1-for-2, though). Bookstore tie-ins will help draw the likely distaff crowd.*

Hugo Pool

In this absurdist comedy, Alyssa Milano ("Fear") stars as Hugo, a pool cleaner with odd clients (the likes of Robert Downey Jr., Richard Lewis and Patrick Dempsey) and an odder family: Cathy Moriarty plays her chronic gambling mother and Malcolm McDowell portrays her lost-soul father. Sean Penn and Ann Magnuson also co-star. Robert Downey Sr. ("Putney Swope") directs, and he co-scripts with his late wife Laura Downey; Barbara Ligeti ("Motorama") produces. (Northern Arts, 11/7 NY, 11/14 LA)

Exploitips: *Once on the First Look slate but now breaststroked over to Northern Arts, "Hugo Pool" is much different in sensibility than the date's big specialized release, "The Wings of the Dove." So sell the contemporary angle to maximize somewhat younger turnout ("Hugo Pool" is rated R for language and sex-related material), who could prefer this to the Miramax period piece.*



Mad City

When he's laid off, a museum staffer (John Travolta) snaps, accidentally shoots a guard and then takes patrons hostage. A tabloid reporter (Dustin Hoffman) decides to exploit the situation. Alan Alda, Mia Kirshner ("Leo Tolstoy's Anna Karenina") and Blythe Danner co-star. Constantin Costa-Gavras ("Music Box") directs; Tom Matthews (former **BOXOFFICE** managing editor) and Ebbe Roe Smith ("Falling Down") script; producing is the Kopelson duo, Arnold and Anne ("The Devil's Advocate," "Eraser"). (Warner Bros., 11/7 wide)

Exploitips: *This comes with an audience-friendly PG-13, even if Costa-Gavras is known for mature fare—and it's true that his name will lend this cineaste cachet. But the mainstream sell, of course, is the superstar teaming of Travolta and Hoffman. And that'll come in handy, with this film going up against another of the season's big guns—what TriStar hopes is its "Men In Black" of the fall, namely the R-rated "Starship Troopers"* *(see P. 30).*

Sick

Subtitled "The Life and Death of Bob Flanagan, Supermasochist," this documentary reveals the personal and professional of late performance artist Bob Flanagan, whose disturbing routine involved self-torture. Kirby Dick directs. (CFP, 11/8 NY/LA)

Exploitips: *Our two-star review calls this "a film that in no uncertain terms is for mature audiences only. It...depicts sexual acts that most will find appalling and intolerable, and this fact overshadows any enticing human element." Nonetheless, the film's graphic nature is a come-on, so hype it to build avant-garde buzz.*

Other Voices, Other Rooms

This adaptation of the Truman Capote novel relates a young boy's odyssey of self-discovery after he learns his reclusive and invalid father's secrets. David Rocksavage directs and co-scripts. (Artistic License, 11/7 NY)

Exploitips: *The adult stars ("Le Confessional's" Lothaire Bluteau and "Unforgiven's" Anna Thomson) aren't unknowns, but the real sell is the Capote name. Robert C. Stigwood executive produces.*

The Knowledge of Healing

This documentary focuses on Tanzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama. Frank Reichley directs. (IN, 11/5 NY)

Exploitips: *This is nicely timed to split the calendar between "Seven Years in Tibet," which TriStar opened in early October, and Buena Vista's upcoming "Kundun," slated for Christmas.*

NOVEMBER 14

The Jackal

In this "The Day of the Jackal" variant, a ruthless killer (Bruce Willis) is on a global murder mission; an FBI agent (Sidney Poitier) and a Russian officer (Diane Venora) enlist an imprisoned IRA terrorist (Richard Gere) to stop him. Michael Caton-Jones ("Rob Roy") directs; Chuck Pfarrer ("Barb Wire") and Kevin Jarre ("The Devil's Own") script; the "Michael" duo of James Jacks and Sean Daniel produce. (Universal, 11/14)

Exploitips: *The Willis/Gere teaming should draw both genders and even non-thriller fans; an R rating (for strong violence and language) will limit under-17 teens—who will likely be getting parents to help them reboard "Starship Troopers" anyway. Key competition: weekend #2 of the similar-demo "Mad City." Also, MGM's move of Gere's "Red Corner" from 11/26 to 10/31 now means "The Jackal" will be the second Gere film in two weeks.*

The Man Who Knew Too Little

Aka "Watch That Man," this caper comedy tells the story of an American (Bill Murray) who attends a London interactive stage show that puts participants in the middle of crime-solving adventures. Without his knowledge, the Yank becomes embroiled in a real case of international espionage. Peter Gallagher ("To Gil-lian on Her 37th Birthday") and Joanne Whalley ("Trial by Jury") co-star for director Jon Amiel, with whom they worked on "Tune in Tomorrow" and "The Singing Detective," respectively. Robert Farrar adapts his novel; Jon Amiel produces with Mark Tarlov, Michael Nathanson and Arnon Milchan for New Regency. (Warner Bros., 11/14)

Exploitips: *Amiel ("Copycat," "Sommersby") is adept at various genres; the question mark is*

whether the talented Murray, of "Ghostbusters" and "Groundhog Day" fame, can draw substantial audiences after "Kingpin" and "Larger Than Life." But the studio made perhaps the season's wisest move when it re-dated this film to 11/14; previously, the PG-rater (for language, innuendo, comic violence and sensuality) was set to suicide against Disney's "Flubber"; now, it will lose only girls and younger children to...

The Little Mermaid

The story of a beautiful young mermaid named Ariel, who longs to be human, and her handsome prince is told again in this reissue of the 1989 Disney animated film, based on a Hans Christian Andersen tale. Voices by Rene Auberjonois, Jodi Benson, Buddy Hackett, Kenneth Mars and Edie McClurg. John Musker and Ron Clements (the "Hercules" duo) direct and script; Musker produces with the late Howard Ashman. Alan Menken's score won an Oscar; the Ashman/Menken tune "Under the Sea" took a statuette also. (Buena Vista, 11/14)

Exploitips: *Even though it was the first of the new Disney's big animation successes (it did $84 million), this G-rater is likely to have just one big weekend. Though non-Disney, with all the perils that portends, Fox's new "Anastasia" is directly targeted at young girls come 11/21—and then Disney trumps itself with "Flubber" the following week. One might still expect decent play through the holidays.*

One Night Stand

The latest from Oscar-nom'd filmmaker Mike Figgis ("Leaving Las Vegas") is a romantic drama about a married man who has what he expects will be just a one-night stand with a married woman. Finding he's unable to forget her, though, he tries to rekindle the romance—with unexpected results. Wesley Snipes, Nastassja Kinski ("Fathers' Day"), Robert Downey Jr. (also in "Hugo Pool"), Kyle MacLachlan ("Showgirls") and Ming-Na Wen ("The Joy Luck Club") star. Figgis scripts (Joe Eszterhas originated the story), and Figgis produces with Annie Stewart and Ben Myron. (New Line, 11/14 700 runs)

Exploitips: *Even in this era, the black/white romantic casting might put off regional audiences (the rating here is R for strong sexuality and language, and for drug content), so expect best results in larger cities—thus the limited opening—and with the distaff demo. Snipes has a following, and the Figgis name (thanks to the Academy and public attentions to "Leaving Las Vegas") could draw some mainstreamers.*



Welcome to Sarajevo

Brit and Yank journalists, including a female producer ("Shallow Grave's" Kerry Fox), a novice reporter (Emily Lloyd) and a jaded writer (Woody Harrelson), cover the Bosnian war. For U.K. correspondent Michael Henderson (stage actor Stephen Dillane), it becomes personal when he, helped by an American aid worker (Marisa Tomei), decides to smuggle to safety a little orphan girl. Michael Winterbottom ("Jude") directs; Frank Cottrell Boyce scripts; Graham Broadbent and Damian Jones produce. *See our Oct.-issue Sneak Preview.* (Miramax, 11/14 NY/LA)

Exploitips: *In our 3 1/2-star review (July issue), our Cannes critic called this docudrama "a complex, deeply moving story ...an extraordinarily affecting, personal, and at times uplifting tale." Winterbottom's camera is candid: The film is rated R for brutal images/war atrocities and language. Expect the more mature arthouse audiences to favor this, given its world-news topicality, while the younger head to...*

Slaves to the Underground

In this drama set against the slacker music scene of Seattle, a love affair between two all-girl rock group bandmates (Molly Gross and "Love Always'" Marisa Ryan) hits the skids when one of the gals runs into her former boyfriend (Jason Bortz) and their relationship reignites. Documentarian Kristine Peterson directs, and she produces with Bill Cody and Raquel Caballes Maxwell; Bill Cody scripts. (First Look, 11/14 NY/LA)

Exploitips: *In our 1 1/2-star review (April issue), our Women in Cinema/Seattle fest critic had a number of problems with "Slaves to the Underground"; still, on an arthouse-heavy weekend, this R-rater (for strong sexuality and language) could draw younger female and lesbian audiences.*

The Tango Lesson

Filmmaker Sally Potter ("Orlando") recounts her romantic involvement with Argentine tango dancer Pablo Veron and her multicontinental efforts to make a film about the Latin dance. Christopher Sheppard (also "Orlando") produces. (Sony Classics, 11/14 NY/LA)

Exploitips: *Potter's challenging "Orlando" grossed a good $7 million take in 1993, and highlighting that credit could draw arthouse audiences. Though "Orlando" would hardly have filled the bill, "The Tango Lesson"—rated a promotable PG (for brief language and some violent images)—might allow outreach to local art programs for exhibitors eager to take advantage of the film's age-friendly rating.*

Nick and Jane

A successful female executive meets a male cab driver; love blossoms. But can it last? Dana Wheeler-Nicholson ("Denise Calls Up" and James McCaffrey ("The Truth About Cats and Dogs") star. Rich Mauro directs; he scripts with Neil Alumkal and Peter Quigley; Bill McCutchen III produces. (CFP/Avalanche, 11/14)

Exploitips: *Our Santa Barbara critic (June '96 issue) gave this two stars; still, everyone loves a love story, so hype the genre. CFP moved this from 10/10, which one hopes is a sign of confidence; the 11/14 frame is chockful of specialized fare.*

A Further Gesture

Playing a hard-luck Irishman, Stephen Rea ("Michael Collins") exits the Emerald Isle for New York City. There, fortune still doesn't smile on him, as he becomes involved in an assassination attempt. (Castle Hill, 11/14 ltd)

Exploitips: *Given a certain popularity of Irish-themed films stateside, the Irish element and Rea's name are the sells. Expect the genre to favor male turnout.*

Ill Gotten Gains

In 1869, after slavery's abolition, 24 captives in the hold of the slave ship "Argon Miss" experience the spirit in The Wood (voice of Eartha Kitt), prompting them to bloody uprising. This drama stars Djimon Hounsou (the upcoming "Amistad," which is based on the same historical incident), Akosua Busia ("Rosewood"), De'Aundre Bonds ("Get On the Bus") and Clabe Hartley. Joel Marsden directs, scripts and produces. (Spats Films, 11/14)

Exploitips: *Perhaps feeling an understandable need to bow before "Amistad," Steven Spielberg's high-profile tale (which DreamWorks docks 12/12 limited and expands 12/25), production company Spats Films has determined to open on this date and could self-distribute. At press time, negotiations with several distributors were ongoing.*

NOVEMBER 21

Anastasia

Meg Ryan voices the title character in this animated tale of Czarevna Anastasia (daughter of Russia's last Czar, Nicholas II), who might have escaped alive the killing of the royal family in 1917 during the Bolshevik Revolution. In this telling, a girl who remembers nothing of her heritage follows a clue to Paris in an attempt to find her identity; the evil Rasputin pursues her, and a charming conman befriends her. Kelsey

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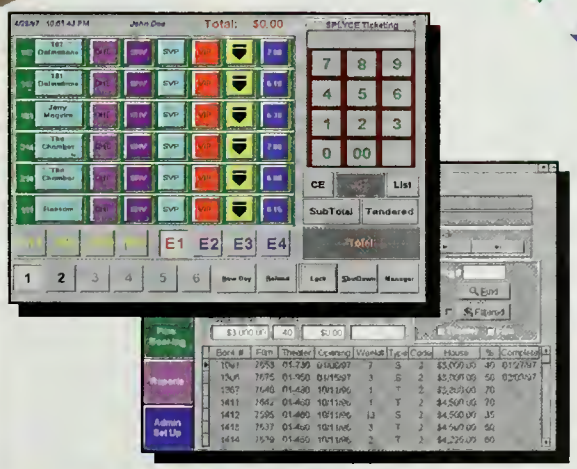
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Grammer, Angela Lansbury, John Cusack and Christopher Lloyd provide other voices. Don Bluth and Gary Goldman, the team for "An American Tail" and "All Dogs Go to Heaven," direct and produce; Eric Tuchman, Susan Gauthier and Bruce Graham script. *See our Sneak Preview in this issue.* (Fox, 11/21 wide)

Exploitips: *Like DreamWorks, Fox is going heavy into animation—even as recent Disney animated fare has been struggling to reach the once-easy $100 million mark. This $50+ million effort is the studio's first out of its new Arizona facility, and although it's likely to pull the family demo in general it trends toward the little-girl side in particular—the same group that Disney satisfied just last weekend with its "The Little Mermaid" reissue. Yet the advantage seems "Anastasia's," given that it's a new entry opening for the Thanksgiving school break.*

The Rainmaker

Adapted from John Grisham's 1995 best-seller, this David and Goliath tale follows the struggles of a recent law-school graduate ("Courage Under Fire's" Matt Damon) pitted against an unscrupulous insurance industry giant and a big-name law firm. Claire Danes ("William Shakespeare's Romeo & Juliet"), Danny DeVito, Jon Voight ("Most Wanted"), Danny Glover (also in "Switchback"), Virginia Madsen ("Ghosts of Mississippi") and Mickey Rourke co-star. Francis Ford Coppola directs and scripts; Michael Douglas and Steven Reuther produce for Douglas/Reuther Prods. with American Zoetrope. *See our October issue's Cover Story.* (Paramount, 11/21)

Exploitips: *This is the seventh Grisham-based film in just five years, and the last ("The Chamber") was received coolly. Given "A Time to Kill's" response, though, that might have been an aberration, not a sign of audience overdose. Some expect Damon to be the next McConaughey (who leaped to fame with "A Time to Kill"), and the supporting cast here is solid. And, of course, there's that Coppola name.*

Mortal Kombat: Annihilation

A group of courageous warriors must survive new challenges when they do battle with an evil warlord who wants to rule Earth. Christopher Lambert, Robin Shou and Talisa Soto return for the sequel; supermodel Irina Pantaeva co-stars. John Leonetti ("Child's Play 3") directs; Brent V. Friedman ("Hellbound") scripts with Bryce Zable; Larry Kasanoff produces. (New Line, 11/21 wide)

Exploitips: *"Mortal Kombat," directed by Paul Anderson, generated $70.4 million in summer '95. This second iteration, originally skedded for August (when New Line successfully birthed "Spawn"), should draw the same arcade/videogame aficionados at the malls on Thanksgiving break.*

Oscar & Lucinda

Sharing love, guilt and a passion for gambling, a British priest ("The English Patient's" Ralph Fiennes) and an Australian glassworks heiress (Cate Blanchett) decide to toil together to transport a glass church by river to a remote Down Under parish. Gillian Armstrong ("Little Women") directs; Laura Jones ("High Tide") adapts Peter Carey's Booker Prize-winning novel; "Cosi's" Timothy White produces with Robin Dalton. (Fox Searchlight, 11/21)

Exploitips: *The arthouse crowd was to have two key choices this weekend, but Gramercy's move of "The Matchmaker" to 10/3 leaves this R-rater (for sexuality and brief violence) with the arthouse weekend virtually to itself. (Unless this goes 11/14, vs. considerable competition.) The Armstrong and Aussie pedigrees will pull the "My Brilliant Career"/"Shine" types (at $13 mil. in production coinage, this is very expensive Down Under fare), but the best bet for broadening the audience is to highlight Fiennes' presence, last onscreen exactly a year ago with the hit "The English Patient."*

Liar

In this psychological thriller, a Charleston blueblood ("Hoodlum's" Tim Roth) who might have killed a hooker ("Jerry Maguire's" Renee Zellweger) uses his brilliance to play mental games with two detectives ("Mulholland Falls'" Chris Penn and "Trigger Effect's" Michael Rooker). Ellen Burstyn and Rosanna Arquette co-star. Jonas and Josh Pate direct and script; Peter Glatzer produces for MDP. (MGM, 11/21 ltd)

Exploitips: *An acquisition to fill out the Lion's slate, "Liar" (a tentative title) faces no new genre competition on its limited rollout, though it will have to battle hold-over business for the higher-wattage "The Jackal." As leads, the players here are more arthouse names, so expect a specialized*

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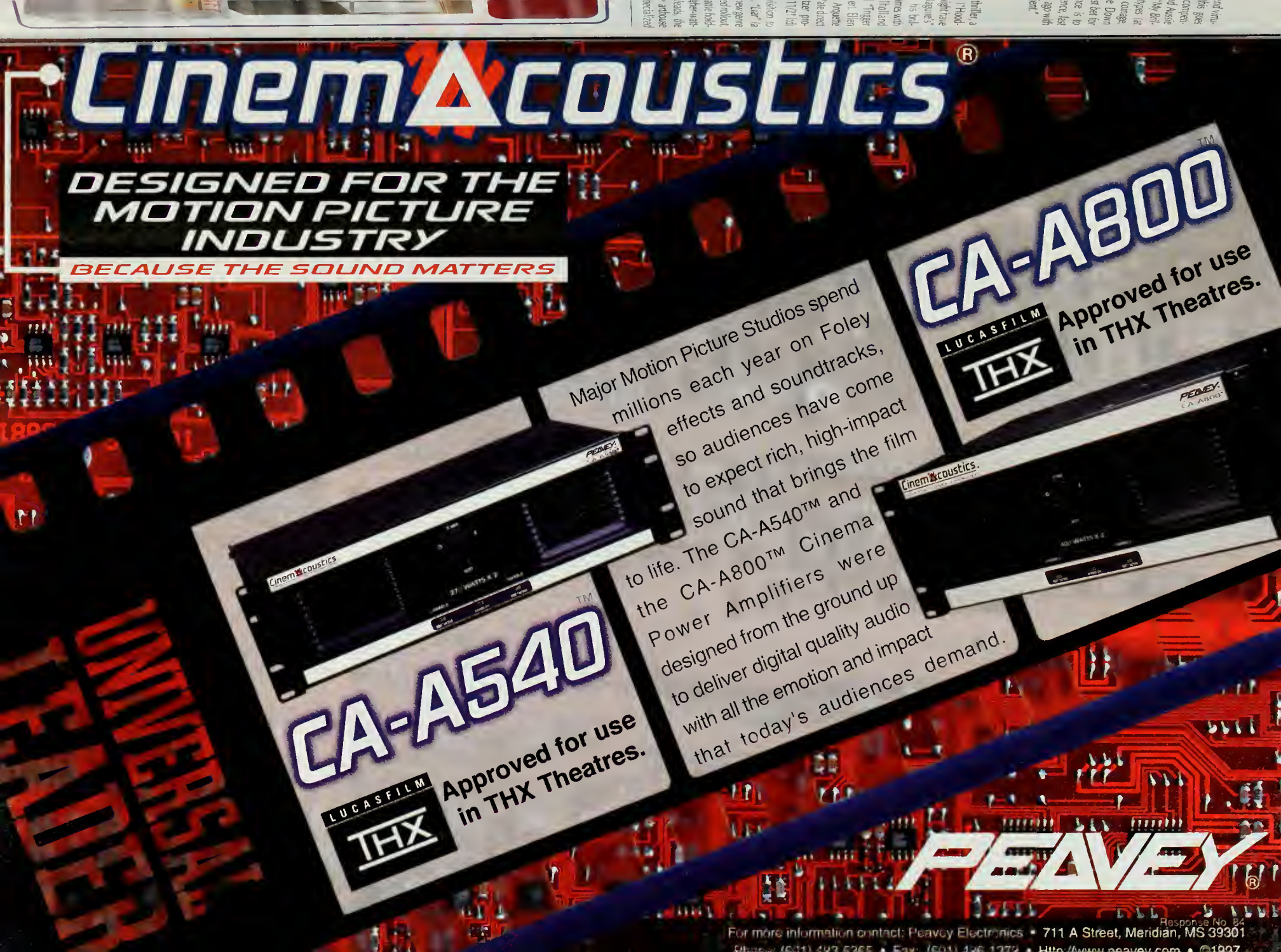
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level of turnout. Some extra media attention is likely given the fact that the directors are twins.

NOVEMBER 28

Alien Resurrection

Sigourney Weaver as Ripley again battles malevolent extraterrestrials in this fourth installment of the "Alien" franchise. This time out, evil scientists clone our hero to access the alien queen that died inside her body when Ripley suicided in "Alien^3." Winona Ryder co-stars with Dan Hedaya, Brad Dourif and two from "The City of Lost Children," Ron Perlman and Dominique Pinon. Jean-Pierre Jeunet (also "The City of Lost Children") directs; Joss Whedon ("Toy Story") scripts; David Giler, Walter Hill, Gordon Carroll and Bill Badalato produce. (Fox, 11/26)

Exploitips: *Fox goes for the gusto in its directing choices for this franchise. Though the artfully dark vision of David Fincher (who went on to make "Seven") of 1992's "Alien^3" didn't find wide audience support, the studio (after winning and then losing "Shallow Grave's" Danny Boyle) for this iteration went with Jeunet, whose offkilter vision (with co-director Marc Caro) drew foreign-language fans to "The City of Lost Children" and "Delicatessen." Will the arthouse aficionado fare well on the megaplex screen? That this is one of only two sequels this month should help; even as "Mortal Kombat: Annihilation" draws younger, this R-rater (for strong sci-fi violence and gore, some grotesque images and language) should trend older.*

Bent

Based on the stage play of the same name, "Bent" is an unconventional wartime love story that brings Nazi persecution of homosexuals into the spotlight. A suave, debonair playboy, Max (Clive Owen of "The Rich Man's Wife"), is living the decadent Berlin nightlife when Hitler's reign of terror begins. Max finds himself on the run from the SS and denying his identity—until he meets a similarly imperiled man, Horst (Lothaire Bluteau, also in "Other Voices, Other Rooms"). Ian McKellen ("Richard III"), Brian Webber and Mick Jagger co-star. Sean Mathias directs; Martin Sherman scripts; Michael Solinger and Dixie Linder produce. (Goldwyn/MGM, 11/26 ltd)



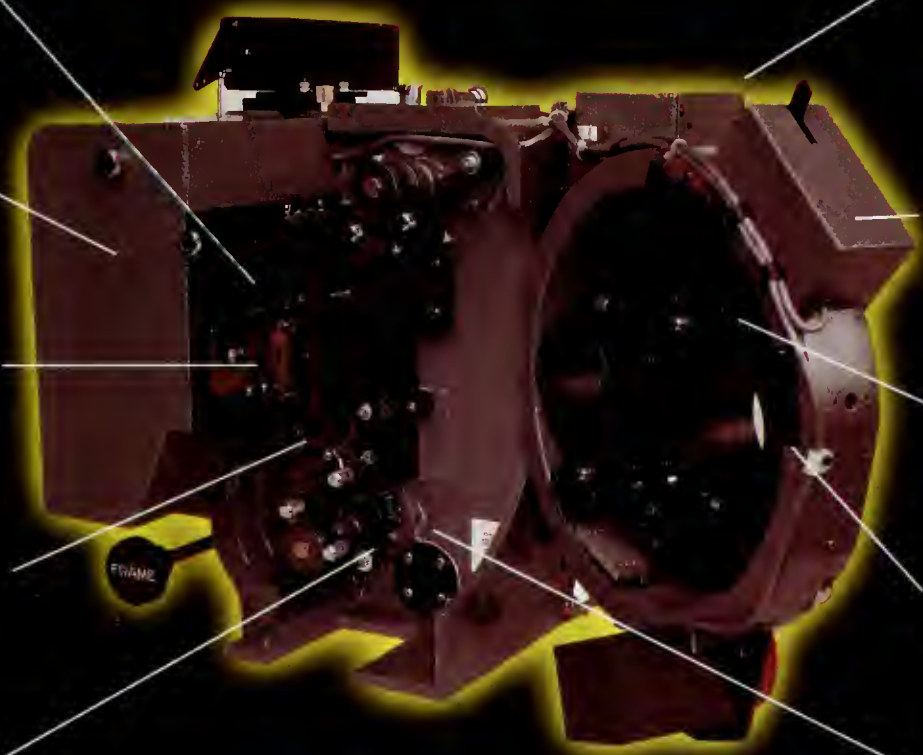
Exploitips: *This will draw crossover interest from generic arthouse patrons, but "Bent's" gay theme make it a natural for that specialized demo. To accentuate crossover, highlight the WWII setting; keep in mind that MGM's UA label release of "Richard III," a 12/95 opener, maxed at $2.6 million domestic.*

Never Met Picasso

In this whimsical dramatic comedy, an artist ("Wigstock: The Movie's" Alexis Arquette) who hasn't quite left the safety of home finds himself a member of a whole new Lost Generation. Meanwhile, Mom (Margot Kidder, best known for her "Superman" turn as Lois Lane) is seduced by her son's lesbian sculptor friend. Among the bohemian characters are the son's unstable beau ("Exotica's" Don McKellar) and an older gay

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FLUBBER

Robin Williams takes on the Fred MacMurray role in this remake of the 1961 family comedy "The Absent-Minded Professor." Williams plays a scientist who invents Flubber (a rubbery anti-gravity substance); Christopher MacDonald ("The Rich Man's Wife") plays the prof's nemesis who tries to purloin the putty. Marcia Gay Harden ("The First Wives Club") plays the prof's long-suffering fiancee, now updated to college president, and there's a flying robot assistant named WEEBO. Les Mayfield ("Encino Man") directs; John Hughes scripts, and he produces with former Hollywood Pictures head Ricardo Mestres. (Buena Vista, 11/26)

Exploitips: *Four years (and two days) ago, Williams and Hughes protege Chris Columbus launched the family comedy "Mrs. Doubtfire" to Thanksgiving-through-New Year success and a very domestic $220 million. Clearly, Disney hopes for that kind of number, vs. that for its previous Williams starrer, the 8/96 "Jack" ($59 million). The chances? Especially given its predictable PG rating (for slapstick action and mild language), not bad. Expect "Alien Resurrection" and "Red Corner" to draw the non-competing SF and adult demos; whatever competition the same-genre "The Man Who Knew Too Little" would have given "Flubber" has disappeared with Warner's move of it to the Nov. 14 frame.*

uncle. Georgia Ragsdale co-stars. Stephen Kijak directs, scripts and produces. (Turbulent Arts, 11/28)

Exploitips: *Expect strongest turnout from twentysomethings who can relate and from gay and lesbian auds. Some crossover might be generated via a gotta-see-this response to the Kidder presence, first for her change-of-pace role and second for her comeback from much-publicized physical and mental difficulties.*

NOV. UNDATED

Body Count

In a "Jade" reteaming, Linda Fiorentino and David Caruso star in this film about an art heist gone wrong. Ving Rhames ("Rosewood"), Forest Whitaker ("Species"), John Leguizamo ("The Pest") and Donnie Wahlberg ("Ransom") co-star. Robert Patton Spruill ("The Squeeze") directs. (Gramercy, Nov. undated)

Exploitips: *Unlike the similar-genre "Kiss or Kill" (see below), this has salable stateside star wattage, so expect some turnout from mainstreamers willing to venture into an arthouse hall. The genre and rating (R for strong violence and pervasive strong language) could also help pull males.*

Kiss or Kill

Down Under helmer Bill Bennett ("Two If By Sea") directs "Love and Other Catastrophes'" Frances O'Connor and Matt Day in this dramatic thriller about a grifter couple running from police across Australia's Nullarbor Desert. When a series of murders occur along their route, each suspects the other. Bennett also scripts and produces. (October Films, Nov. undated)

Exploitips: *Especially given its lack of known names, emphasize the Aussie heritage of this arthouse entry to attract fans of Down Under fare. And—as with Gramercy's "Body Count"—highlight the genre to help draw males into your theatre queue.*

The Leading Man

In this drama set amid London's theatre world, a playwright (Lambert Wilson) sleeping with his leading lady ("The Journey of August King's" Thandie Newton) asks his leading man ("Moonlight & Valentino's" Jon Bon Jovi) to sleep with his angry Italian wife ("The Hairdresser's Husband's" Anna Galiena)—with results that he had not intended. John Duigan (also "The Journey of August King") directs; Virginia Duigan scripts; Bertil Ohlsson and Paul Raphael produce. (Legacy, Nov. undated)

Exploitips: *Screened at the 1996 Toronto fest, "The Leading Man" won a three-star review from our critic, who said that the film is "fresh and unpredictable" and that rocker-turned-actor Bon Jovi in "the Sting role" has "genuine presence and charm." The Duigan and Newton names are known to and respected by the arthouse crowd, and a growing buzz about Bon Jovi's abilities and his continued MTV-audience popularity could rein youths.*

Tokyo Fist

In this sweaty and kinetic Japanese-language new-wave action movie, a corporate executive ("Tetsuo: The Ironman" filmmaker Shinya Tsukamoto, who also directs here) is unhappy to meet up with an old school friend (Kohji Tsukamoto), now a boxer. Their competitive jealousies increase when the exec's fiancee (Kahora Fujii) decides to move in with the pugilist. (Island Digital Media, Nov. undated)

Exploitips: *Not only did this move from October, but its distributor's name changed, from Manga—in part because the house was beginning to handle non-manga fare, and to show the label's Island corporate parentage. Quotably, Tsukamoto has been called "the Asian answer to William Gibson, William Burroughs, David Cronenberg and David Lynch," and "Tokyo Fist" has been described as "an assault and battery of a movie."*

Withnail & I

This re-release of the 1987 British comedy follows the misadventures of two self-absorbed and unemployed actors who endure a disastrous vacation in the English countryside. Richard E. Grant, Paul McGann and Richard Griffiths star. Bruce Robinson directs. (Northern Arts, Nov. undated)

Exploitips: *Emphasize the film's 10-year anniversary to lend this event status. Northern Arts moved this from September, perhaps wisely, given that month's overload (38 titles, per our October-issue Independent Feature Chart) versus that of November.*

Parallel Sons

An unlikely bond grows between a rural white teenager (Gabriel Mick) and an escaped urban-black convict (Laurence Mason). Murphy Guyer, Graham Alex Johnson, Heather Gottlieb and Josh Hopkins co-star. John G. Young directs and scripts; James Spione and Nancy Larson produce. (Greycat, Nov. undated)

Exploitips: *A much-moved film (Cinevista first planned a March '96 bow, then Greycat acquired it and targeted June and then November of last year, and then October of this year), "Parallel Sons" might be most effectively marketed to gay audiences through alternative media.*

Bollywood Cinema Series

Mani Ratnam's romantic "Roja" ("The Rose"), Sanjay Leela Bhansail's musical "Khamoshi" ("Silence"), Harry Baweja's "Romeo and Juliet" variant "Diljale" ("Heartbreak"), Shankar's politically campy "Hindustani" and Ashok Honda's biofilm "Rakshak" ("The Defender") travel as a sort of Indian film fest. (Phaedra, Nov. undated)

Exploitips: *Phaedra head Greg Hatanaka says that all five titles will be bookable to play during a one- to two-week period all together; individual titles that have drawn audience and press praise will then be made available for return solo engagements. His hope is that this strategy will build enough interest in this Indian fare to allow longer runs.*

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ekken 3	870
t. Fighter 3	725
ampire Savior 33"	596
ruisin' USA 2 player	552
ime Crisis 50"	451
laximum Force 39"	445
Men vs. St. Fighter	273
Police Trainer	259

CHICAGO, IL - Week ending 6/2/9

1) HOUSE OF DEAD	$1,03
2) Tekken 3	6
3) Cruisin' World 1	5
4) XMen vs. St. Fighter	48
5) Cruisin' World	45
6) Area 51	33
7) SF Rush Twin	32
8) Lucky & Wild	25
9) Police Trainer	23
10) Cops	22

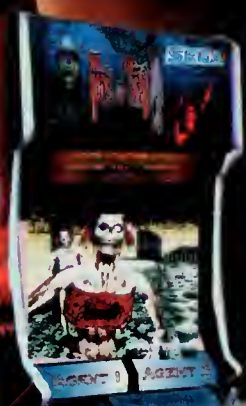






SEATTLE, WA - Avg. Week for Month of May 1997

1) HOUSE OF DEAD #1	$2,683
2) HOUSE OF DEAD #2	2,348
3) Alpine Surfer #1	1,642
4) Alpine Racer	1,472
5) Alpine Surfer #2	1,383
6) Rail Chase II #1	1,232
7) Alpine Racer 2 #1	1,228
8) Alpine Racer 2 #2	1,218
9) Rail Chase II #2	1,101
10) Maximum Force	1,055





DECEMBER

DECEMBER 5

Office Killer

In this black-comic horror film, Carol Kane ("The Princess Bride") stars as a mousy murderer prowling a magazine company's halls after her boss-from-hell, a career-obsessed assistant and a paranoid colleague. Molly Ringwald, Jeanne Tripplehorn and Barbara Sukowa co-star. Photographer/artist Cindy Sherman makes her directing debut; Tom Kalin scripts; Christine Vachon produces for Good Machine's horror/art label, Good Fear. (Strand, 12/3 NY, 12/5 LA, 12/12 SF)

Exploitips: *Originally slated to go out via Miramax on (this is Miramax all over) Secretary's Day, "Office Killer" now punches in for Strand. Expect at least a modicum of gleanable press cites from the film's Toronto fest appearance, and play up the seasonal counterprogramming with a comic catchline like: "Not feeling festive at work? Here's one way to celebrate: murder."*

The Mother and the Whore

This reissue of the controversial 3 1/2-hour French film (winner at the '73 Cannes of a special grand jury prize and the international critics prize) explores the relationships among three children raised in the '60s counterculture who are both the heroes and victims of sexual liberation. Bernadette Lafont, Jean-Pierre Leaud and Francoise Lebrun star. Jean Eustache directs. (Artificial Eye, 12/2 NY)

Exploitips: *Highlight the 25th anniversary angle with a catchline like "the film that inflamed audiences 25 years ago returns." For serious arthousers, the film's French-language nature is a plus.*

DECEMBER 12

Amistad

Steven Speilberg, in his first serious film since "Schindler's List," tackles issues of slavery and justice in this drama based on a true story. In summer 1839, 53 African captives led by Cinque (Djimon Hounsou, also in the similar "Ill Gotten Gains") take over the slave ship Amistad but, failing in their attempt to sail home, are forced to confront the American justice system. Abolitionist Theodore Joadson ("Kiss the Girls'" Morgan Freeman) and young lawyer Roger Baldwin ("A Time to Kill's" Matthew McConaughey) ready a defense, but President Martin Van Buren ("Twelfth Night's" Nigel Hawthorne) wants to appease the pro-slavery South. Anthony Hopkins,



Pete Postlethwaite, David Paymer and Stellan Skarsgaard ("Breaking the Waves") co-star. David Franzoni and Steven Zaillian (also "Schindler's List") script; Spielberg, Debbie Allen and Colin Wilson produce. *See this issue's Sneak Preview.* (DreamWorks, 12/12 ltd, 12/25 exp)

Exploitips: *This looks to be a solid performer, just as a dozen years ago Spielberg's "The Color Purple" pulled. Although the storyline here might not be as mainstream-wide as is other upcoming Christmas fare, "Amistad" is likely to generate great press attention, thus cranking up audience interest. A dynamic cast could also help word of mouth travel inward from the coasts as the film nears its Christmas Day expansion. Expect the Spielberg name to free up boxoffice gold.*

Senseless

In this Penelope Spheeris ("The Little Rascals") comedy, a cash-starved college student ("The 6th Man's" Marlon Wayans) works four jobs but still can't pay his bills. He agrees to participate in a university medical experiment that is supposed to heighten his senses, which it does—until he starts to experience bouts when he completely lacks one of his senses, leading to comically embarrassing events. David Spade and Rip Torn co-star. David Hoberman and Eric L. Gold produce. (Miramax, 12/12 wide)

Exploitips: *This is likely to pull in urban auds wanting lighter fare than "Amistad" (and none too interested in New York angst; see next item), and it should draw well from the suburban twenty-something and on-Christmas-break ivy-campus crowds. So highlight Spheeris' "Wayne's World" credit, even if a bit dated.*

Deconstructing Harry

In this latest Woody Allen self-reflexive comedy, Allen plays a writer whose life is an erratic series of very nervous romances. Kirstie Alley, Richard Benjamin, Billy Crystal, Judy Davis ("Husbands and Wives"), Mariel Hemingway ("Manhattan"), Amy Irving, Julie Kavner ("Shadows and Fog"), Julia Louis-Dreyfus, Demi Moore, Elisabeth Shue, Stanley Tucci and Robin Williams star. Allen directs and scripts; Jean Doumanian produces. (Fine Line, 12/12 NY/LA/Tor)

Exploitips: *Although Miramax handled Allen's last three films, Fine Line acquired North American rights to this at Cannes (with part of the $10.5 million pact being that the distributor would release Barbara Kopple's documentary about Allen's jazz band's European tour). In the '90s, Allen's seven films have averaged just $8.75 million domestically, but Fine Line is likely to toil extra hard for success here.*

DECEMBER 19

Mr. Magoo

In this Walt Disney effort, nearsighted millionaire Quincy Magoo ("Spy Hard's" Leslie Neilsen) has a stolen gem land in his possession. Targeted by bad guys who want it back, the bumbling Magoo—just like in the cartoons that Jim Backus memorably voiced—consistently escapes dangerous treacheries unharmed and oblivious. Added to the mix are a nephew, Waldo, and a bulldog, Angus. Kelly Lynch, Ernie Hudson and Malcolm McDowell co-star. Stanley Tong (the Hong Kong helmer noted for such Jackie Chan fare as "Rumble in the Bronx") directs; Pat Proft and Tom Sherohman script; Ben Myron ("One Night Stand") produces. *See our July '97 issue Sneak Preview.* (Buena Vista, 12/19)

Exploitips: *Already shellacked by conservative and religious groups for certain of its non-children's film fare and for its gay-partner employee policy, Disney has taken new heat from the National Federation for the Blind for what the group sees as a ridiculing of the blind inherent in the Magoo character. Disney's response—that Magoo is nearsighted, not blind—didn't seem to help matters much. Controversy can help a film like "The Crying Game," but it's rarely a boon for a family film. Then again, it might simply not matter; animal groups fearing a wave of unwise pet adoptions protested "101 Dalmatians," and that made $136 million domestic. Nonetheless, antics-full sell techniques by exhibitors might be unwise here.*

Home Alone 3

This third installment of the John Hughes child-caper comedy series that made a star out of Macaulay Culkin returns with a new eight-year-old. Alex D. Linz ("One Fine Day") stars as Alex Pruitt, who—left home alone with the chicken pox by mom (Haviland Morris)—finds himself facing off with international thieves looking for top-secret defense plans that have been hidden inside the mechanical components of a toy car. Olek Krupa, Rya Kihlstedt, David Thorton and Lenny Von Dohlen play the clumsy but deadly foreign thieves. Kevin Kilner, Seth Smith and Scarlett Johansson (also in "The Horse Whisperer") co-star; Raja Gosnell (who edited both "Home Alone" efforts) makes his directorial debut; Hughes again scripts, and he produces with Ricardo Mestres. (Fox, 12/19)

Exploitips: *At one time, this was tentatively a summer title, despite the holiday success of the first two iterations. The wholesale switchout of cast—not only is Culkin gone, but so are Catherine O'Hara and John Heard as the forgetful parents and Joe Pesci and Daniel Stern as the bumbling bad guys—might have been necessary in creative terms (witness recent non-response to "Free Willy 3") but in audience terms could be a turnoff (just as successful movies made into TV series must surmount loyalty-based audience antipathy). Also, this one gets a comparatively late start: "Home Alone" bowed 11/16/90, winning $282 million domestically, and the sequel opened 11/20/92, finishing with $173 million. Still, in this "we're-going-to-the-movies" season, the real battle is vs. "Mr. Magoo," and parents might decide this PG fare (for slapstick violence, language and mild sensuality) is more family-ish.*



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Response No. 29

The Mighty

In this imaginative comedy/drama, two outcast boys—Maxwell Kane, a giant, slow-witted boy, and Kevin, a tiny, sickly but super-intelligent child—team up to face fights with local hoods and also adventures both mythical and real. Sharon Stone, Kieran Culkin, Gillian Anderson (TV's "The X-Files"), Harry Dean Stanton and Gena Rowlands co-star. Peter Chelsom (the success d'estime "Funny Bones") directs; Charles Leavitt ("Sunchaser") and Rodman Philbrick adapt Philbrick's novel; Simon Fields and Jane Startz produce. (Miramax, 12/19 NY/LA, 1/16/98 wide)

Exploitips: *One critic called "Funny Bones" "extraordinarily strange," and this one sounds not all that ordinary also. From the days of its disastrous launch of 1993's "Into the West," Miramax has wanted to establish a family label; even more than with Miramax's recent "Wide Awake," the question here seems to be whether it wants to pull children to stories about children or adults to stories about children.*

The Winter Guest

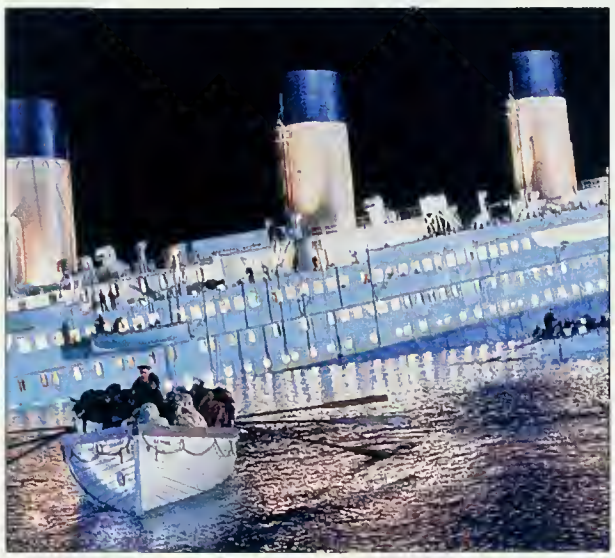
British actor Alan Rickman ("Michael Collins") makes his directing debut with this drama about a strong-willed mother ("Sense and Sensibility's" Phyllida Law) who arrives bringing unsolicited advice, opinions and emotion into the Scottish seaside home of her recently widowed daughter (Emma Thompson, Law's "Sense and Sensibility" co-star and also her real-life daughter) on a day so cold the sea has frozen. Rickman and Sharman Macdonald adapt Macdonald's play; Ed Pressman, Ken Lipper and Steve Clark-Hall produce. (Fine Line, 12/19 NY/LA/Tor)

Exploitips: *Screened at Montreal, this won a 3 1/2-star review from our critic and is likely to build a cache of arthouse-oriented praise before opening. Despite Thompson's wide appeal and Rickman's fame as the original "Die Hard" bad guy, "The Winter Guest" is resolutely specialized fare; although its opening-date competition is "The Mighty," given its dramatics it will also do battle through the holidays with other arthouse fare (like "The Sweet Hereafter," also from Fine Line) but also serious studio efforts like "Kundun" and "The Boxer." One might forecast split votes, although the Thompson name should certainly help.*

Will It Snow for Christmas?

This French-language drama follows the lives of a mother and her seven illegitimate children growing up on a farm in southern France, where their poor but happy lives are intermittently interrupted by their unpredictable, tyrannical father. Dominique Reymond and Daniel Duval star. Sandrine Veysset scripts and makes her directing debut; Humbert Balsan ("The Proprietor") produces. (Zeitgeist, 12/17 NY)

Exploitips: *A seasonal tie-in by title or storyline is never a bad thing, though it's probably more helpful on a studio title like a "Home Alone" than for an arthouse entry. As always, if it's foreign-language, that it's the French language being spoken is a plus.*



V
S



TITANIC

Writer/director James Cameron ("True Lies") recreates the ill-fated 1912 maiden voyage of the luxury liner Titanic in this epic adventure/romance. Using historical and fictional characters, this joint-studio production (Paramount has domestic distribution rights, Fox has foreign) follows the onboard love story between the aristocratic Rose ("Sense and Sensibility's" Kate Winslet) and steerage passenger Jack (Leonardo DiCaprio of "Romeo & Juliet"). Billy Zane ("The Phantom"), Kathy Bates ("Dolores Claiborne"), Frances Fisher ("Female Perversions"), Bernard Hill, Jonathan Hyde, Danny Nucci, David Warner and Bill Paxton ("Twister") co-star. Cameron and Jon Landau produce for Lightstorm. (Paramount, 12/19)

Exploitips: *Our advice, back when this was a 7/2 release, was that exhibitors already blessed with "Men In Black" should play up the romance of the DiCaprio/Winslet pairing with a catchline like "a voyage into love—and legend." Now what was "MIB" has become "Tomorrow Never Dies," and our advice remains the same. Admittedly, it'll take quite a romance to make "Titanic's" maybe $200 million cost worthwhile, but that's a studio worry; exhibitors need only fill their theatres for this to work for them. Early buzz on the Internet from a midwestern work-in-progress sneak was quite good, citing a mix of adventure and romance that could work for both genders.*

TOMORROW NEVER DIES

James Bond is back for the 18th installment of the longest-running franchise in film history. Pierce Brosnan returns as Agent 007 in this action/adventure; this time out, the debonair secret agent takes on a dangerously powerful media mogul ("Carrington's" Jonathan Pryce) and crosses paths with, of course, two beautiful women: Teri Hatcher ("Heaven's Prisoners") plays the media mogul's wife who shares a secret past with Bond, and "Supercop's" Michelle Yeoh plays an Asian agent who becomes a formidable ally to 007. Roger Spottiswoode ("Air America") directs; Bruce Feirstein scripts; Michael G. Wilson and Barbara Broccoli again produce the Broccoli/Eon production. *See this issue's Cover Story.* (UA, 12/19)

Exploitips: *When MGM's fall-season press kit is opened, a microchip plays the Bond theme—signaling just how important this UA title is to the Lion, which announced in September it was going public. Exhibitors can expect a full-court press to get "Tomorrow Never Dies" booked into a majority of prime theatres, "Titanic" or no, but exhibitors can also expect a full-court press via the adwoves to position this as the film to see as Christmas vacation opens. It's likely, in this megaplex era, that both films will be able to boast of smashing opening-weekend numbers, and each—unless word of mouth is bad—can expect to be a major force right through the New Year.*

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Response No. 473

DECEMBER 26

The Horse Whisperer

Robert Redford directs and stars in this drama/romance, an adaptation of the best-selling novel by Nicholas Evans. When a girl (Scarlett Johansson, also in "Home Alone 3") and her prized horse are terribly wounded in a riding accident, her sophisticated mother ("The English Patient's" Kristin Scott Thomas), seeing that the fate of her daughter rests on the animal's recovery, seeks out the help of a "horse whisperer" (Redford), a rural man with a gift for curing troubled horses. Love blossoms between the man and woman. Sam Neill, Dianne Wiest and Chris Cooper co-star. Eric Roth ("Forrest Gump") and Richard LaGravenese ("A Little Princess") script; Redford produces with Patrick Markey. *See photo, P. 30.* (Buena Vista, 12/25 wide)

Exploitips: *Especially given the project's strong distaff leaning, this is likely to be the bookstore tie-in of the season. Scott Thomas' "The English Patient" credit should help further. And one can see why the Montanan Redford would be drawn to this project, although it was seven years ago when many questioned the believability of Redford as a romantic lead opposite Lena Olin in Christmas 1990's "Havana."*

The Postman

Kevin Costner moves behind the camera for the first time since



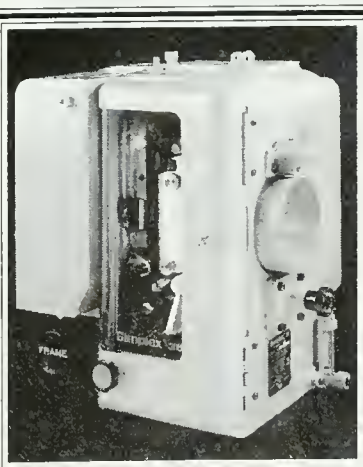
"Dances With Wolves" with this futuristic adventure set in a ruined American West, where the nation's infrastructure lies in shambles. In this milieu, one isolated township dreams of making contact with other struggling settlements, despite the divisive grip of a general ("Inventing the Abbotts'" Will Patton) and his army. When a stranger (Costner), who's posing as a postman simply to get a meal and a place to stay, arrives in the town, his presence brings hope, inspiring the townspeople to fight back against the general and forcing The Postman to decide whether to stay and fight or to abandon his new identity. Larenz Tate ("love jones") and newcomer Olivia Williams co-star. Eric Roth (also "The Horse Whisperer") and Brian Helgeland ("L.A. Confidential") adapt David Brin's novel; Costner produces with longtime partner Jim Wilson and Steve Tisch. (Warner Bros., 12/25)

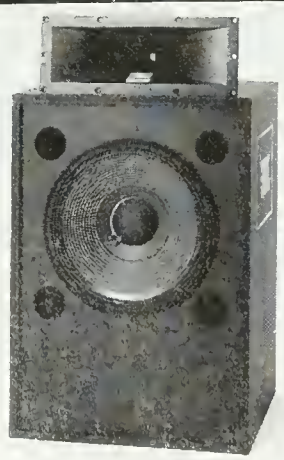
Exploitips: *Audiences will recall the Oscar-draped "Dances With Wolves" with pleasure; on the other hand, "The Postman's" dystopian future setting could conjure images of "Waterworld," which is remembered as a colossal failure, fairly or not. Given Costner's mature approach to filmmaking, likely competition will be Redford's "The Horse Whisperer"; Scorsese's "Kundun"; Jim Sheridan's "The Boxer," though that remains limited until 1/9/98; and Clint Eastwood's "Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil." The Christmas season obviously expands the available moviegoing audience greatly, but it's unlikely all five will be blockbusters; going in, the popularity of the Costner name, like that of Redford and Eastwood, could give this an edge over the more cineaste-leaning Scorsese and Sheridan.*

Jackie Brown

This latest from Quentin Tarantino, based on the crime caper novel "Rum Punch" by Elmore Leonard, follows the adventures of smuggling stewardess Jackie Brown ('70s blaxploitation film star Pam Grier), who is busted by federal agents and forced to set up a sting operation to bring in a half-million dollars and bring down a gun runner; she, of course, has other plans. Samuel L. Jackson (also in "Eve's Bayou"), Robert Forster, Bridget Fonda, Michael Keaton and Robert De Niro co-star. Tarantino directs and scripts; Lawrence Bender (another "Pulp Fiction"-eer, as well as overseer of this month's "Good Will Hunting") produces. *See the Sneak Preview in this issue.* (Miramax, 12/25 wide)

Exploitips: *On the one hand, there're the likes of Scorsese and*





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Response No. 51

Sheridan; on the other, there's pop filmmaker extraordinaire Tarantino. "Jackie Brown" isn't as star-heavy (and thus mainstream-pulling) as "Pulp Fiction" (for one thing, Grier never had the worldwide fame of Travolta to lose and regain), and "Pulp Fiction" bowed more than three years ago on a 10/14/94 date on which its competitors were offering only the likes of "Exit to Eden" and "Little Giants." Will this, like Tarantino's previous, crack $100 million? Expect strong media attention and larger-market audience interest on weekend #1; the rest is up to Tarantino.

As Good As It Gets

An unlikely bond forms among three New York neighbors that don't appear to have anything in common: an old, curmudgeonly romance novelist (Jack Nicholson), a cafe waitress juggling the responsibilities of single parenthood ("Twister's" Helen Hunt) and a gay artist whose career is at a crossroads ("A Smile Like Yours'" Greg Kinnear). All are brought together by a dog named Verdell in this comedy (aka "Old Friends") from filmmaker James L. Brooks. Cuba Gooding Jr. ("Jerry Maguire"), Skeet Ulrich ("Scream") and Shirley Knight co-star. Brooks directs, and he also scripts with Mark Andrus and produces with Kristi Zea and Bridget Johnson. (TriStar, 12/25)

Exploitips: *Even more than the Brooks imprimatur, it's the diverse casting here that promises diverse demo pull. (Nicholson, Hunt and Gooding: Now that's a picture.) The fact that this is much lighter fare than that coming from Brooks' esteemed fellows like Costner and Scorsese, yet still comes from a significant filmmaker, also singles this one out. Expect "For Richer or Poorer" and "Mousehunt" to provide some competition, although the former could skew to particularly undemanding audiences and the latter lacks major-star firepower.*

For Richer or Poorer

Tim Allen and Kirstie Alley star in this romantic comedy about a high-living, unhappily married couple who find themselves owing the IRS millions in back taxes when their accountant rips them off and disappears. A wrong turn on the way out of the country lands them in Amish country, where they hide out by posing as long-lost relatives. As the sophisticated couple adjusts to their new lifestyle, they rediscover their love for each other. Larry Miller co-stars. Bryan Spicer ("McHale's Navy") directs; Jana Howington and Steven LuKanic script; Sid, Jon and Bill Sheinberg produce for their Bubble Factory house. (Universal, 12/25)

Exploitips: *All the Bubble Factory efforts ("Flipper," "The Pest," "McHale's Navy," "A Simple Wish") have performed so poorly that Universal ended its production pact with Bubble, despite Sid Sheinberg's previous two decades at the MCA helm. Although Bubble Factory might now have the same negative connotation with exhibitors that Savoy once built up, Tim Allen and Kirstie Alley have significant mainstream pull that none of the Bubble-production stars have before. Those audiences aren't going to know a Bubble from a Balloon, and what they like more than anything is a they-live-happily-ever-after romantic comedy.*

Mousehunt

Two down-on-their-luck brothers, Ernie ("The Birdcage's" Nathan Lane) and Lars (Lee Evans), are surprised to learn the old mansion they have inherited is worth millions. Before they can cash in, however, they must rid the house of a tenacious mouse—a stubborn creature who has no intention of vacating the premises. Maury Chaykin and Christopher Walken co-star. Gore Verbinski directs; Adam Rifkin ("The Chase") scripts; Alan Riche, Tony Ludwig and Bruce Cohen produce. (DreamWorks, 12/25)

Exploitips: *This first comedy from DreamWorks, aside from its SKG moniker, has only Lane's "Birdcage" credit to flaunt. One should be able to expect a dreamy DreamWorks push, although the company's attention might quite understandably be weighted toward taking care of its same-day expansion of its co-founder's "Amistad." Key competition is likely to come from TriStar's higher-profile "As Good As It Gets"; "Mousehunt" might need to not so quietly hunt for good word-of-mouth to give it a better shot come weekend #2.*

Kundun

In 1937, a two-year-old boy from a peasant Tibetan family is recognized as the 14th reincarnation of the Buddha of love and compassion; he is destined as the new Dalai Lama to become his country's spiritual and political leader. Directed by Martin Scorsese, this drama recounts the Tibetan's life from childhood through the 1950 Chinese invasion and

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the crushed rebellion at decade's end and on into his time in exile. Tenzin Thuthob Tsarong, Kunga J. Tenzin and Tenzin Gyalpo star. Melissa Mathison (best known for "E.T.") scripts; Barbara De Fina (Scorsese's "Casino") produces. (Buena Vista, 12/25 ltd)

Exploitips: *The $35 million "Kundun," originally a Universal turnaround project, has been a cultural and political headache for Disney Co., which has been trying to open the vast Chinese marketplace to sell its many product lines. Although UGC was sold all "Kundun" distribution rights except for the North American and United Kingdom markets, China—a country in which many Disney toys also are made—still IDs this as Disney Co. fare. The now-departed Michael Ovitz was able to woo Scorsese (whom Ovitz agented while at CAA) from his longtime MCA home into a two-picture deal at the Mouse House by backing his "Kundun." But—unless this delivers a good-hearted emotional wallop (hardly the Scorsese signature) that transcends America's "Tenzin" resistance to stories of other cultures —this looks to be a domestic prestige item for the studio, working best in select-site bookings.*

The Boxer

A once-promising fighter returns home after spending 13 years in a British prison, only to find his city of Belfast now a place full of hatred and desolation. He returns to the ring, determined to find a way out of the legacy of despair, and he rekindles a romance with his former lover ("Breaking the Waves'" Emily Watson), who now has both a husband who's himself in prison and a teenaged son that she is raising. In a creative reteaming of four "In the Name of the Father" principals, Daniel Day-Lewis stars, Jim Sheridan directs, Sheridan scripts with Terry George, and Sheridan produces with Arthur Lappin for Hell's Kitchen. (Universal, 12/26 ltd, 1/9/98 wide)



Exploitips: *The prestige project "In the Name of the Father" pulled just $24 million for Uni after a 12/93 opening, and that was with Emma Thompson aboard. And that was $10 million better than the Sheridan/Day-Lewis "My Left Foot" managed with a best-picture Oscar. Although Day-Lewis did draw $74 million for "The Last of the Mohicans," most likely "The Boxer" is a title an exhibitor can book with and for pride, knowing it'll pull select serious audiences.*

The Big Lebowski

In this comedy/thriller from the Coen brothers ("Fargo"), a man named Jeff Lebowski, aka The Dude, is confronted by gangsters who demand that his wife repay a loan. Puzzled, the unmarried Dude learns there's a millionaire Jeff Lebowski in town, but what he thinks is just a case of mistaken identity worsens as double-crossing, thievery, revenge and bowling follow. Jeff Bridges stars with an ensemble cast that includes Julianne Moore ("The Myth of Fingerprints"), "Fargo's" Peter Stormare and "Barton Fink"-ers John Goodman, John Turturro, Steve Buscemi and Jon Polito. Joel Coen directs; Ethan Coen produces; both Coens script. (Gramercy, 12/25 NY/LA)

Exploitips: *After the brilliant big-budget bomb "The Hudsucker Proxy," the Coens needed a hit; now after the long-running and Oscar-winning "Fargo," audiences are likely to say "yah" to their next. Based on that, and bravely forgetting the results from its last forays ("The Portrait of a Lady," "I'm Not Rappaport") into the high-stakes holiday season, Gramercy has long slated this for Christmas Day. Expect this to be the movie of choice for those who aren't looking for the archness of the arthouse but want to avoid the pabulum of the megaplex. Of course, step one is to highlight the Coens' "Fargo" credit.*

The Sweet Hereafter

In a small Canadian town, a school bus accident kills dozens of children. With the residents variously trying to deal with the tragedy, a big-city lawyer ("The Fifth Element's" Ian Holm) arrives with promises of lawsuit riches. Some become clients; then a survivor has a crisis of conscience, and her decision transforms the town. Sarah Polley and Maury Chaykin co-star. Atom Egoyan ("Exotica") directs and adapts the Russell Banks novel, and he produces with Camelia Frieberg. (Fine Line, 12/24 NY/LA)

Exploitips: *Although Cannes winners have an uneven record stateside, "The Sweet Hereafter" did win three promotable awards, including the Grand Jury nod. In a four-star review (August issue), our Cannes critic said this "stirring portrait of a community struggling to heal" is "distinguished by an array of fine performances, Egoyan's signature evocative camera work, and a story that leaves one thinking without heavy-handed moralizing." The coastal bow could give this arthouser time to win more citable U.S. review support.*

Ma Vie en Rose

In this French-language comedy, whose title translates as "My Life in Pink," a married couple (Jean-Philippe Ecoffey and Michele Laroque) have a new and happy suburban life except for one thing: Their nine-year-old son (Georges du Fresne) believes that he's a girl. Although Dad initially is far less than understand-

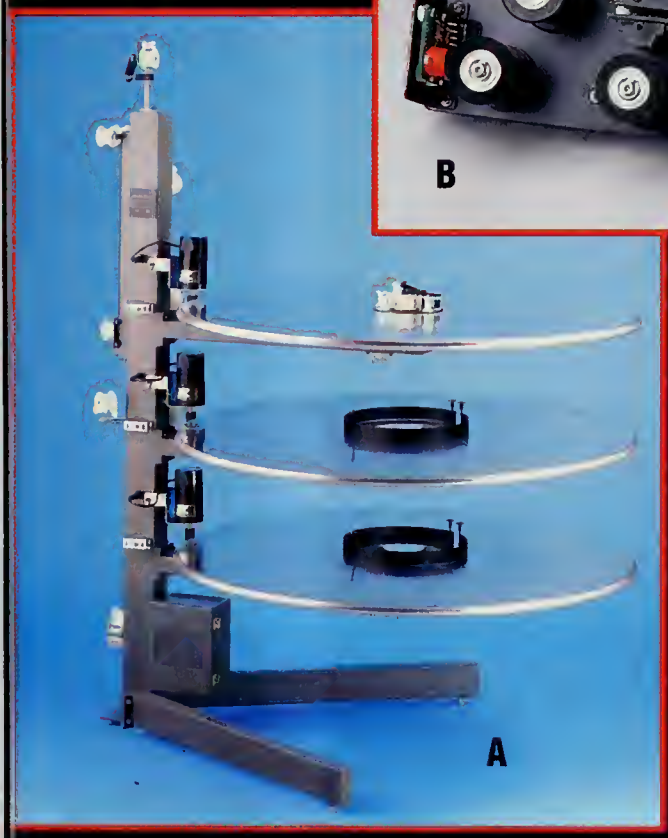


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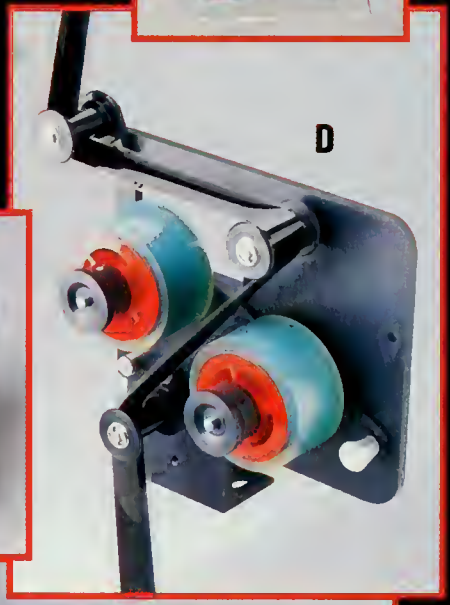
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ing but Mom comes to his support, when social pressures set in the parents experience role reversals. Belgian Alain Berliner makes his directing debut, and he scripts with Chris Vander Stappen; Carole Scotta produces. (Sony Classics, 12/25 NY/LA)

Exploitips: *In a glowing four-star review, our Cannes critic (September issue) said this "rare gem" was "a scathingly funny, brutally critical commentary on gender roles and bourgeois thinking.... [Berliner] deftly renders his cinematic suburbia at once real and surreal, with a tone that manages to be both hilarious and affecting. Amid a color palette of extremes—cotton candy-pink dresses, an electric blue sky—Berliner's characters exist in a Magritte paradise." Expect superb arthouse numbers into January.*

Good Will Hunting

Matt Damon ("The Rainmaker") stars as Will Hunting, a remarkably bright but defiant young man from South Boston whose only hope to avoid a pending jail sentence is therapist Sean McGuire (Robin Williams, in "Dead Poets Society" mold), a former college professor with an admiration for Hunting's emotional struggles. Stellan Skarsgaard (also in "Amistad"), Ben Affleck ("Chasing Amy") and Minnie Driver ("Grosse Pointe Blank") co-star. Gus Van Sant ("To Die For") directs; Matt Damon and Ben Affleck script; Lawrence Bender (also "Jackie Brown") produces. (Miramax, 12/25 NY/LA, 1/9/98 wide)

Exploitips: *Given its close ties to Bender, Miramax—which has been accused of a see-what-sticks release approach—will be providing this full support; Williams' presence plus the platform release suggest the distributor expects strong coastal response to help persuade midlands auds to try out Van Sant product. If Coppola's "The Rainmaker" has been a hit, the Damon name will be a young-crowd pull.*

DECEMBER 31

Great Expectations

This modern-day retelling of Charles Dickens' classic novel follows the journey of aspiring artist Finn Bell ("Gattaca's" Ethan Hawke), whose life is invaded by a dangerous convict named Lustig (Robert De Niro), the beautiful but icy Estella ("The Pallbearer's" Gwyneth Paltrow) and an old, crazed eccentric, Nora Dinsmoor ("G.I. Jane's" Anne Bancroft). Chris Cooper ("Lone Star") and Hank Azaria ("The Birdcage") co-star. Alfonso Cuaron ("A Little Princess") directs; Mitch Glazer ("Three of Hearts") scripts; now Fox-based, Art Linson ("The Edge") produces. (Fox, 12/31 ltd, 1/16 wide)



Exploitips: *Last year's big literary adaptation—"The Crucible," also from Fox—underperformed ticket and Oscar expectations, and that was with the august Daniel Day-Lewis in the lead. Although Hawke in comparison might recall a certain vice-presidential tongue-lashing ("I knew Jack Kennedy, and you're no Jack Kennedy"), perhaps his teaming with Paltrow and the contemporary setting will pull the necessary twentysomething crowd. Cuaron's touch was near-perfect directing "A Little Princess," though that's hardly a salable credit. Despite the update, a bookstore tie-in could aid on the distaff side.*

O Amor Natural

This documentary focuses on a posthumously published book of erotic poetry by the Brazilian Carolos Drummond de Andrade and on its effects for everyday elderly Brazilians reflecting on love and sex. Heddy Honigmann ("Metal and Melancholy") directs and scripts; Pieter van Huystee produces. (First Run, 12/31)

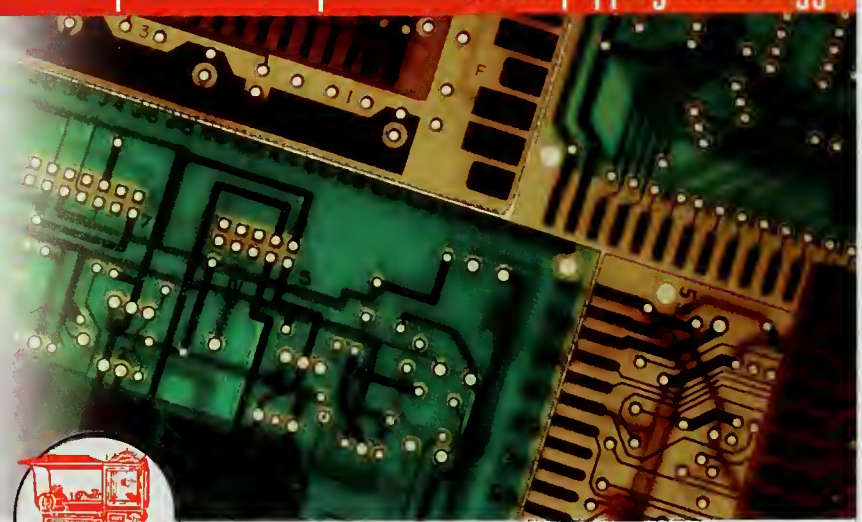
Exploitips: *Documentaries don't sell, but sex does, so emphasize the subject matter's erotic nature and the exotic Brazilian setting. Given that this is for very specialized moviegoers, that the source material is a book of poetry is actually a selling point.*

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Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil

Based on the best-selling novel, this evocative drama stars John Cusack ("Con Air") as a young writer from New York on assignment to cover a Christmas party thrown by a wealthy antiques dealer, Jim Williams ("L.A. Confidential's" Kevin Spacey). When Williams is arrested for murder, however, the writer's article evolves into a book about a murder trial, Southern gentility, old-world social graces, family wealth, illicit romances and sudden violence. Jude Law ("Gattaca") and Jack Thompson ("Excess Baggage") co-star. Clint Eastwood directs; John Lee Hancock ("A Perfect World") adapts the John Berendt book; Eastwood produces with Arnold Stiefel for Silver Pictures and A.P. Productions. (Warner Bros., Dec. undated)

Exploitips: *Behind the camera in the '90s, Eastwood has been hit ($101 million for "Unforgiven," $72 million for "The Bridges of Madison County") and miss (together, "White Hunter, Black Heart," "The Rookie" and "A Perfect World" made barely $50 million). The solid cast here—including the Oscar-minted Spacey—and the always popular Eastwood name (even without Clint on camera) promise good results, perhaps near the $60 million that "Absolute Power" generated. A bookstore tie-in should pay dividends, as with several other films this month.*

DEC. UNDATED

Cousin Bette

This comic adapation of the classic novel by Honore de Balzac tells the 1840s story of the aristocratic Julot family, replete with adultery, fortune hunting and characters of suspicious virtue. Jessica Lange, Kelly MacDonald ("Trainspotting"), Elisabeth Shue ("The Saint") and Bob Hoskins star. Stage director Des McAnuff makes his movie helming debut. (Fox Searchlight, Dec. undated)

Exploitips: *Obviously art-house material—say "Balzac" to many, and they might guess it's a video game—"Cousin Bette" wades into a month made for specialized material, of course meaning there's lots of competition. The quality cast raises this a notch above most, so emphasize the names. Expect a bookstore tie-in to draw the distaff demo.*

Underground

Miki Manojlovic, Lazar Ristovski and Mirjana Jokovic star in this Serbo-Croatian production that, spanning a 50-year time period, tells the story of World War II refugees who, not knowing the war is long over, remain hidden in a Belgrade cellar. When the

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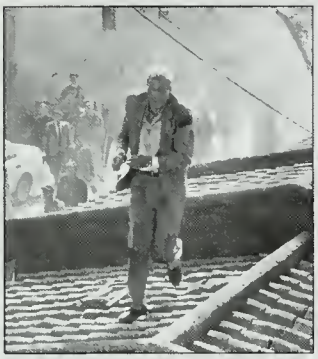
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RED CORNER

In this thriller, a savvy entertainment lawyer (Richard Gere) comes to China to broker a big TV deal. While celebrating, he seduces a beautiful Chinese woman. Awaking the next morning, he finds himself accused of raping and murdering her. Caught in a legal system that affords no presumption of innocence and provided a skeptical court-appointed attorney (Bai Ling), he faces imminent execution. Jon Avnet ("The War") directs, and he produces with Jordan Kerner, Rosalie Swedlin and Charles Mulvehill; Ron Koslow ("Last Dance") scripts with Robert King. (MGM, 10/31)



Exploitips: *This looked to be boxed into a corner itself when "Red Corner" was slated for 11/26, not only versus "Alien Resurrection" but also just 12 days after audiences had seen Gere in "The Jackal." In a superb date move, this now goes Halloween—not as good a date generally, but it puts "Red Corner" against two studio openers with lower profiles.*

I LOVE YOU, I LOVE YOU NOT

An adolescent girl ("William Shakespeare's Romeo & Juliet's" Claire Danes) suffering both estrangement from her fellow students at a private Manhattan school and a crush on a popular boy (Jude Law) wins wise advice from her grandmother (French icon Jeanne Moreau), a Holocaust survivor with a special appreciation for life. Mamet casting director Billy Hopkins makes his directing debut; Wendy Kesselman adapts her play. (CFP/Avalanche, 10/31 ltd)

Exploitips: *Featuring an intriguingly eclectic cast, this debuts against no new arthouse competition. The Moreau and Danes names could well attract both mature specialized auds and younger newcomers to the smart set.*

CRIES OF SILENCE

In a hurricane's wake, a mute teenaged girl (Erin Buchanan) washes onshore; a young doctor (Kathleen York) living with her mother (Karen Black) assumes custody of the girl, who seems terrified. Little by little, the doctor begins unearthing a shocking secret. Avery Crounse directs, scripts and produces. (Showcase, 10/3)

Exploitips: *This won best picture and best actress awards at the Giffoni film fest in Italy; it's a ways for exhibitors wishing to draw auds to travel for kudos, but it adds a bit of panache.*

refugees finally emerge, they find their country's landscape indeed devastated, but from a new war. Emir Kusturica directs, and he scripts with Dusan Kovacevic; Pierre Spengler produces. (New Yorker, Dec. undated)

Exploitips: *This won the Palme d'Or at the '95 Cannes, though a bit dated as a kudos. "Underground" had a very limited stateside run this summer. Our Cannes critic accorded it 4 1/2 stars, calling it "a sprawling, imaginative, bold and impressive work.... Kusturica's balance of humor and pathos keeps the film from becoming preachy or dogmatic, yet it resonates with sensitivity and contemporary relevance."*

The Mouse

John Savage stars as shamster/prizefighter Bruce "The Mouse" Strauss, who teaches a young buck the ropes about boxing, the art of the scam, and how to be knocked out with grace, style and minimal damage. Angelica Torn co-stars. Dan Adams directs and scripts. (Strand, Dec. undated)

Exploitips: *Promo tie-ins with local health clubs could raise the profile with male audiences most likely to give this a try.*

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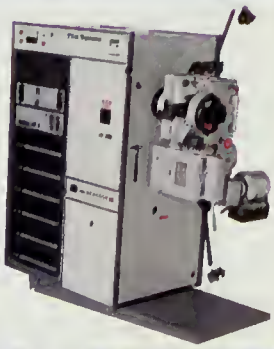


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IMAX and its Competitors Take Large Format Film From the Museum to the Multiplex *by Alex Albanese*



OUTER LIMITS: *IMAX's long-standing relationship with NASA is reflected in "Mission to Mir," a recent title.*

The 90s, a decade that was supposed to be all about "cocooning"—staying at home with the 36-inch screen and cable's multiplicity of choices—has turned out to be one of renaissance in film exhibition. The reasons for this are varied and complex, from the healthy economy, to a huge drop in crime, to Brad Pitt; but some explanations are simple. People like to go out, and our industry has relearned the wisdom of two generations ago: when people go out, not only do they want to do something special, they want to be someplace special.

Economic necessity killed the movie palaces of the past, but more was lost than just carved marble and atmospheric ceilings. Today not only the old attitudes, but the moving clouds have made a comeback—on the lobby ceiling if not the auditorium. Megaplexes, those modern movie palaces that provide the latest in technology along with classic service, themed detailing and cappuccino, are adding a new weapon to their arsenal of excitement. It is a feature that until fairly recently was looked upon by mainstream exhibition as not only marginally relevant, but as being as stodgy and quaintly exotic as a gilded plaster dragon. But images can change fast in show business, and after waiting in the wings for 25 years, today's hot new exhibition star is the 15/70 large-screen format, pioneered by IMAX Corp.

Until about four years ago, large-format film lived a quiet, almost bookish life, far from the hurdy-gurdy of Hollywood. Traditional fare consisted of educational documentaries because, aside from venues built for world's fairs or amusement parks, the bulk of large format theatres were attached to science and natural history museums. The format has done an outstanding job of serving that arena, and it continues to do so; but as Sony Classics vp Mark Katz, who has been distributing the format for 10 years, points out, that was not necessarily the plan. "If you read interviews from 25 years ago," he states, "the original vision of the founders of IMAX Corporation, who pretty much pioneered this industry, was to build commercial theatres that would run commercial films and be the cinema of the 21st century. But they didn't get anywhere with the studios back then, and their first buyers were museums, who were looking to basically do the planetarium of the '70's. They had to make a living, so they took the customers they could get, and the content of the films that were produced mirrored that."

In 1994, when the Toronto-based IMAX Corp. was acquired by Bradley Wechsler and partner Richard Gelfond, they examined broader options. "We looked at IMAX's branded quality with respect to family entertainment," states Wechsler, "and that was something we didn't want to walk away from, but we also saw a phenomenal technology that we felt was really underexploited. If you could present such beautifully clear pictures that extend into your peripheral vision for documentaries, why couldn't you also move that over to more standard entertainment fare?" Wechsler and Gelfond decided to expand the company by moving IMAX into more conventional entertainment venues. They also had a new product to launch: IMAX 3-D. "Our instincts told us there was a potential large demand for well done 3-D titles," Wechsler states.

> *"IMAX appeals to people who want truth and reality in some fashion."*
> *—Greg MacGillivray*

The first commercial 3-D IMAX theatre to open was at Sony's Lincoln Square in Manhattan, in November of 1994. Part of a state-of-the-art, flagship megaplex, it has become one of the highest-grossing single movie screens in the United States. "Sony came in and proved you could put a state-of-the-art 3-D IMAX within a multiplex and be successful," states Katz, "and they

proved there was an audience appetite for more than the standard documentaries that had been made thus far." In the wake of that success and thanks in part to the new, less expensive IMAX SR theatre installation, which is designed to be incorporated into more conventional multiplexes, there has been a flurry of other commercial exhibitors signing contracts with IMAX all over the world.



ON TOP OF THE WORLD: *IMAX takes its cameras to the roof of the Himalayas with "Everest." Why? Because it's there.*

"One of the impediments for growth at IMAX has been the capital cost of putting in a theatre," Wechsler explains. "They are expensive, which obviously limits the number of viable sites around the world. So we started asking ourselves what makes IMAX special, and it occurred to us the experience can be reproduced in a different scale. We realized we could geometrically reduce the size of our average theatre from 425 seats to about 275. By doing that, we came up with a plan where IMAX theatres can be integrated into multiplexes for around half the cost of a stand alone IMAX theatre." The practical importance of this more compact IMAX experience is obvious: Unlike a traditional IMAX theatre, which requires a population base of at least one million, the new SR installation can be supported by a community of 500,000.

In North America, the SR concept has been embraced by several circuits. In June, IMAX signed a deal with Regal Cinemas for ten 3-D SR systems, and in July Edwards Theaters signed on for 10 as well, bringing that circuit's total up to 13 IMAX venues. Regal executive vp and COO Greg Dunn feels that prior to this new SR concept "there were very limited applications as to where you could build an IMAX theatre within one of our megaplexes. They've opened themselves up to many more markets around the country, and we are just now seeing this concept take off, and I think they will be successful with it. There are definite synergies between IMAX and conventional theatres, and we plan to grow off those."

As Mark Katz points out, "What a large-format theatre does for a multiplex, whether it's in New York or a small midwestern town, is elevate the perception of the technical capabilities of the whole complex. It also gives you a daytime business that you're just not going to get with conventional cinema. That gives you more exposure and more daytime traffic, which ultimately benefits your concessions. In the evening, you can package your IMAX films with your conventional films because the IMAX attraction is only an extra 40 minutes."

Regal's director of marketing, Phil Zacheretti, agrees. "In several ways," he states, "we think it will bring people to the complex that might not normally come, or might not come as often. With IMAX being a different experience, you're going to find a lot of school groups, tourists, and we think we'll find a little bit of the older crowd that might enjoy the subject matter. It can be that little extra draw, particularly at a time when we normally aren't as busy." Regal's move into IMAX is "based on what we think we can make happen. With moviegoing in general on the increase, not just revenue but attendance, we think we are entering the business of the future."

IMAX now has 154 theatres built worldwide, and a backlog of 55 on the boards. Once those are built over the next two years, there will be almost as many commercial IMAX theatres as museum-based ones. With large-format competitors Iwerks and Showcsan recently merging to ensure they can also get a chunk of the exhibition pie, now the big question is not so much "if you build them will they come," but what will they want to watch. This is where opinions start to diverge.

There has been a range of product experimented with over the last few years, from the straight-ahead 3-D undersea documentary "Into the Deep" to the full on 3-D narrative "Wings of Courage." There have also been documentaries with a more visceral than educational appeal, like the Indy cars of "Super Speedway" or the roller coasters of "Thrill Ride." Another permutation, "Across the Sea of Time," exploits the 3-D effect by contrasting antique stereoscopic views of New York City with modern-day swooping helicopter shots, but cramps all the bravura visuals into a rather stilted narrative framework.

Traditional IMAX fare has, by necessity, had an educational, documentary slant. "The bulk of the older 2-D theatres are in institutions where the museum mission statements require that the films shown have a very strong educational orientation," explains Derval Whelan, executive director of marketing at Sony Pictures Classics. "Our films definitely tend to be on the more commercial side, but we strive for a really good combination of entertainment and education because that's what the marketplace needs right now. As the commercial sector grows, our films will probably work to satisfy those needs more in the future—the demand is going to go in the direction of more entertaining rather than educational films. But three of the current six distributors of large-format films are museum based, so I think there will still be companies to serve the educational needs of that part of the marketplace."

Greg MacGillivray, whose company MacGillivray Freeman has made 18 large format films, still feels there will be more films produced for the educational market than for the strict entertainment market. "I think that the real key for a filmmaker like myself," he states, "is that my films will become skewed slightly toward entertainment and subjects which lend themselves toward entertainment and away from subjects that are solely educational. I was careful to word that sentence in a specific way because there is a subtlety there. You don't just put out a film like 'The Living Sea' and say this is an educational film, period. A lot of films work both ways and the audience sees the value in both directions—highly entertaining but also enriching."

"Our 'Everest' film coming out next year is a good example," he continues. "It's a story film centered around three people, but it's non-fictional. It is about as akin to what we should be doing, in my estimation, as any film that's come out. You take a subject like that and install a story and characters, giving the audience the experience of being someplace, which

IMAX does do well, along with characters they can identify with. That's where I think the medium should be going—more toward fuller filmmaking rather than simplistic documents, as has often been the case in the past."

"The industry has been debating this within itself for awhile," states Sony's Mark Katz, "and it's not a black and white thing. There's no one who can say that a narrative is not educational, and you can't say a documentary isn't entertaining, but some might not do both as well as others, and multiplexes are going to demand more narrative-oriented product because their audiences don't want too many documentaries. Based on what our instincts and research tell us, the audience wants a good story, because a good story transcends any medium at the end of the day."

"IMAX," counters MacGillivray, "because it is so crystal sharp and real, appeals to people who want to have truth and reality given to them in some fashion. Now that's not to say that something like 'Apollo 13' wouldn't work in IMAX. I think it would, but I really do believe it's a different experience than just a storytelling medium and that's a subtle difference the audience is picking up on. If the split becomes 50/50 in terms of the number of theatres, that doesn't account for the numbers of attending audience members, and currently the museum facilities do considerably larger grosses and larger numbers than commercial facilities."

MacGillivray doesn't feel documentary will necessarily play second fiddle to narrative in commercial theatres. "You can go back historically and look at the grosses for 'This Is Cinerama' and 'The Living Desert,' documentaries that were unique but distributed more or less conventionally, and found a market," he says. "If you do a film that is exceptional it will draw extremely well. With the increase in theatres and better marketing, I don't see the documentary draw being that different from the narrative draw if they are marketed in similar fashion and if they are both commercially viable."

"If you make a solid 3-D documentary with the right subject matter in today's environment it is as economically viable, if not more so, than making a narrative that costs more," concedes Katz. "But we did some research, and there is no question that the most frequent IMAX-goers, who are growing in number every year, want narrative bigtime. I firmly believe it's a case of timing. Someday with reasonable budgets, making an $8 or $9 million 3-D narrative versus a $6 million dollar 3-D documentary will be very much worth the extra cost. Once the creative side of the large-format industry can figure out a way to tell a great story using the tools of IMAX that doesn't have an astronomical price tag, there will be a breakthrough, there's no question." "Some feel the vista in a large format film is the most important component," observes Whelan, "that the visual of soaring over the mountaintop just can't be compared to seeing somebody sitting in a room, acting. Others think IMAX is supposed to take you to a place that you could never go to on your own. There are many great uses of the medium. At Sony Classics we take it on a project-by-project basis—whether we felt that it is worthwhile in the marketplace, and is something that should be done in IMAX rather than be done as a TV documentary or a feature film."

She then mentions MacGillivray's "Everest." "There have been any number of IMAX films done in snow-capped mountains. I mean, you see the same themes coming up over and over again, which is one of the things that Sony wanted to change when they got involved with this business—to exploit more new subject matter. But I can't wait to see 'Everest' because, although I've seen a million IMAX movies that take place in the same geographical kinds of locations, they followed the tragic expedition that happened last year, and I think it's going to be extremely different from those which have come before it."

> *"If we don't give the audience an emotional, escapist experience the way good conventional films do, all these nice big palaces that are being built to accommodate IMAX screenings are going to get a conventional 35 projector and stop showing IMAX."*
>
> *—Mark Katz, Sony Classics*

One thing almost all parties interviewed for this story were in agreement on regarding 15/70's move to become a mainstream entertainment choice is that the breakthrough film, the one that through word of mouth becomes a must-see for the general public, has not arrived yet. "It's still to be made, and we are anxious to find the person that will do it," says IMAX's Wechsler, "especially when you're talking about IMAX 3-D. The rhetoric of filmmaking, storytelling, and visual presentation—call it the killer application—it hasn't been discovered yet. Maybe it will come from some kid fooling around in film school right now, or maybe one of the more established Hollywood directors will take a diversion from 35mm and have the vision of what will work in large format. But I think we've yet to see it."

Paramount has announced it will produce a 3-D IMAX "Star Trek" short, and some feel perhaps this will be the film to put IMAX on the mainstream map. "You know, it looks fantastic on paper," states Katz. "'Star Trek' is an established entertainment phenomenon with a huge following. If they actually pull it off and it's good, it might just be the breakthrough film this format is looking for." Loews Theaters president Travis Reid concurs. "'Star Trek' could be the breakthrough. It will probably be typical of the length of the TV episodes, which is perfect—everybody has seen these stories told very effectively in that time frame. We'll be able to get the same kind of turnover we're used to, and the subject could really capitalize on special effects, how great they can look on such a huge screen, with that clarity."

Whatever the breakthrough, the long term, widespread success of the format will ultimately rest on one factor. "First and foremost," Katz concludes, "the films have got to keep coming and keep improving, so the industry can hopefully generate better returns and we can keep making more and better films. Because right now the technology is still what people are coming for—it's still not the film quite yet. We're getting there, becoming more software driven, but we have a ways to go. That's what will carry this medium forward. Because if we don't become software driven, giving the audience an emotional, escapist experience the way good conventional films do while perhaps pushing harder on some of the other senses, then all these nice big palaces that are being built to accommodate IMAX are going to get a conventional 35 projector and stop showing IMAX. That's one thing I feel very strongly about."

Greg MacGillivray is in complete agreement. "What the increased theatre base will do is enable us to make a better film," he says, "because we'll have more venues to show the film, and we can make more money back so next time we can have a bigger budget and better writing, better acting, better everything. It hopefully will end up improving the quality of IMAX filmmaking—that's the big crusade that I have. Let's write better films, make better films and give the audience better filmmaking.

"I still think it will take years before the awareness of IMAX and the quality and consistency of the product gets to a level that the audience can be assured that their $7 or $8 dollar investment will be worthwhile," adds MacGillivray. "But it will be crucial for everyone involved that this industry arrives at that place."

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Response No. 49

COASTING TO SUCCESS

Pacific Theatres' New Builds Are Making Waves

by Bridget Byrne



PACIFICATION: *The Beach Cities 16 in Manhattan Beach, Calif., is one of the first builds under Pacific's new expansion plan.*

In Southern California, it's Pacific Standard Time. That is, Pacific Theatres is setting standards with several new megaplex builds in El Segundo, San Diego, the San Fernando Valley, Anaheim, Northridge and Bakersfield. Pacific's Hawaiian arm (known as Consolidated Amusement Co.) is also opening new locales, including sites in Koko Marina, Honolulu; Pearlridge, Aiea; and Kaahumanu, Kauhului. The rapidly-expanding circuit, which currently operates 328 screens in California and Hawaii, will add 189 more screens to its tally by April of 1999.

Chan Wood, Pacific's executive vice president, head film buyer and director of marketing, says these megaplexes are "examples of the ultra-modern complexes which will typify Pacific's future growth."

But at the same time, Wood points out that 'typical' is not a word to apply to a Pacific cinema. "Each of our theatres has its own personality," says Wood, pointing to a colorful brochure illustrated with styles of architecture ranging from sleek modern to elaborate art deco.

The 51-year-old company, begun with the purchase in 1946 by William R. Forman of some existing drive-ins, owns and operates theatres as diverse in style as the nostalgic and famous slice-of-a-giant-golf-ball Cinerama Dome on Sunset Boulevard and the all-that-glitters El Capitan on Hollywood Boulevard; as modernistic as the Gaslamp, set to open this month in San Diego; and as vast in scale as the Kapolei Theatre, the largest entertainment center in Hawaii, with 16 auditoriums built on over 8.5 acres.

But what Wood insists must be typical of each and every theatre, whatever its design, wherever its location, is the excellence of presentation. So although there is no prototype for a Pacific Theatre, there is always an assurance that the customer is what matters. "It's like keeping a drinking glass clean. If there's a smudge on your glass, you are not going to have a good experience whatever the contents," says Wood about the importance of customer service.

Wood points out that many of the films Pacific shows are also onscreen at competitors' theatres, so "choice" takes on a different meaning. "Today, people want a choice of films to see at any given location, and they want a multiple choice of show times so that they can turn up at the theatre and find something to see within no more than a 20-minute to half-hour wait," says Wood, summing up one of the main reasons why Pacific is thinking in huge complex terms.

The style in which the film is projected and viewed is the ultimate priority. All of Pacific's new theatres have been designed with widely-spaced rows of stadium seating for a clear, unobstructed view from highback chairs with moveable cupholder armrests. The complexes will all feature Sony SDDS, DTS and Dolby Digital sound systems, and every auditorium will be THX-certified. "Everything the public wants today is definitely in the theatre," says Wood.

But sitting, seeing and hearing are just part of the exhibition experience, and Pacific Theatres is devoting much thought to other elements, such as spacious, attractive lobbies; a broad range of concessions; and convenient, easy parking with safe access.

"Theatregoing has become more than just seeing a movie," says Wood. "The theatre is the place for a social gathering, an outing. People these days arrange to meet in the lobby to decide which film to see. They might split up for different movies and arrange to meet again in the lobby afterwards, or families split



WHAT A GAS: *A sketch of Pacific Theatres' Gaslamp in San Diego, set to open this month.*

up so that the children can see a G-movie while the parents take in an R." Pacific has responded to this pattern in patron activity by making the theatre lobbies appealing, expansive meeting places with comfortable dining areas providing more interesting and sophisticated varieties of foods than your typical concession choices. Wood says the company is negotiating with restauranteur Wolfgang Puck to bring the famed chef's innovative, eponymous cafes on-site, like the one neighboring the Pacific Beach Cities Cinema 16. Pacific also hopes to enter into more tie-ins with Houston's Steak House, another adjacent eatery.

Thoughts are also being directed toward different manners of food service, such as selling refreshments to patrons in their seats by having ushers circulate snack trays. Pacific is also considering implementing a combined "film and food" service through which food can be pre-ordered along with a ticket for immediate pick-up on arrival at the theatre.

An innovation of a different kind is a paging service for patrons. Designed chiefly to ease the worry of parents who have left children home with a baby-sitter, Pacific offers it as a complimentary "peace of mind" service. A parent who leaves a driver's license as a deposit at the boxoffice is given a pager which can be silently beeped by an operator at the theatre. The theatregoer can then come to the lobby to take the incoming call. Refrigerator magnets bearing the pager service phone number are given out to interested patrons.

Keeping one step ahead of the competition is, Wood believes, vital in a business where there is currently lots of "fierce competition." "There's a lot of building going on—the shelf life for a theatre has become shorter, definitely so in the California market," he says, referring to the brief amount of time it can take for new technologies and industry standards to make pre-existing theatres obsolete. "Five years ago, they were building eight- to 12-plex theatres. Today, they're building 16- to 30-screen theatres. [Other differences include the advent of] stadium seating auditoriums, with the wall-to-wall screens. So if you built an eight-plex five years ago, that theatre would be really outdated already, even though it's [practically] a brand-new theatre. The people are demanding a better presentation, more variety, more choice with their showtimes, and restaurants and entertainment-type projects."

"It's like keeping a drinking glass clean. If there's a smudge on your glass, you are not going to have a good experience whatever the contents."

Wood is able to speak with authority about the evolution of the exhibition industry, having joined Pacific Theatres' film department 40 years ago in 1963. ("I started very young, by the way. A mere child," he hastens to add with a laugh). The most significant change Wood has observed over the decades is the increased number of prints available, and the resultant impact on booking practices. "It used to be pictures would open in certain areas of the country, like East Coast or West Coast or the South. And they would work with maybe 200 prints, and move those prints from the South to New York to the Midwest to California. And while that was going on, there would be a picture opening in California, then going down to the South, then going to the Midwest. And there was never a national availability. [In the '60s,] a picture playing the Dome theatre, like 'Mad, Mad World,' would play for a year. Today, a picture like 'Lost World' opens on 4,000 screens and grosses $100 million the first week. And in five weeks or six weeks, the picture's gone."

Prior to joining Pacific, Wood's first-ever job was as an usher at the Inglewood Drive-In. Pacific, which built its success on drive-ins, still owns a few, such as the Vineland four-plex in the San Gabriel Valley, the Hi-Way 39 four-plex in Westminster and the Vermont Tri-plex in Gardena. But the move away from that type of exhibition, begun by Michael R. Forman, who succeeded his father as Chairman and CEO in 1981, continued even more aggressively when Michael's son, Christopher, took over the CEO reins a couple of years ago and began focusing on building larger theatres—often on the sites once viable as drive-ins.

"Our company's mission is to build the biggest and best state-of-the-art theatres during this time of aggressive expansion," says Wood. "You go to a movie to be entertained. It's not the exhibitor's fault if the picture is not good, but it is the exhibitor's job to make sure the sound is clear, the picture is clear, the temperature is right, the theatre is clean and comfortable, the popcorn is hot, the parking is secure and the customer service is good and directed to making sure you enjoy your visit and want to come back."

LET THE GAMES BEGIN!

The Sega GameWorks Team Offers Exhibitors a New Kind of Bang for Their Buck *by Pat Kramer*

With competition between exhibitors on the rise, theatre circuits are discovering the virtues of adding more high tech video and interactive amusements to their lobbies, providing an additional source of revenue while giving moviegoers extra reasons to visit their facilities. Many exhibitors are now setting aside prime space or designating specially-designed alcoves for these amusements, where they can be enjoyed by visitors without causing traffic problems.

Sega GameWorks (SGW) has taken a leading role in this process via its Sega Cities and GameWorks divisions. Back in 1995, the company, then known as Sega Enterprises, formed its first exhibition partnership with United Artists by participating in the development of UA's Starport entertainment center in Indianapolis. Other Starports followed at UA multiplexes in Baltimore, Austin, Denver and Albuquerque, giving the circuit its own interactive games franchise for retail mall locations. Ranging in size from 6,000 to 8,000 square feet, the early Sega Cities aimed to target the teenage/young adult market with a design that was light, bright, attractive and fun.

Next was a Sega partnership with Cineplex Odeon to develop the 18,000-square-foot Cinescape facility in Calgary, Alberta, which opened on July 2, 1996. Cinescape combined Cineplex's existing five-screen theatre in Eau Claire Market with Sega's latest cutting-edge amusements: interactive games, electronic motion simulator devices, movie-themed pinball games and 10 high-speed Internet stations. Another Cinescape was built in Houston, Texas for Cineplex later that year. According to Howard Lichtman, Cineplex's executive vice president of marketing and communications, both facilities have resulted in increased business. "We're seeing a definite synergy between the Cinescape patrons and the movie patrons and the cross utilization is very high, as was our hypothesis. It is the moviegoer who is going to Cinescape and it is the Cinescape customer who is going to the movies."

Cinescape was the first official exhibition project under the banner of Sega Gameworks. Earlier that year, in March 1996, Sega Enterprises joined forces with Universal Studios and DreamWorks SKG to form Sega GameWorks L.L.C., a limited liability corporation. SGW is comprised of three core business: games under the Sega brand; operation and expansion of the original Sega Cities division, which includes the placement of games in theatres; and a new division: GameWorks location-based entertainment centers (LBEs).



LUCKY BREAK: *An SGW "WaveRunner" environment lets users skim over simulated seas.*

In the past year, SGW has launched GameWorks facilities in Seattle, in Las Vegas and in Ontario, California. With an average size of 30,000 square feet, the GameWorks sites are all adjacent to large multiplexes or megaplexes and feature the latest of SGW's proprietary line of interactive video games, motion simulators and amusements.

> *"In some districts, we've actually increased game revenues 150 percent district-wide."*

At the Ontario facility on any given weekend day, you'll find a mix of teenagers, young adults and families lined up to play an assortment of adrenaline-producing games that test their balance, reflexes and sense of adventure. "Alpine Racer" is a perfect example: the gamer places his or her feet in molded plastic skis to steer down an incredibly fast-paced ski course as it flashes by on a video screen. Other games include "Hang Pilot" for those who enjoy the thought of hang-gliding but have reservations about doing it in the flesh; "Golden Tee" for would-be golfers; "Super Shot", which issues actual basketballs for practice shots through a moving hoop; and "The Lost World: Jurassic Park" where one or two players ward off attacking dinosaurs by shooting simulated bullets at a video screen while seated in a simulated jeep.

New and even more innovative titles include "Vertical Reality" and "Game Arc." Described as a cross between a video game and a motion simulator, Vertical Reality straps three players at a time into chairs facing a two-story screen where they must shoot moving targets or get shot. The player's chair rises to a maximum

height of 40 feet, depending on the skill of the players. The chairs are quickly lowered to the floor when players run out of ammunition or are caught in a fatal crossfire.

Like Vertical Reality, Game Arc is for those who like to test their reflexes, shooting at simulated villains while sitting in a small car mounted to a moving platform. Moving images are projected on a large screen while high fidelity sound creates the aura of battle in an underground world inhabited by dangerous aliens. With Game Arc, price is dependent on how long one chooses to continue.



SMART MOVE: *A GameWorks patron uses a Smart Card debit card to go for another play.*

"This whole concept is very, very hot today," states David Stroud, GameWorks' director of new business development. "We think there's a lot of opportunities today with the investments the major chains are making and the fabulous properties they're creating." David Wilhoyte, director of Sega City and Game Operations adds, "GameWorks works well in places with a broad entertainment mix including theatres, retail stores and restaurants. The theatre chains are an important part of that mix, creating more of a total entertainment destination for consumers."

Some opponents of location-based entertainment centers feel they create competition for exhibition by eating up a share of the money consumers bring to each location. Stroud says that's not been the case. "At other entertainment venues, where these components don't exist, business has not increased as much as at our larger locations. The more you offer people, the more they're going to get out and enjoy themselves and spend money. It's truly creating a destination that is more than one stop in an evening's activities."

At GameWorks facilities, all games are set up to take "Smart Cards"—debit cards which are purchased in advance. In addition to moving patrons through the entertainment center quickly, Wilhoyte says the Smart Cards have been found to increase per patron spending.

While Wilhoyte says there's no "average" per-game price at GameWorks sites, the money spent on higher-end games is fairly steep. Motion simulated games like "Alpine Racer" and "Hang Pilot" cost $1.25 and $1.50 per two-to-three minute game. "The Lost World" costs $2 per player, but to play the entire course from beginning to end might take six or eight tries, and might therefore be costly. "Game Arc" costs $2 per play, while "Vertical Reality," one of GameWorks' "premium" amusements, runs $4 per game.

Besides the pinball, video and motion-simulator games, GameWorks offers access to the 'Net via the "Internet Lounge." Patrons are provided with comfortable chairs and laptop computers where they can access an abundance of different sites, chat rooms, or information resources through specially-designed web pages. At $2 for every 10 minutes, this is a resource for those who are looking to send an e-mail or do a little browsing. To make sure those using the simplified system don't get lost, an Internet consultant is stationed in the room to answer any questions that arise.

SGW has ambitious development plans, with a goal of opening 100 GameWorks sites worldwide by the year 2,002. The next GameWorks facility will be opening in Grapevine, Texas this fall followed by Tempe, Ariz. and other locations, including Rio De Janeiro. While the more elaborate GameWorks sites are being planned in high traffic locations near large exhibitors, SGW also is trying to establish partnerships with smaller exhibitors through its Sega Cities division. Stroud is in charge of setting up those joint ventures within theatre complexes, which range from installing a few amusement devices to areas wholly designated for games. "We examine and measure the proposed area for the games, checking out the traffic flow," says Stroud. "After that, we provides assistance in design and theming for the games, as well as installation and maintenance."

While he's eager to increase business for the company, Stroud acknowledges that not all theatres are right for hosting Sega Cities. "If we don't feel that the theatre has the right design or is the right venue for our games, then putting a lot of games in is really not a good idea. When we visit the theatres, we try to explain to [exhibitors] that the games are a very important component of their business. We also like to make sure they have the newest and latest games and make sure they are kept absolutely clean, like everything else in the theatres."

Stroud says revenues are up at many of their joint ventures. "We've really started to dress them up and make them a destination in themselves. As a result, in some of the districts we've gone into, we've actually increased game revenues 150 percent district-wide." Wilhoyte adds, "We've been successful at improving the performance of games in theatres that historically may not have been performers, through carefully selected games and superior service. We want to ensure that when we do commit to a partnership with a theatre or any other game operation venue, that we can meet our mutual expectations for game earnings and our ability to service their needs."

In keeping with their expansion plans, SGW has just completed a new design concept for Sega Cities. Wilhoyte says the size of the facilities will remain roughly 6,000 to 8,000 square feet, but the theming will be more decorative. "[The new concept] is colorful, eclectic, dynamic. It's a theatrical, whimsical environment, very different from the current Sega Cities look, but very inviting. Again, it's a combination of having a theatre and a high-quality game room with a lot of traffic."

Describing the strides SGW has taken in just 18 months, Stroud points to the three GameWorks facilities that are up and running: "To go from concept to design to installation to opening was just a tremendous feat!" He attributes that achievement to chairman Skip Paul. "He's put together an unbelievable team. I've never seen a team as smart, creative and effective at realizing their goals, so I'm really excited to be a part of this."

While he's guarded about revealing too much about the company's future plans, Stroud says, "We're looking at and involved with a lot of different countries and are talking to several exhibitors at this time. But no doubt about it—there will probably be a Sega City or GameWorks coming to a neighborhood near you soon!"

STATE OF THE ART

MGM Chairman and CEO Frank Mancuso asks tough questions about today's film biz *by Frank Mancuso*

At this year's ShoWest convention, MGM Inc. chairman and CEO Frank G. Mancuso provided a keynote speech that held back no praise yet pulled no punch. Mancuso's comic anecdote about two men and a bear drew laughs, and his promise that MGM would lead the way toward establishing a year-round release schedule drew applause, but his calls for decreased—or at least more profit-oriented—spending by both the production and the exhibition communities were straight-arrow serious. Because Mancuso's address was filled to overflowing with analysis of do-or-die importance to professionals in all areas of the film industry, **BOXOFFICE** *here offers a transcript of Mancuso's commentary for our readers attending ShowEast.*



IN LIKE A LION: *MGM chair Frank Mancuso (in his office at the studio)—a man willing to discuss hard truths.*

So what was I thinking? I'll bet that's a question that went through many of your minds, that day back in the summer of 1993, when you found out I was assuming the chairmanship of MGM. Actually, I was thinking my golf game wasn't getting much better, even though I was practicing, so this seemed like a more attractive alternative.

Some alternative! We were faced with the task of taking over this great film company—which had struggled through a series of ownership and management changes and with an industry that barely believed it still existed—and restoring it to its rightful place as one of Hollywood's premier studios. I took great comfort in the wisdom of Yogi Berra's remark, "It ain't over 'til it's over," and we got on with the task.

And succeed we did, thanks to the hard work of a group of talented, seasoned professionals in every division of the company, and thanks also to the support of exhibitors. You believed in our efforts and supported our film slate. In 1994 and 1995, we started to accomplish our goal and justified the faith of the exhibition community with films like "Stargate," "Rob Roy" and "Species." And later, with successes ranging from the award-winning "Leaving Las Vegas" and "Get Shorty" to "GoldenEye" and "The Birdcage," we proved that the Lion still had plenty of roar left in it after all.

Yet it wasn't long before MGM faced challenges once again, with a sale of the company that would determine its future. This time, we weren't just looking at a studio that had to overcome difficulties to return to prosperity. We also had to contend with a changing industry, production and marketing costs that were reaching the stratosphere, and an exhibition business that had made the price for screen expansion overly costly.

So what were we thinking, when our management group teamed with Tracinda Corp. and Seven Network to buy MGM? Actually, we were thinking that many in exhibition were up against the same set of challenges—that we were not alone. We had all faced long odds at one time or another in growing our businesses. We were all going to have to change, and we would all probably have to do it together.

> *"We are cannibalizing each other's audiences and shortening the life of a film."*

But why change? This industry has been good to us, hasn't it? After all, American copyright industries, which include filmed entertainment, are among the largest and fastest-growing sectors of the economy. They account for more than five percent of the country's gross domestic product. They—we—create new jobs more than twice as fast as does the economy as a whole. Further signaling the strength of our business, the percentage of the moviegoing public that attends movies frequently rose by 14 percent from 1990 to 1995. That's a 14 percent increase in the number of people who go to the movies at least once a month.

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Response No. 153

There's still more good news about our industry. The amount of money spent on movie admissions has risen every year since 1939. Since the Depression ended, we've had over five-and-a-half decades of consecutive increases in dollars spent in this country on going to the movies. And Americans aren't the only ones spending record amounts on movie tickets. Exhibitors are building new, bigger and better theatres around the world. The new spate of construction in international markets parallels the multiplexing of America 20 years ago.



CLIFFHANGER: *Mancuso likens exhibition and distribution to the title characters from "Thelma and Louise," so drunk with a sense of freedom and empowerment that they exercised it by driving off a cliff.*

Exhibitors should be proud that, at home and abroad, the moviegoing experience is better than ever for consumers. New theatres are larger and more comfortable. But if our reality is new and bigger markets, increasing frequency of attendance among moviegoers, better technology, and more dollars than ever spent on movie tickets, then why does the film industry have to change?

It has to change because there's another dimension to our reality, and we have ignored it too long. Just like the characters in a disaster movie, we have been blissfully unaware—or pridefully unmindful—of the problems around us. But the problems are there, and it's time we recognize them and do something about them. If we do, our industry will be stronger than ever.

From 1990 to 1995, the number of screens in America increased by 17 percent. The number of major-studio releases grew by 34 percent. Yet in the same period the number of admissions rose by only six percent.

I noted earlier that moviegoing frequency is on the rise, and indeed it is. But that's only among people already in the habit of going to the movies. People who attend infrequently are not going more often, and the people who normally don't go to the movies still aren't going. Little we've done so far has succeeded in changing their ways.

Look at California's San Fernando Valley. In the past three years, the number of screens in the area increased by nearly 80 percent. Yet boxoffice grew only 16 percent. Although we breathed a sigh of relief to see nationwide admissions finally move up last year, that five-year curve still is not very curvy. In fact, admissions were the same in 1995 as in 1989. From 1990 to 1995, screens grew three times as fast as admissions, and the number of releases by five times as much. By comparison, admissions were all but flat.

How much more are we spending on making and marketing our movies? How many more dollars are we spending on building new theatres? And how many new movie patrons are we getting in return? The answers: too much, way too many, and not nearly enough.

Perhaps we've been thinking, "If we build it, they will come." But there's something wrong here, my friends. We're making more pictures and building more theatres. Yet people aren't going to the movies more. We either must find ways to grow our market or cut back on our spending.

Our goal has been growth. But growth at an irrational cost? Growth even at the expense of profits? Exhibitors and studios alike have acted on a mandate to increase boxoffice, and we achieved our goal: a nine percent increase in dollars spent on movie tickets from 1990 to 1995. But we've done it by increasing quantity, not quality. We built more screens and released more movies. We expanded everything except the number of people going to the movies. The size of the pie didn't get significantly bigger; we just carved it up into smaller pieces among more films and more theatres. To put it in the simplest terms, we've spent more and gotten less. We've forgotten legendary venture capitalist Warren Buffet's two cardinal rules of creating wealth. The first rule is not to lose money. And the second rule is not to forget the first rule.

Forgotten it we have. Film companies released more movies in 1996 than 1995, and they are scheduled to release 14 more in 1997 than in 1996. The result? A cluttered market in which it's difficult for a given film to stand out. The result of that? Increased spending on production, to make the film bigger, more exciting, more noticeable. The result of that? Even more spending on marketing, prints and ads, to protect the excessive amounts already spent to make the movie. And the result of that? A run on the market for Maalox.

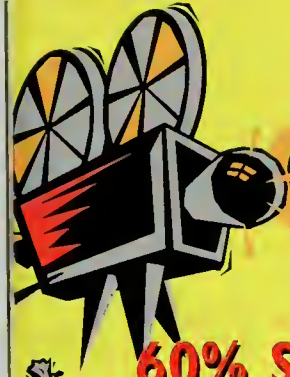
Studio executives are reaching for relief because supposedly at least 12 movies in 1997 will have production budgets in excess of $100 million. But in an average year only 10 movies top that figure at the domestic boxoffice. I sure hope this won't be an average year.

From 1990 to 1995, production costs soared 36 percent. Marketing costs skyrocketed 48 percent. And, unfortunately, the new numbers for 1996 have continued this unhealthy trend.

The story isn't much better on the exhibition side. Is the competition between two studios dueling over films with similar content really any different from trying to build two megaplexes in the same city or shopping center area? Multiplexes and megaplexes were supposed to help exhibitors reduce their overhead. But when that new theatre is just a short drive away, or down the block, or maybe even directly across the street from your competitor's new theatre, that overhead savings is gone. We are cannibalizing each other's audiences and, by spreading movie patrons across screens rather than across weeks, we're shortening the life of a film.

Just as studios are carving up the audience pie into smaller pieces among more releases, exhibitors are slicing the pie into smaller slivers among more screens. As studios have believed the way to boost revenues is to produce more films, exhibitors have acted on the belief that the way to grow revenues is to build more theatres. But building in overserved areas will not help your bottom line.

If just one exhibition company were building megaplexes, if one studio were producing big-budget pictures and spent tens of millions on marketing them, their actions would have the positive effect on the market they want. But



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when most major exhibitors build new theatres, and build them within shouting distance of one another, and when most studios release event movies and do it in the same competitive period, they neutralize the impact of what could have been market-leading strategies. They cancel out each other's efforts; they defeat each other's purpose.

We're like the two characters in "Thelma and Louise." After surviving a string of disasters, Thelma and Louise embarked on a joyriding escape from the law. They ultimately drove themselves off a cliff rather than face capture. Roger Ebert described them as "intoxicated with the sense of their own freedom." That sounds like us! We've lost our sense of restraint, continually overproducing and overbuilding. Like Thelma and Louise, we're heading for a cliff. But will we stop before we go over the edge? I believe we can, and I believe we will. We're all part of an industry that is without equal in the world. No other country, even those with thriving film industries, has created a force to rival the American entertainment industries. We, along with the talents that collectively make up the industry we call Hollywood, have built this unique business, and we can bring it back from the edge.

Competition is the food that feeds us, the drive that sustains us. It should not be the obsession that hurts us. Remember the story of the two men being chased by a bear? When one stopped to put on his sneakers, the other yelled, "You fool, you can't outrun a bear." The first man yelled back, "I don't have to outrun the bear. I just have to outrun you." We're so busy trying to outrun each other that we're all losing sight of the bear, the "huge, hairy beast" Jack Valenti once cited when describing our escalating costs.

So what do we do?

First: Studios should make fewer movies and concentrate on quality more than on quantity. Audiences—and exhibitors—often wonder how studios can make so many bad movies. The truth is, studios have been trying too hard to fill an imaginary need for their distribution pipelines. But overproduction has caused the pipe to spring a lot of leaks: bad movies and clutter.

"Studios have been trying too hard to fill imaginary needs for their distribution pipelines."

Better movies will play longer in your theatres, giving them time to be discovered. And fewer films will reduce clutter, giving movies a greater chance to open well and hold better, drawing an audience over a longer period of time. We at the studios must concentrate our resources on films to which we can fully devote our attention, our care, and our skill—in production, marketing and distribution—to enhance the efficiency of the system.

Second: Studios should release their movies in a more orderly, 12-month release pattern. I know you've heard this before. I think it was mentioned in a breakfast room in San Diego at the first ShoWest.

And here we are, still talking about it. If it's any better today it's an accident, a by-product of overproduction. We all need to do better. There's so much proof that a year-round release pattern makes sense. Look at the January 1997 re-release of "Star Wars." It outgrossed any Thanksgiving or Christmas 1996 release, and gave our industry one of the best first-quarter admission numbers in years. Look at the successful runs of MGM's "Get Shorty," an October release, and "The Birdcage," a March release. A film does not have to open in summer or over the holidays to be a hit.

Studios must distribute pictures throughout the year, spreading our schedules across all 12 months to help reduce the clutter. Film fans don't lose interest in movies just because it's early February or late September, and your theatres don't cost you any less to operate when you have no new quality releases to show. A yearlong release pattern of want-to-see films, not just any films, will keep your patrons happy and your theatres full.

At MGM, as we gear back up to full produc-

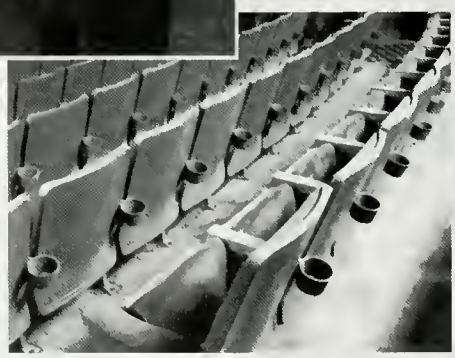
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tion, we will pace our films evenly, by spreading such upcoming titles as "The End of Violence," "Hurricane," "Red Corner" and "Tomorrow Never Dies" across the coming months. We will follow that in 1998 with "The Man in the Iron Mask" in January, "The Mod Squad" in February and "Species II" in March. And we will continue to implement a year-round release pattern as we build our slate from this strong beginning.

Third: We must follow our instinct, not a formula, for what makes movies work. Studios must make movies because they tell a great story, because they entertain, not because they conform to some theory about budgets. I don't believe Hollywood should only make movies budgeted at less than $20 million or more than $70 million. That's like saying you can eat only canned tuna or caviar, can shop only at Sears or Saks Fifth Avenue. There is no formula for what will make an audience cry, laugh, cheer and, yes, come back again and again. If there were, we wouldn't need filmmakers; we'd only need accountants.

Fourth: You, our colleagues and friends in exhibition, must start building theatres in under-served towns and neighborhoods, instead of overbuilding in cities already saturated with screens. I know some of you are already doing this. Exhibitors can and should continue to build new theatres to lure in new moviegoers and raise those crucial admissions numbers. Building theatres practically next door to one another will only help you divide, not conquer.

Examine your markets. Study your audience. Consider your competition. And then build your theatre—but not where competitors are building. Build it where your audience needs it and wants it, where it is long overdue. Build where you will draw in new movie patrons, raise admissions, and grow your business and this industry. Give patrons in a new area the pleasure of this new experience.

"Exhibitors are slicing the pie into smaller slivers among more screens."

Fifth, and finally: We must join forces—studios and exhibitors working together for our common purpose. With the new technology we've put into making films and building theatres, the theatrical experience is without question better than ever. Yet the investment we have all made in better theatres and bigger movies has not yet reaped the benefit it should.

So we must do one thing more. We must create a joint industry campaign to promote moviegoing, urging those who haven't shared in this incredible new enhanced experience to come to the movies—and inviting those who have come to come again and again. Dairy producers have their "Got Milk?" campaign. The beef board has its "Beef: It's What's for Dinner" effort. With a new cooperation between you in exhibition and us at the studios, with a creative collaboration between NATO and the MPAA, we can create a campaign that tells the world, "The Movies: There's No Place Like It at Home."

With such a campaign, we can grow our business; we can recapture the lost patron's imagination; we can increase the number of people who go to the movies and love doing it. For perhaps we have become complacent and have allowed ourselves to believe that the movies are so woven into our cultural fabric that audiences will always come. We must remember—and we must remind—that it is in movie theatres that we are swept away in a larger-than-life format, to a larger-than-life adventure or romance or drama. It is in movie theatres that we scream in fright along with everyone else, or laugh with joy with the rest of the crowd, or wipe away a tear and feel better to see others doing the same. It is in movie theatres that we share an experience.

Whatever the mystique of the movies, I call upon exhibitors and studios alike to celebrate the theatrical experience with the world. For if we build it—the theatre in the under-served area, the movie that entertains and satisfies, the film slate with the year-round audience appeal, and the message of the new wonder of movies—they *will* come.



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AN INDIE PRODUCER'S HANDBOOK

by Sam Arkoff

Legendary producer Sam Arkoff could easily be termed one of the most influential figures in movie history. As co-founder of American International Pictures—an independent producing and releasing company whose output spanned three decades and over 500 titles—Arkoff pioneered many of the releasing strategies that are second nature to today's studios, and helped launch the careers of generations of talent.

*In this knowing commentary, Arkoff gives the benefit of his experience to aspiring indie producers everywhere. Given the high profile independent and specialty product has attained recently, it's advice applicable to anyone in or out of the film industry who seeks to understand the way things work.—**Editor***

Independent producers have a chance if they can start with unusual stories that also are well told. Not just one or the other. Both. Extravagant special effects are not enough. Boxoffice "stars" are often not enough. Audiences have been overfed with spectacles and superstars. They are beginning to ask for more, as the disappointing grosses on some recent extra-costly releases reveal.

This gout from grandiosity is an invitation to the new producer to find creative ideas and writers to put together something new, and then do one of two things: Preferably and hopefully capture the cooperation of a major studio that will finance the picture and provide for its marketing; or find other financing, from various places and interests throughout the world, to get the picture made and distributed. Look at the recent Oscar nominees: indie movies *do* get completed somehow.

Indie filmmakers who hope to raise funds should first find a recognized distributor. There aren't many whose track record is strong enough to attract outside capital. One solution is to deal with the "art-house" division of a major. There are about five of these, and they may provide the assurance that foreign or non-industry investors require.

Obviously the cost of film production has grown much faster than the inflationary spiral. This has torpedoed many of the so-called smart guys in the studios who have poured hundreds of millions into hoped-for blockbusters, and who have announced that there is no future for less expensive films. This is nonsense. In spite of many of the summer superfilms costing more than ever before to produce and market, audiences still don't buy dollars, they buy fresh entertainment. How many ships have to sink before our industry stops making TITANIC, extravagant disaster movies?

One way the independent producer can look at his profession is to consider what happens on Broadway. A project may begin off-Broadway or even off-off Broadway. If it is a surprise hit in these less expensive birthplaces, it may be picked up by the moneyed interests and financed for a Broadway run. The trick, again, is to come up with a unique idea and make sure it is well-written.

When raising money it is best if the first funds come from the U.S. Foreign distributors and investors want to know that some American interests are putting their dollars where other currencies are also wanted. Today, it is less important to have a "sort-of" star name attached than to have a guarantee of release.

It is a truism that if a film *should* be made, it *can* be made. Where the money will come from is sometimes hard to envision at first, but somehow it does materialize in most cases—provided the will is strong and the material worthy. Major studios need unique, independent product to release. They must enrich their slates with films such as "Fargo," "The English Patient," "Sling Blade" and "Scream."

The day of the cheap imitation of yesteryear's successes is pretty well over—at least as a picture that gets theatrical distribution. Difficult as it is, in many ways it is easier to get independent films made today than ever before. There are all sorts of courses given in and out of educational institutions teaching the "hows." There are also lots of experienced people ready to pitch in with the making of an independent film—cheaply, or even on spec. Equipment is plentiful, inexpensive, and more user-friendly. You want to make a movie? People want to help.

If you don't have that great story yet, find the right novel and option it. Many books have been optioned for as little as $500 a year, or even less. Then find a way to pitch it—or a screenplay based on it—to the studios. Unless you have the support of a major star or director, don't *permanently* attach any element, including screenwriter, stars, director, special effects people or anyone else; the final money people may have other ideas. It *is* okay if those elements indicate they would *like* to be in on it.

Having co-produced and/or released hundreds of movies myself, I can confidently state that there will always be a place for the talented independent, but you must have a strong and money-ready organization prepared to launch your films knowledgeably in the U.S. and abroad, and to sell them to all the ancillary markets. And ideally, but it isn't easy, it would be helpful to have financing for subsequent pictures lined up, too. After all, no one can be certain that any one picture is going to be a winner.

Sam Arkoff is president of Arkoff International Pictures.

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IF THEY KNEW WHAT YOU WERE MISSING: *Part Three*

WHY TODAY'S MOTION PICTURE SOUND SYSTEMS FAIL TO MAKE THE GRADE AND WHY THEY CAN'T SOUND BETTER

by John F. Allen

Motion picture sound is critically important in setting the emotional atmosphere of a film. Sound alone is often the determining factor in knowing if a scene is a comedy or tragedy. Obviously, the better the theatre's sound presentation, the better the film works. If sound is, as some insist, more than half the show, how can exhibitors best exploit its potential? **BOXOFFICE** *contributing writer John F. Allen continues his important four-part series of articles exploring the present state of movie theatre sound along with some valuable guidance. Part one was published in the April, 1997 issue of* **BOXOFFICE.** *Part two appeared in the July, 1997 issue.*

In part one of this series, I reviewed the inadequacies of typical loudspeakers found in motion picture theatres. Part two covered the amplifier power required by all types of loudspeakers for proper presentation of digital soundtracks. These columns detailed why, without investments in upgrading or replacing most of the speakers and amplifiers presently installed in theatres, audiences simply will not hear the true quality available from digital films. Exhibition will also miss a golden opportunity to redefine what the moviegoing experience can be.

Rather than concentrating further on sound system components or equipment, this article covers sound system equalization or tuning. As hard as it may be to believe, I will explain why virtually every motion picture sound system in existence is mistuned and, more often than not, severely mistuned.

How can this be? Don't technicians use real-time sound analyzers? Don't they equalize every channel of every sound system according to "industry standards?" Well, yes they do. Sort of. And therefore don't all stereo sound systems sound perfect no matter what equipment is used? Furthermore, don't they all sound the same? Well, no they don't.

The fact is that theatre sound systems do not sound the same even when they are outfitted with identical equipment in identical theatres. The problem is that the measurements technicians rely on to equalize movie theatre sound systems are hopelessly inaccurate and totally unrepeatable. Indeed, regardless of the quality and performance of the speakers and amplifiers installed or even the room's acoustics, one of the major reasons that movie theatres can't sound better than they do is poor tuning.

The sound systems which get "tuned" the most have the distinction of not only sounding worse than they should, but each time they are re-equalized, audiences get to hear a different example of mistuning. In my own experience, one of the most ridiculous examples of this concerns the HPS-4000 systems which I designed and installed for the Century Plaza theatres, screens 2, 3 and 4, in Los Angeles. From day one, the largest of these theatres (#2) has been hailed by critics and producers alike as "the best in the area, if not the country."

Since these theatres are often used for premieres, the sound systems are constantly being checked. Normally one might think this would be a good thing. But such is not the case. One technician after another has marched in, set up his microphones and before listening to anything, totally changed the equalization—even if he had been there the week before and done the same thing. Seals I installed on the equalizer modules are ripped apart and ignored. When all is done, the sound systems usually end up sounding shrill with no bass—in other words, ruined. The technicians then listen and complain that it doesn't sound good even though their measurements "look good." Mostly they don't complain at all, which is even worse.

The technicians then listen and complain that it doesn't sound good even though their measurements "look good." Mostly they don't complain at all, which is even worse.

The situation became so bad the theatre purchased a second set of equalization modules for everyone else to use. The equalizers I set, the so-called house cards, are sealed and should be left alone. For 10 years now, technicians have had their own equalizer modules with which they may do what they will. As soon as they leave, it is understood that the house cards will be reinstalled. If ever proof is required that the measurements these well-meaning technicians are making are inaccurate and unrepeatable, consider this: In 10 years, no technician has ever set the second set of equalizers the same way twice. For 10 years, no technician has been able to achieve a sound quality as good as, let alone better than, that which is available by simply using the house cards as is. Why is this so and what can be done? There are actually several complex factors at work here. I will attempt to deal with some of them one at a time.

When measuring the frequency response of a speaker in a theatre, a technician typically sets up anywhere from one to four microphones in the rear two-thirds of the theatre. Pink noise is played through each speaker or group of surround speakers. The noise is, of course, picked up by the microphones and graphically displayed by the analyzer in 27 one-third octave bands.

According to what has now become industry practice, motion picture sound systems are equalized so that their measured frequency response matches the "X" curve (*see Figure 1*). The frequency response characteristic of this curve is flat from 100 Hertz (Hz) to 2000 Hz and declining -3 dB per octave from 2000 Hz and above. At first glance, one might look at this and wonder why there is a curve at all, when what we are supposed to be listening to is a sound system with a flat frequency response (i.e., no curve). After all, when the pink noise is connected directly to the analyzer the measured response is equal at all frequencies, or flat.

In actuality, once pink noise is played through a loudspeaker and becomes airborne in a room the size of a theatre, it will no longer measure flat on a real-time analyzer, even when it is. This is primarily due to that amount of room reverberation which the microphone sees which is also added to the measurement. Since there is a relatively large amount of low-frequency reverberation and very little high



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frequency reverberation, we see a rolled-off response on the analyzer showing more total lows than highs.

Were we able to completely remove the reverberation from this measurement technique, we should see a frequency response characteristic which is flat to around 8000 Hz and down around -3 dB at 16000 Hz (*see Figure 2*). This high-frequency loss above 8000 Hz is due to the insertion loss of the screen as well as the high-frequency absorption of the air. Yet the "X" curve shows that the frequencies from 2000 Hz to 8000 Hz are also attenuated. So what's going on? It turns out to be a characteristic of this measurement system to show such a response, which begins falling off above 2000 Hz, when we are in fact hearing a response which is flat out to as much as 8000 Hz before falling off. In other words, we're in trouble already.

The ISO 2969 and SMPTE 202M standards, which now encompass this measurement approach, take the size of the theatre into account and provide for a higher rate of high-frequency rolloff for larger and more reverberant theatres, and a somewhat reduced rate for smaller theatres. What they do not take into account is that the "knee" of the curve, where the rolloff begins, also varies with room size and acoustics. This is clearly seen when one uses loudspeakers with a flat frequency response in different theatres. Unfortunately, most speakers used in theatres are not flat and have a significant high-frequency rolloff themselves. Indeed, unless one uses flat speakers, there is no possible way to know where the knee of the curve should be for any particular theatre (*see sidebar*).

As we are beginning to see, there are many shortcomings with this approach. Any one of them is enough to completely mislead a technician. The most important issue we must understand is the difference in the way we hear and process sound, versus the way microphones work. When sound happens, it travels directly from the source to our ears. Assuming we are indoors, it also bounces off the walls, ceiling, and floor as well as everything and everyone else. Echoes of the sound reverberate throughout the room until they die out.

The first arrival of the direct sound at our ears is very important. The first arrival is what our brains use to characterize the tone as well as the direction of the sound. It also triggers our brains to suppress the earliest reverberations of the sound so that we do not hear them. This is critical to our hearing process. Our ear-brain hearing mechanism makes a clear distinction between the initial direct sound and later reverberant sound.

We experience one example of this reverberation suppression, or rather its absence, when we listen to someone speaking to us over a speakerphone. They sound like they are in an echo chamber. In fact, we hear so much reverberation of their voice and the room they are in, we can have trouble understanding them. Yet, if we were standing next to them in that room, we would not hear the reverberation even if we tried. Our brains suppress it very effectively.

Of course, the reason it's so easy to hear the reverberation through the speakerphone is because its microphone doesn't have a brain. Measurement microphones and real-time analyzers don't have brains either. And unless we take this into account, neither do we.

Not only do microphones respond to the first sound arrivals, they also pick up all the reverberation in the room and add it to the direct sound without distinguishing one from the other. The result is a totally contaminated measurement. This mess is then displayed on the analyzer and is generally mistaken as representing the frequency response of what we will hear in the theatre, when nothing could be further from the truth. Unfortunately, virtually all of today's motion picture sound

GETTING A BETTER EQ
by John F. Allen

While the original cinema sound system far-field measurements and equalization procedures seem to work well with the older speakers in use when the "X" curve was researched, modern installations require a more critical approach. Since no current technology exists which can measure what something sounds like, we must learn to get more accuracy out of the real-time analyzers we have and also learn to better interpret their displays.

To that end, the following suggestions are offered to technicians responsible for equalizing motion picture sound systems. Some of these suggestions may seem like heresy. But they're worth a try and certainly won't hurt. Sound system tuning is as much an art as balancing a symphony orchestra. It takes years to develop the skills required. Even then it's still an art. The following should be a good beginning:

1. Set the real-time analyzer for maximum averaging time and minimum resolution (2 or 3 dB per division), whenever speakers are measured.

2. Place all the measurement microphones in the third row of the theatre. If using a single microphone, place it in the middle third of the third row where the frequency response displayed looks the worst in the 100 to 500 Hz range.

3. If the screen speakers are all the same, as is usually the case, equalize the center channel for a smooth response, but not better than ±2 dB. Avoid boosting. Use cuts only, if at all possible. Then adjust the controls for the other screen channels to match the settings of the center. Ignore the analyzer's display of the frequency response of the other speakers. However, the analyzer may be useful in balancing the high and low frequency sections of a bi-amplified speaker system. Setting the equalization for all the screen channels the same as the center will ensure that they will sound the same. Do not adjust any one-third octave bands below 80 Hz. If the low-frequency bands below 100 Hz look elevated, do not be concerned. They can be left alone for now.

A special note about third-row measurements of speaker systems with constant directivity horns: When these horns are placed behind a screen, the coverage angles of the higher frequencies are increased around 20 degrees in all directions beyond the screen. This directs an excessive amount of these high frequencies toward the front rows. The sound in these seats may normally be too bright when the rest of the theatre sounds normal. In such a case, the "X" curve will not be seen when the microphones are in the near-field, and the real-time analyzer's display will show a more nearly flat high-frequency response.

4. Move the microphones. If using four microphones, place them along the center line of the theatre, starting from the center of the seating area to about 10 feet from the rear wall. If using a single mike, place it in the center of the seating area.

5. Adjust the equalization of the surrounds for a flat response ±2 dB from 100 to 10000 or 12000 Hz. The equalization adjustments should be the same for both surround channels.

6. Set the optical surround delay so that it equals, in milliseconds, the total length of the theatre plus 10. A 70-foot-long theatre would therefore have a delay of 80 milliseconds.

7. Using only the microphone located in the center of the seating area, set the processor to the stereo optical format "04". Adjust the equalization of the subwoofer to cut everything above 80 Hz.

8. Set the fader to "7". Adjust the sound pressure levels (SPL) for each channel using the one microphone placed in the center of the seating area. This location is the most symmetrical between all the speakers and will provide the best channel-to-channel balance. The optical surround level is best set with the Dolby CAT-151 film and the surround delay at "0".

9. When finished, listen to a good 20 minutes of familiar feature film material—not trailers. Make equal adjustments to each channel's treble as your ears require. If peaks in the frequency response can be positively identified, make adjustments to all three channels accordingly. Also, adjust the fader for a normal dialogue level. In terms of SPL, normal dialogue (not shouting or whispering) peaks at around 80 dBc, with occasional peaks to 85 or 86 dBc. Note the new fader setting. If other than "7", reset the fader to a point equal on the other side of "7". (If the fader is at 6 1/4, reset to 7 3/4.) Readjust all SPL levels at this fader setting and note it as the calibration setting for future servicing. Recheck the reference film dialogue level. The fader should be at "7" when the level is normal.



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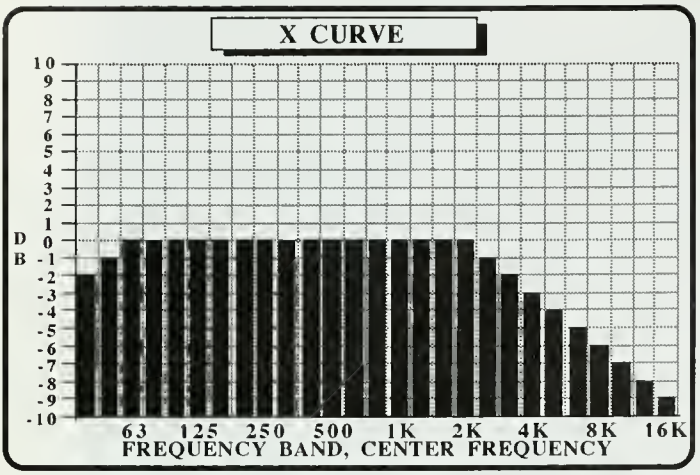


Figure 1.

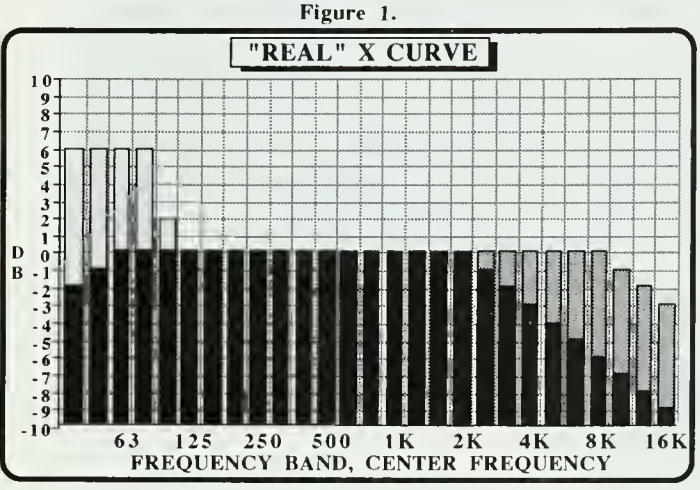


Figure 2.

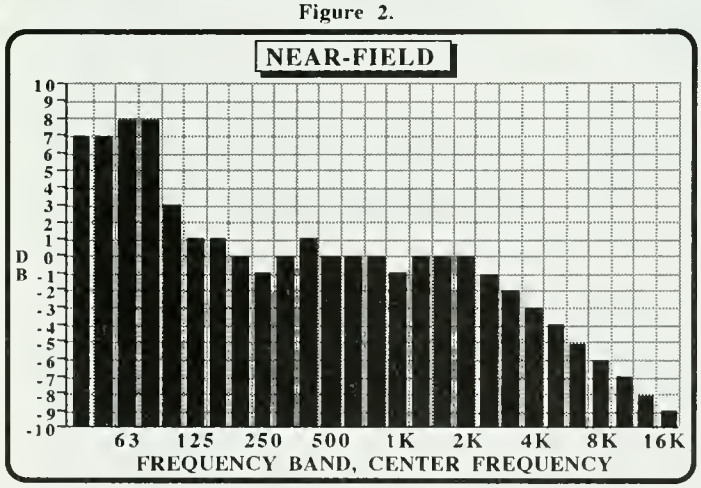


Figure 3.

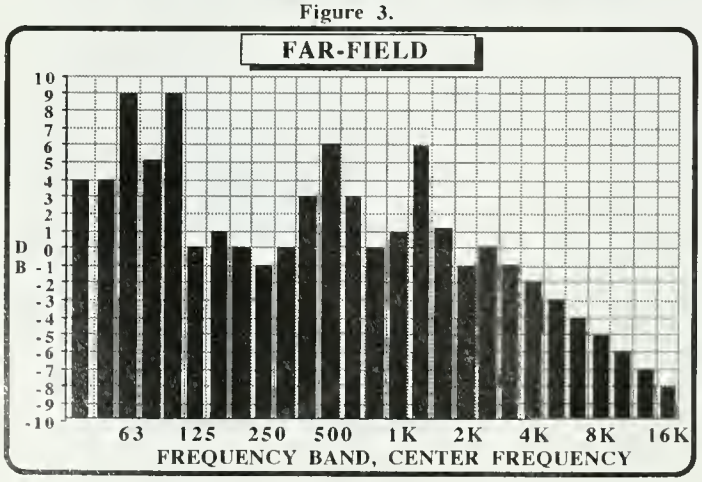


Figure 4.

systems have been equalized with these distorted measurements and as a result fail to deliver their best possible performance, whatever it may be.

The sad fact is there is no technology available which can measure what something sounds like. However, with measurements more heavily weighted to the direct sound and away from the theatre's reverberation, we can get far better results. Until we have a new measurement system, simply moving the microphone(s) to the front of the theatre, typically around the third row, will dramatically increase credibility of the display on the analyzer (*see Figures 3, 4 and 5*).

To illustrate, Figure 3 shows a third row, or "near-field," measurement of a full-range, fully horn loaded loudspeaker located behind the screen of a 600-seat theatre. This excellent theatre is large enough for the high-frequency rolloff to begin at 2000 Hz and conform nicely to the theoretical "X" curve. The low frequencies appear elevated. But this is actually a normal measurement for a speaker system like this which, with a 10 1/4-square-foot low-frequency radiating area, is fully coupled to the air in the room down to frequencies below the 40 Hz range. In other words, don't try this with ordinary speakers.

Figure 4 is the measurement of the same speaker in the same theatre at the same time, but with the microphone in several locations two thirds of the way back in the house. Note the differences as seen in Figure 5, particularly the 5 dB peaks at 500 and 1250 Hz. These "measured" peaks are most curious as they do not exist when we actually listen to the sound system. In fact, it is quite impossible for a loudspeaker to have such a radically different frequency response simply by standing 30 or 40 feet farther away.

Differences of the kind seen in Figures 3, 4 and 5 are often seen between a theatre's separate screen speakers as well. Though they are only 15 to 20 feet away from each other and in the same room, differences of as much as 8 dB in one or more of the one-third octave bands are regularly seen. This again is completely impossible unless the speakers are defective. Unfortunately, many technicians have been trained to believe such measurements, even though they defy common sense. Sound systems are routinely equalized to "correct" these differences. In the process some rather huge distortions are actually introduced to the frequency response of the direct sound heard by the audience. Papers about this problem started appearing in the early 1970s, prior to the introduction of real-time analyzers to the movie theatre industry. These papers have been all but ignored, for reasons I have never been able to understand.

A further note about the lowest frequency bands: Looking again at the bands from 40 to 100 Hz in Figures 2, 3 and 4, it needs to be understood that when using pink noise, the measured level of these bands is dependent on the size of the theatre and of the speaker systems. Suffice it to say that the "X" curve appears to show that the speakers used in the 1970s, when the curve was researched, lacked deep bass. For when a full-range flat speaker playing continuous steady-state pink noise happens to measure with an elevated low end, the tone of actual program material sounds balanced. If the bass of such a large speaker is turned down, the sound becomes decidedly thin and unnatural. Unfortunately, there is no real way to know where these lower frequencies should measure relative to the mid frequencies. So unless a problem can be heard when listening to films, it's probably best not to equalize screen speakers below 80 to 100 Hz.

One of the arguments used in defense of the present theatre sound system measurement and setup practices is that they allow the technician to "equalize the room." This is a misnomer, as there are no adjustments to the room at all. It might be better referred to as equalizing for certain effects of the room. Indeed there is some validity to this, as room acoustics do alter the perceived tone of what we hear from a loudspeaker. However, the effect is primarily limited to the frequencies below 400 to 500 Hz.

Unfortunately, steady-state pink noise-based measurements do a terrible job detecting these room effects no matter where the microphones are located. Even in the front of the theatre, room effects can be completely missed. This is due to the steady state nature of the pink noise and the conditions of acoustic equilibrium thus created in which the measurements are taken. These conditions very often mask these

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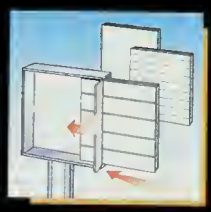
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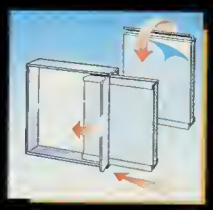
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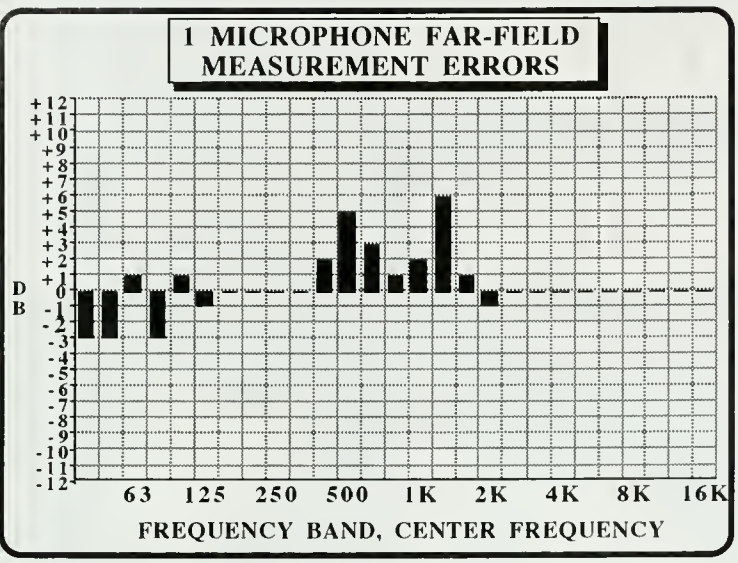


Figure 5.

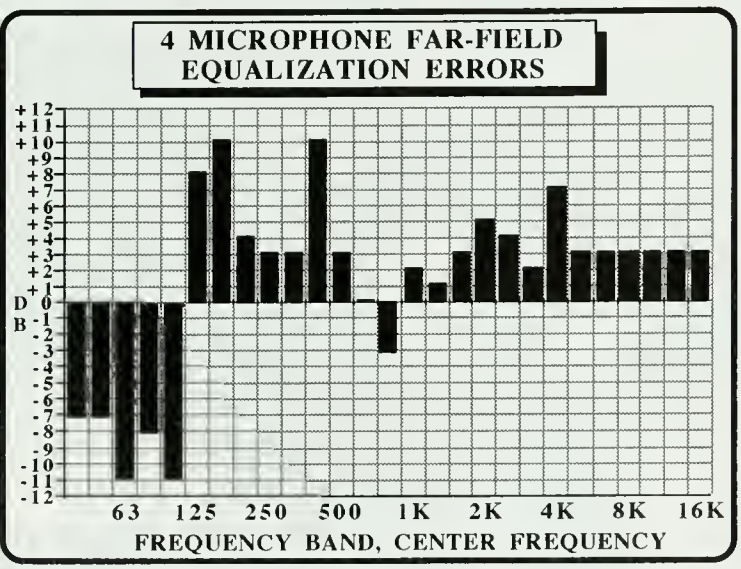


Figure 6.

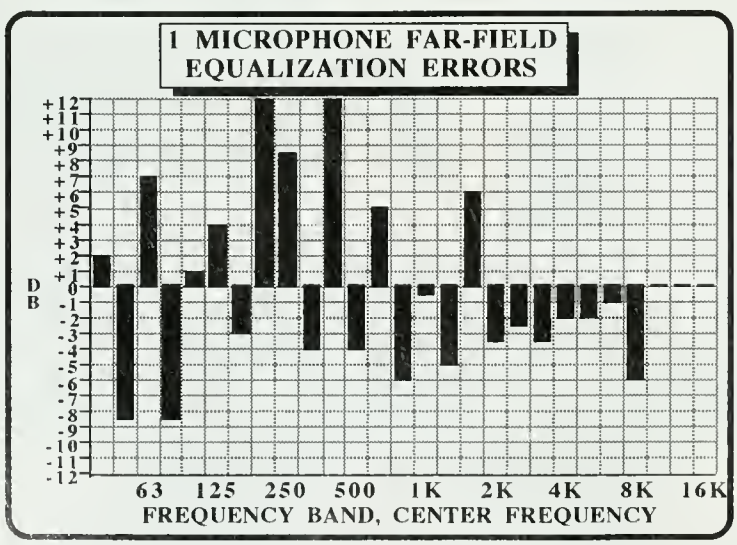


Figure 7.

important room effects. Real sound, particularly speech, is transient and dynamic. So we can easily hear these (now unmasked) effects even though the analyzers tell us they aren't there. The moral is, if the ears say there is a problem and the analyzers say there isn't—the ears win.

So, how poorly tuned are today's theatre sound systems? Unfortunately, pretty poorly! In August 1995, I demonstrated the differences in sound quality resulting from three different equalization and measurement techniques—my own, plus the two methods outlined in the ISO and SMPTE standards. The program was produced for the International Theatre Equipment Association's annual convention and took place at General Cinema's highly successful Framingham, Mass. facility. I repeated this program in April 1996, for an audience of over 330 local members of the SMPTE, the Audio Engineering Society, the Boston Audio Society and the Acoustical Society of America.

The program consisted of selected recordings and film clips, played four times each. First, the sound system was equalized according to my own proprietary High Performance Stereo (HPS) near-field tuning techniques (*see Figure 3*). Second, the system was equalized to show how it would sound using the typical far-field four-microphone measurements (*see Figure 6*). These settings were done by a senior industry sound technician. For the third example, the sound system was equalized using a single microphone in several locations two-thirds back from the screen (*see Figure 7*). Fourth, the clips were again played back through the normal HPS near-field tuning (*see Figure 3*). To everyone's ears, the HPS near-field tuning sounded best by far. Here's why.

Figure 3 shows the normal response, typical for a theatre of this size with the HPS near-field tuning. Figure 6 shows the changes to this equalization when four microphones placed in the far-field are used to measure the system. Figure 7 represents the changes made when one microphone is used in the far-field.

Just imagine what happens to clean smooth sound when it is passed through such equalizations as shown in Figures 6 and 7. As you can see, neither had any bass. The four-mike tuning was also excessively shrill due to the erroneous boosts above 1000 Hz. The boosts of as much as 10 dB in the 160 and 400 Hz range gave the sound a "honky" quality making everyone sound like they were speaking in a phone booth or through a fire hose. This "honky" characteristic, commonly associated with movie theatre sound as well as horn-loaded loudspeakers, is bad sound, pure and simple. Yet it has been so prevalent in theatres for over 60 years that I've actually run into one or two who thought there was something wrong when the sound was so natural they didn't hear it. So, while there are some poorly designed speakers (horn-loaded and otherwise) which can produce a honky quality, this aberration is also caused and exaggerated by improper equalization, as well as technicians who would seem to be all too forgiving.

The sound quality resulting from the single-mike far-field tuning (Figure 7) was also unacceptable. The high and low frequencies were essentially gone. The rest of the sound was pure mud with a heavy dose of midbass.

In both of the far-field tunings the background sounds were diminished or wiped out altogether. The stereo image was narrowed. Music quality was also severely impacted. The sound from the improperly equalized surrounds all but vanished as the entire soundtrack collapsed into the screen.

The important thing to understand out of all this is that all three equalizations done for this presentation measured the same on a real-time analyzer and "conformed" to the ISO and SMPTE standards, or at least looked like they did. Yet the sound of each was radically different. The other important realization is that thousands and thousands of today's motion picture theatres are routinely mis-equalized with the kinds of errors shown in Figures 6 and 7.

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John F. Allen is the founder and president of High Performance Stereo in Newton, Mass. He is also the inventor of the HPS-4000 cinema sound system and, in 1984, was the first to bring digital sound to the cinema.

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SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

MONDAY, OCTOBER 20

10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.	Trade Show Registration	Convention Center
1:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m.	Convention Registration	Convention Center
5:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.	Specialized Screening: New Yorker Films' "Beaumarchais"	Xanadu Theatre
7:00 p.m.-8:30 p.m.	Cocktail Reception	TBA
8:30 p.m.-10:30 p.m.	Specialized Screening	Xanadu Theatre

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 21

8:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m.	Registration	Convention Center
9:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m.	Specialized Screening: Sony Classics' "Afterglow"	Xanadu Theatre
9:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.	Will Rogers Blood Pressure and Cholesterol Testing (also Wed., 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m., and Thur., 9 a.m.-1:30 p.m.)	Diamond Ballroom A
10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.	Nestle Foods Hospitality Suite	Diamond Ballroom C
10:30 a.m.-12 noon	Technical Seminar: Proper Screen Illumination	TBA
12:15 p.m. -2:00 p.m.	Screening	Xanadu Theatre
2:00 p.m.-3:30 p.m.	Exhibitor Relations Trade Fair	Tiara Ballroom
3:00 p.m.-6:45 p.m.	ShowEast '97 **Trade Show** and Cocktail Reception (Sponsor: Dolby)	Etess Arena
7:00 p.m.-8:45 p.m.	Opening Night Gala Dinner (Sponsor: Pepsi)	Grand Ballroom
9:00 p.m.-11:00 p.m.	Screening	Xanadu Theatre
11:00 p.m.-12 midnight	International Dessert Buffet (Sponsor: Fox)	Tiara Ballroom

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 22

7:30 a.m.-6:00 p.m.	Registration	Convention Center
8:15 a.m.-9:30 a.m.	Opening Day Breakfast	Grand Ballroom
9:30 a.m.-12:15 p.m.	Opening Ceremony and Screening. Moderator: Greg Dunn, Show Chair; Speaker: NATO Pres. Bill Kartozian	Xanadu Theatre
12:30 p.m.-2:00 p.m.	Opening Day Luncheon (Sponsors: Kodak and Imax)	Grand Ballroom
2:00 p.m.-5:30 p.m.	**Trade Show** (Sponsor: DTS)	Etess Arena
5:00 p.m.-6:45 p.m.	Screening	Xanadu Theatre
7:00 p.m.-8:45 p.m.	Wednesday Evening Dinner (Sponsor: New Line)	Grand Ballroom
9:00 p.m.-11:00 p.m.	Screening	Xanadu Theatre
11:00 p.m.-12 midnight	Dessert Party	Tiara Ballroom
12:00 mid	Screening	Xanadu Theatre

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 23

8:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.	Registration	Convention Center
8:00 a.m.-8:45 a.m.	Continental Breakfast	Tiara Ballroom
9:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m.	Screening	Xanadu Theatre
10:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	**Trade Show**	Etess Arena
12:30 p.m.-2:15 p.m.	Final Day Luncheon (Sponsor: Sony Releasing)	Grand Ballroom
2:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m.	Screening	Xanadu Theatre
5:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.	Screening	Xanadu Theatre
7:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m.	Final Night Cocktail Party (Sponsor: Sony Cinema Products)	Tiara Ballroom
8:30 p.m.	Final Night Banquet and Award Presentations (Sponsor: Coca-Cola)	Grand Ballroom

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Salah M. Hassanein Humanitarian Award

Cinemark USA chairman and CEO Lee Roy Mitchell and Cinemark USA executive vice president Tandy Mitchell are the recipients of the 1997 Salah M. Hassanein Humanitarian Award.

LEE ROY MITCHELL opened his first theatre more than 35 years ago. Growing up around his family's theatre business, he worked in every facet of exhibition, from buying and booking films to popping corn. Starting his own theatre business in Ennis, Texas, Mitchell built and expanded his circuit into the largest independent theatrical exhibitor in the state of Texas.

In 1984, Mitchell sold his original theatre company but retained the Cinemark name. After a short retirement, he started his quest to expand Cinemark into a major American and international theatre circuit. As a result of his efforts, Cinemark is now the fifth-largest motion picture exhibitor in North America, with 1,680 screens in 29 states, plus additional sites in Canada, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Japan, Mexico, Peru and El Salvador.

In addition to providing vision and leadership at Cinemark, Mitchell has served on the NATO board of directors as well as the boards of Nest Entertainment and the Southern Methodist University Meadows School of the Arts.

TANDY MITCHELL has held various leadership roles at Cinemark. She currently serves as executive vice president of the company and provides direct supervision of theatre operations and corporate projects. According to Tandy Mitchell, Cinemark's success is based on complete customer satisfaction—a goal she and Lee Roy Mitchell have always striven to satisfy.

The charities supported by Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell include the Peaceable Kingdom Retreat for Children, Variety Club of North Texas/Children's Charity, Bill Glass Ministries, Young Life and the SPCA of Texas.

JIM MURRAY

Founders Award

The 1997 winner of the honor variously known as the Founders Award and the Distinguished Service Award, **JIM MURRAY** began his career in the exhibition business the old-fashioned way: He started as an usher. Today, he is vice president of U.S. operations for National Amusements (whose chairman is another who began at the industry's bottom rungs: Sumner Redstone). National Amusements, founded in 1936 and by 1996 the nation's eight-largest circuit, projects that by year-end 1997 it will have 944 stateside screens at 104 sites.

Murray has been a key part of National Amusements' growth for a quarter-century. He joined the company in 1973 as a district manager and by 1988 was managing the entire East Coast region. In 1991, Murray transferred to National Amusements' Dedham, Mass., corporate headquarters, where he took up his current post. Despite his long tenure at National Amusements, he is only now equaling his time spent at Century Theatres in New York, where he previously worked for 25 years as well.

Active outside the office, Murray is president of the Variety Club of New England. Through his efforts, Murray coordinated collections for the Jimmy Fund, which this year reached a tally of $598,000. In addition, he had the nation's highest sales of Gold Hearts for Cystic Fibrosis. Murray also serves as a director on the boards of NATO and NATO of New York, and he is treasurer of TONE. As is common for this award's recipients, Murray has served on the ShowEast Executive Committee since its founding 13 years ago.



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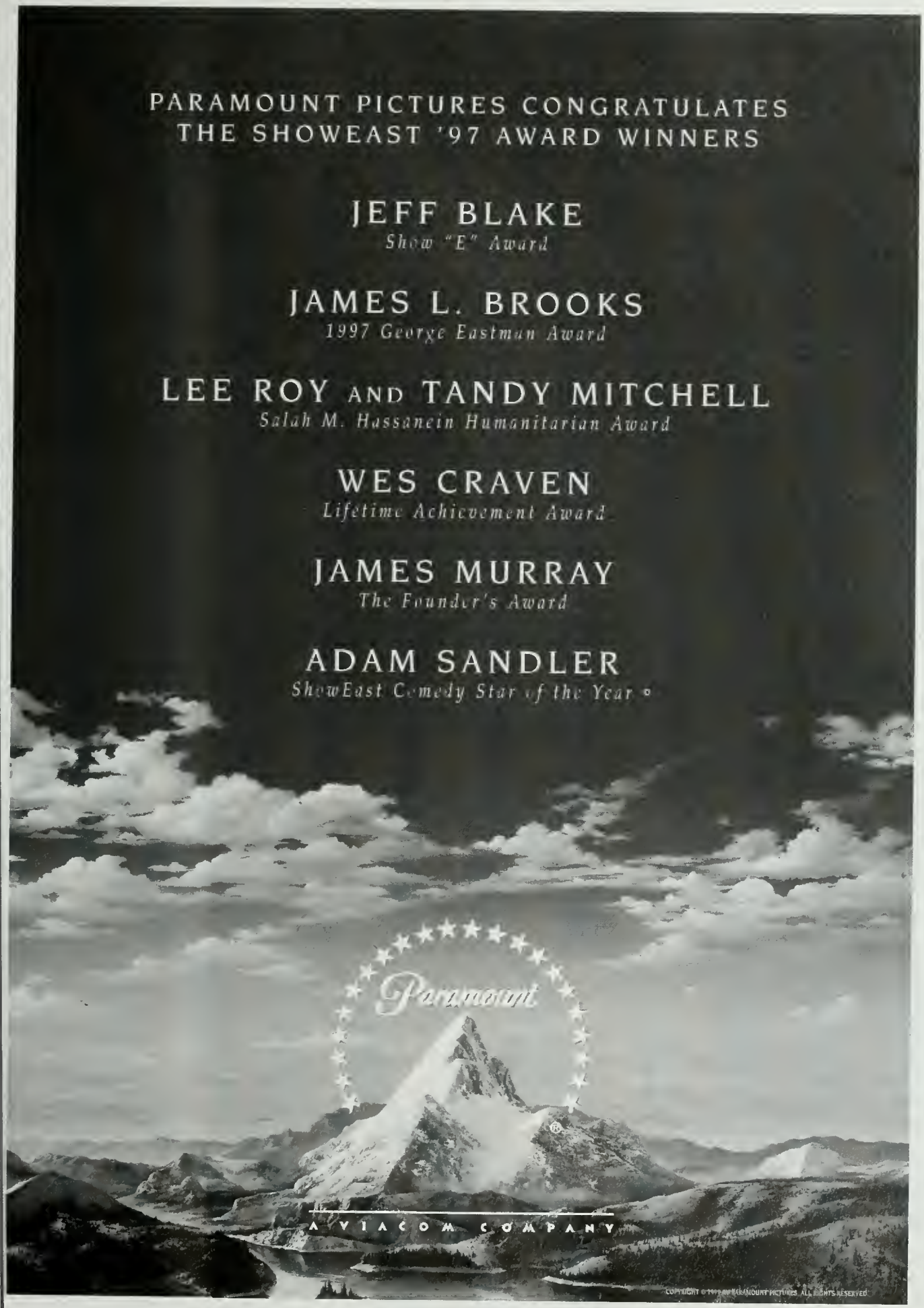
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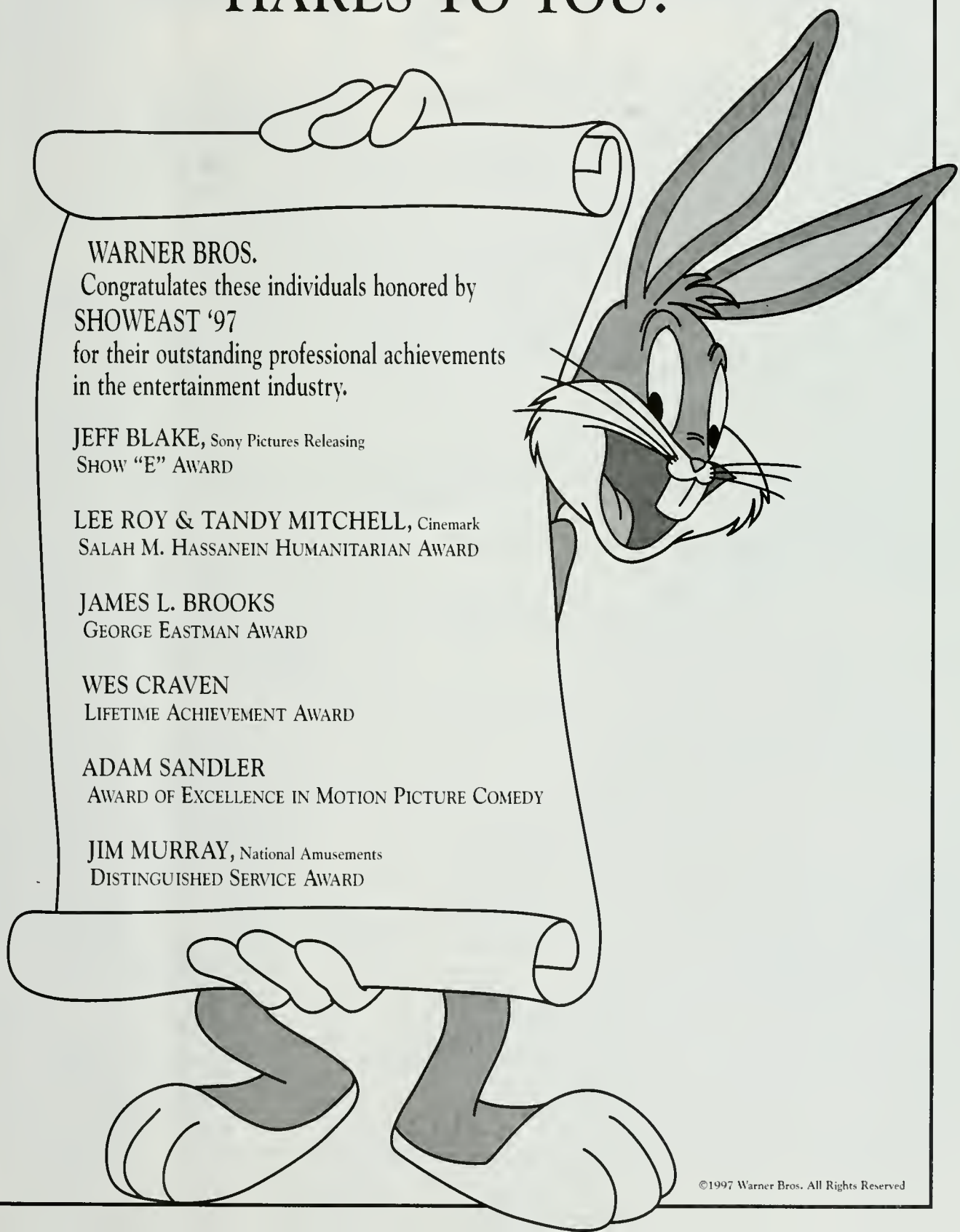
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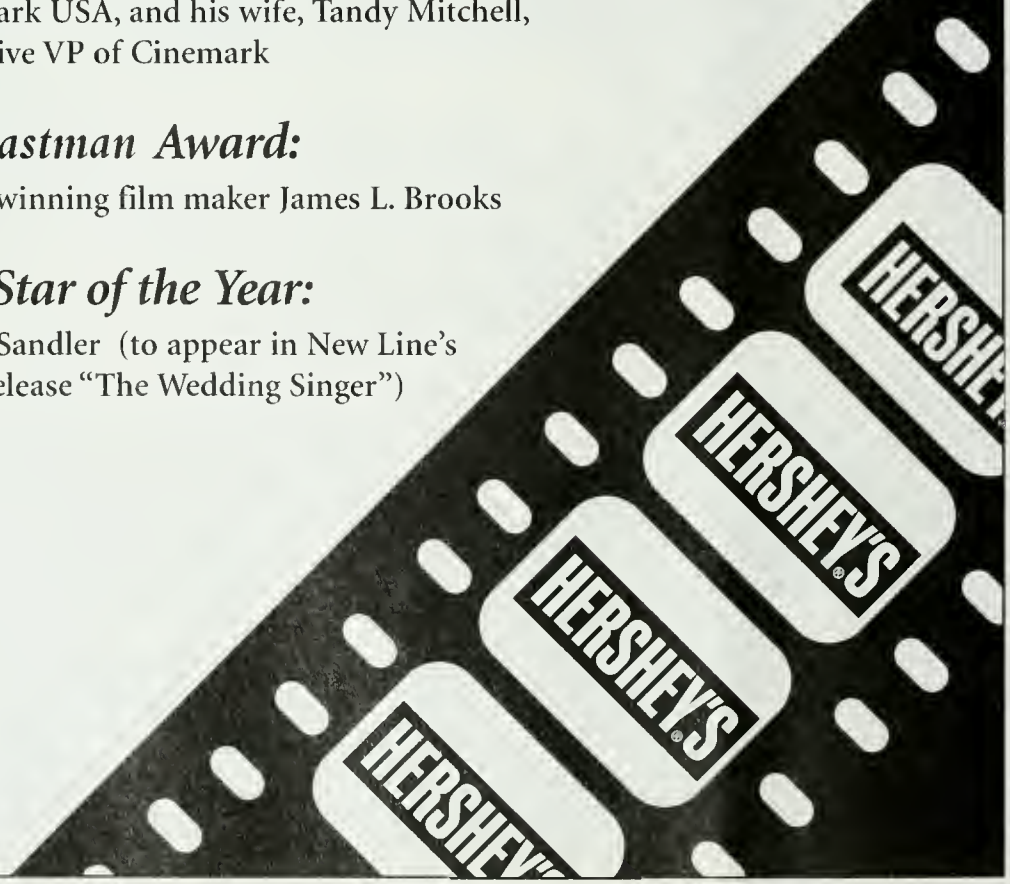
Lee Roy Mitchell, Chairman and CEO of
Cinemark USA, and his wife, Tandy Mitchell,
Executive VP of Cinemark

George Eastman Award:

Oscar-winning film maker James L. Brooks

Comedy Star of the Year:

Adam Sandler (to appear in New Line's
1998 release "The Wedding Singer")



Congratulations!

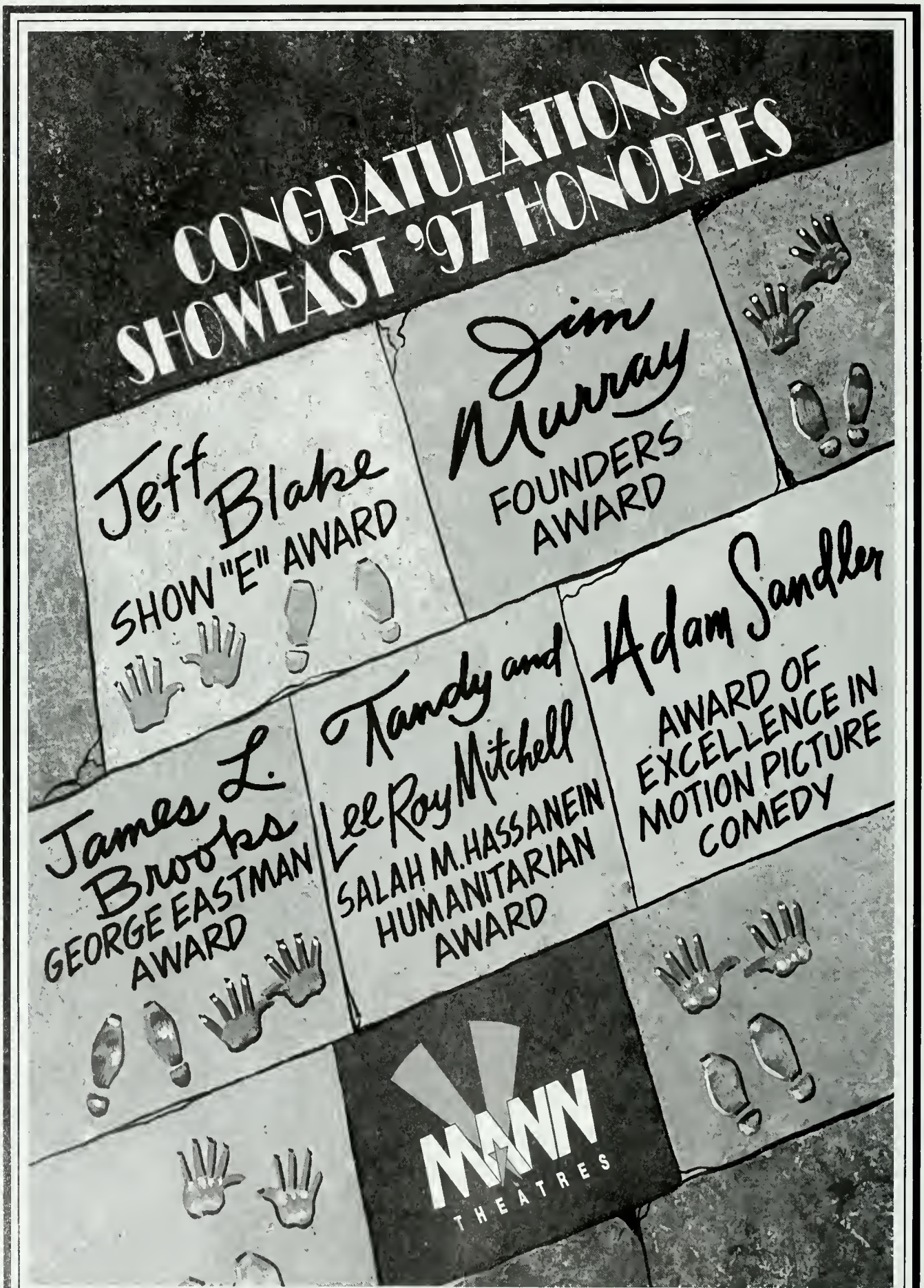
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JEFF BLAKE

Show "E" Award

The recipient of the 1997 Show "E" Award is **JEFF BLAKE**, president of Sony Pictures Releasing. As head since 1994 of Sony Pictures Entertainment's domestic theatrical distribution arm, Blake has been a key element in the studio's new-found vigor at the boxoffice.

This past year, Blake has overseen such successful releases as Columbia's "Anaconda," "The Fifth Element," "Men in Black" and "Air Force One," and TriStar's "My Best Friend's Wedding." During the holiday season, TriStar will offer two high-profile films: "Starship Troopers," a Paul Verhoeven sci-fi actioner opening Nov. 7, and "As Good As It Gets," a James L. Brooks film starring Jack Nicholson.

Before taking his current post in August 1994, Blake was president of domestic distribution for Columbia. Prior to joining the Sony team, Blake spent 18 years at Paramount Pictures; after serving in several capacities at Paramount, Blake was named executive vice president and general sales manager of the studio's domestic distribution arm in 1987.

JAMES L. BROOKS

George Eastman Award

Multi-talented writer/producer/director **JAMES L. BROOKS** is the recipient of the 1997 George Eastman Award. Brooks is a three-time Academy Award winner and 12-time Emmy Award winner. He began his television career as a writer who then later produced television hits such as "Taxi," "Mary Tyler Moore" and "The Simpsons." Brooks began working in film in 1979 when he wrote the screenplay for "Starting Over," which he co-produced with Alan J. Pakula. In 1983, Brooks wrote, produced and directed "Terms of Endearment," for which he earned three Academy Awards. In 1987, he wrote, produced and directed "Broadcast News," which won the New York Drama Critics Award for best picture and best screenplay. Through Gracie Films, Brooks executive produced the feature film "Say Anything," produced "The War of the Roses" and co-produced "Big" with Robert Greenhut.



In 1990, Brooks produced and directed his first play, "Brooklyn Laundry," in an L.A.-based production starring Woody Harrelson and Glenn Close. His most recent film as a director was "I'll Do Anything," starring Nick Nolte and Albert Brooks; he also produced last year's smash "Jerry Maguire," which starred Tom Cruise and was written and directed by Cameron Crowe.

Currently, Brooks is editing the theatrical feature "As Good As It Gets," starring Jack Nicholson, Helen Hunt and Greg Kinnear—a film he wrote, produced and directed.

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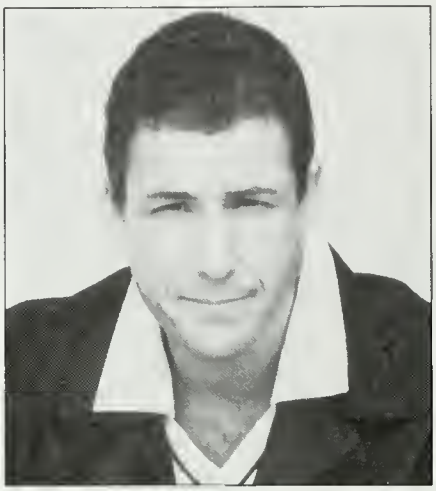
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ADAM SANDLER

Comedy Star of the Year

Brooklyn-born comic **ADAM SANDLER**, who broke into the mainstream with notoriously bizarre characters like Opera Man, Canteen Boy, Carlos and Cajun Man on television's "Saturday Night Live," is the recipient of ShowEast's Comedy Star of the Year award. Sandler's first foray into comedy was at age 17 when his brother encouraged him to go onstage spontaneously at a Boston comedy club. While attending New York University, Sandler continued to perform in clubs and universities throughout New York. Shortly thereafter, he won a spot as part of "Saturday Night Live's" cast for the 1990/'91 season; he and his unique, outrageous characters became increasingly popular over the five years he appeared on the show.

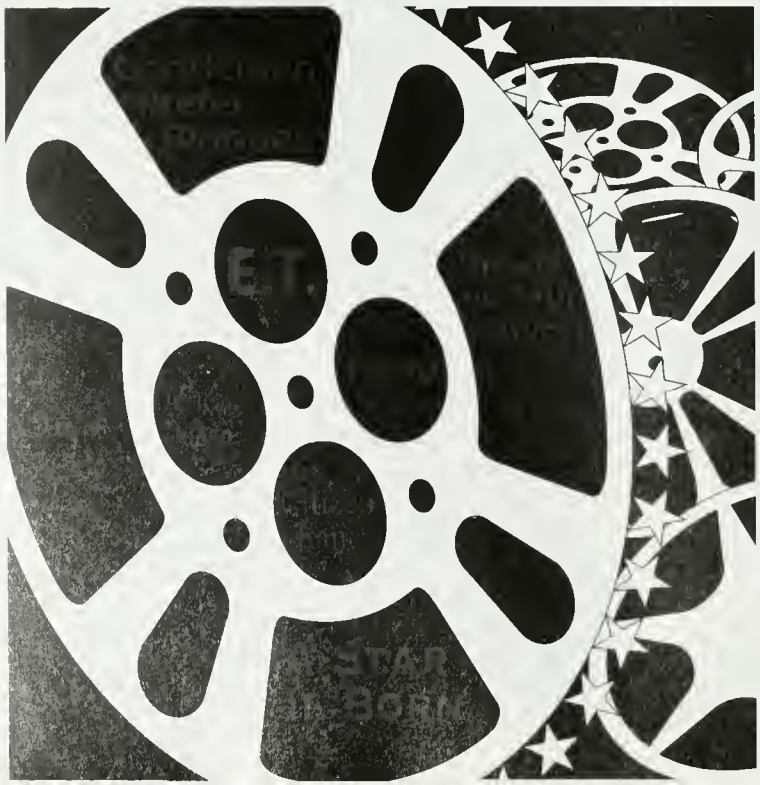
Sandler made his feature film debut in 1993's "Coneheads," and subsequently starred in several comedies including "Airheads," "Billy Madison," "Bulletproof" and "Happy Gilmore." Coming up for Sandler is New Line's "The Wedding Singer," slated to open Feb. 13, in which he'll star in the title role opposite Drew Barrymore. Set in New Jersey circa 1985, the film tells the story of Robbie (Sandler), lead singer for a band that does cover versions of Culture Club and Dead or Alive songs to mixed reactions at small-town wedding receptions. When he's jilted at the altar of his own wedding, he's devastated, and his work suffers.



The role "marries" Sandler's aptitudes as both a comic actor and a singer—the multi-talented entertainer wrote and performed such hits as "Lunchlady Land," "Chanakah Song" and "Red-Hooded Sweatshirt," and has released three comedy albums which feature both spoken-word pieces and songs: "They're All Gonna Laugh At You!," "What the Hell Happened to Me?," and his latest, "What's Your Name," which recently hit record stores everywhere.

Sandler is currently busy co-scripting "The Water Boy" with his writing partner Tim Herlihy. The film, in which Sandler will also star, is scheduled to go into production this month and will be released through Buena Vista.

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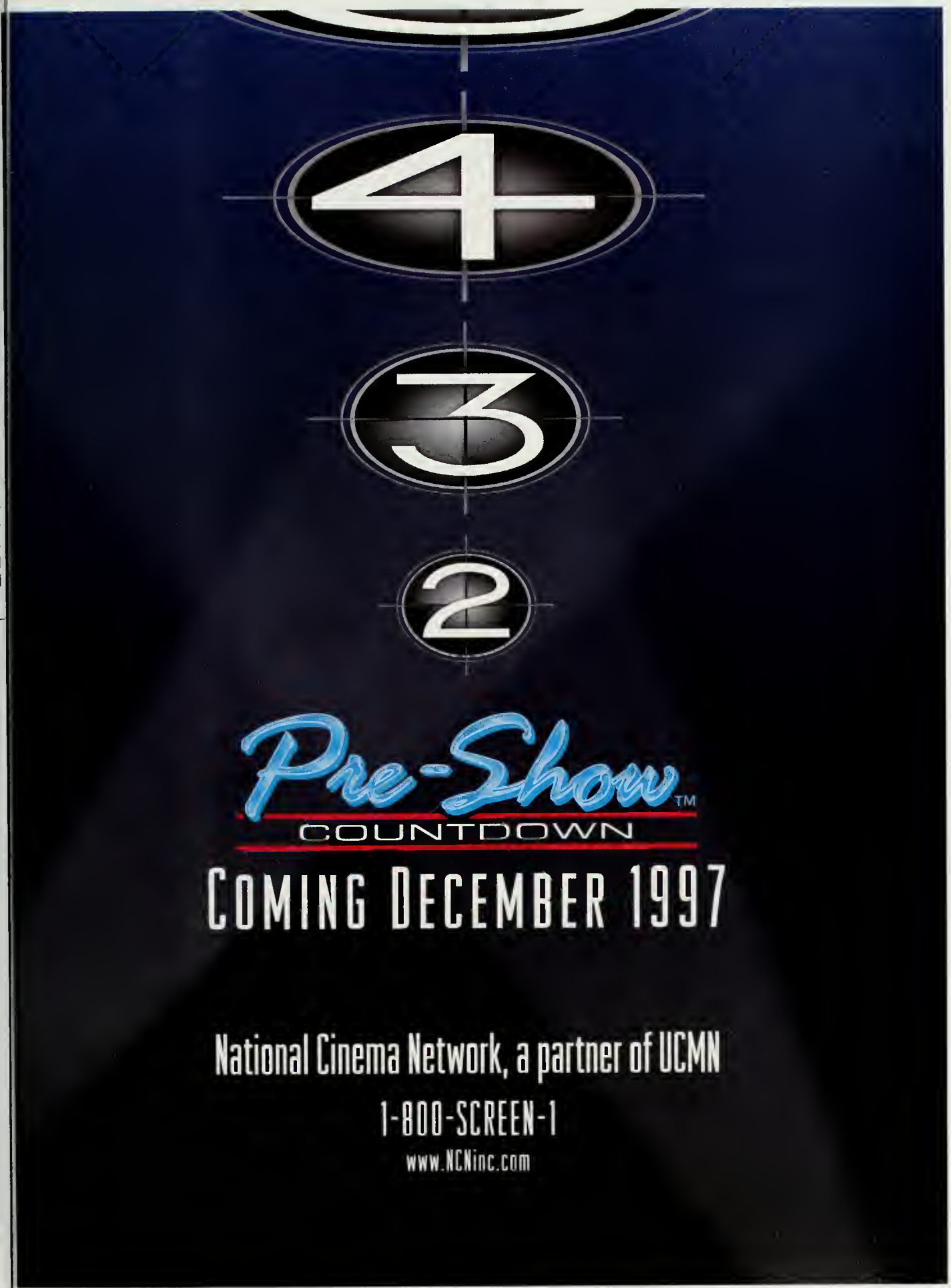
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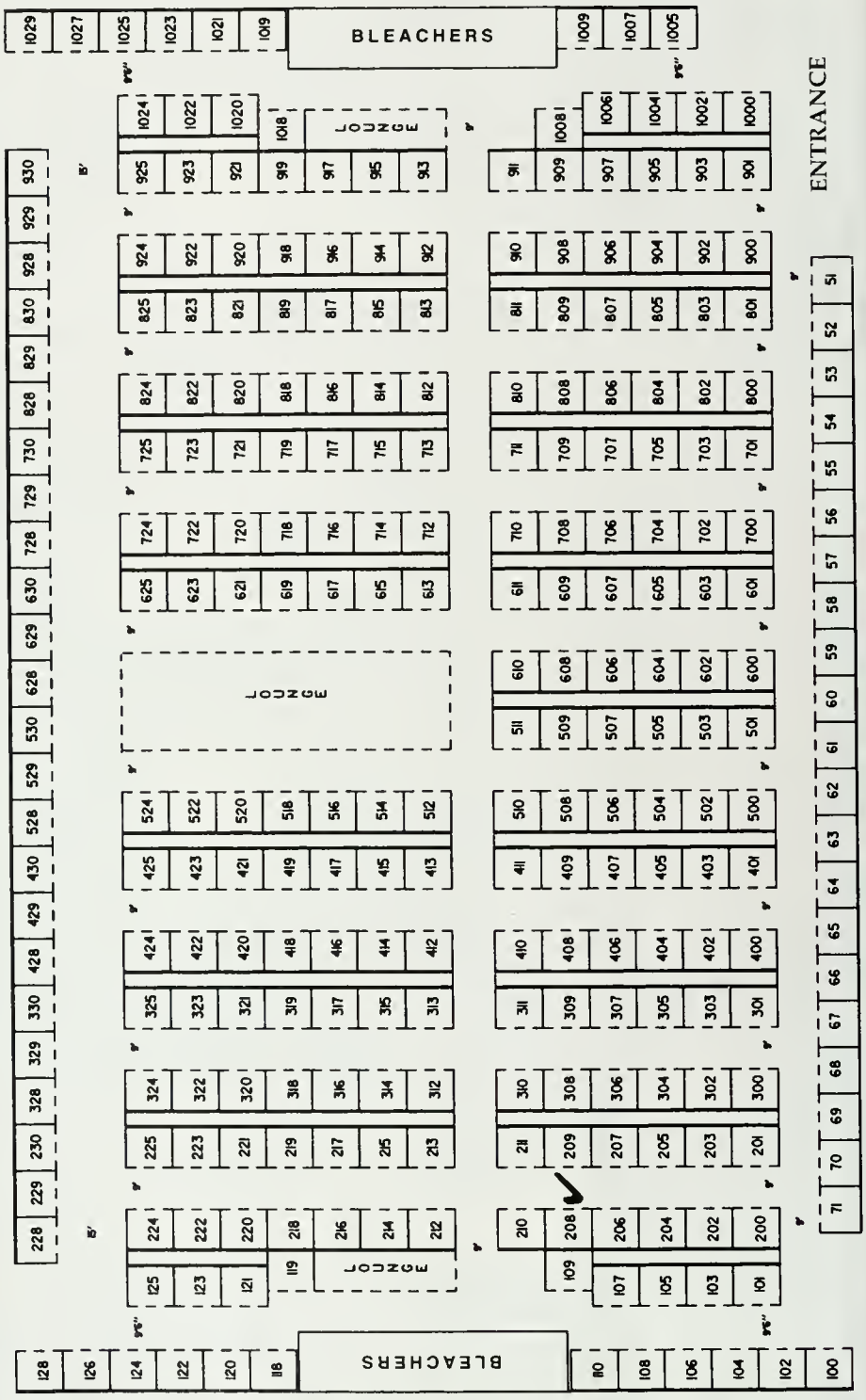
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(Our Trade Show Booth List Begins On Page 88)

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Ball Park Franks.....224
Rep: Don DeLordo

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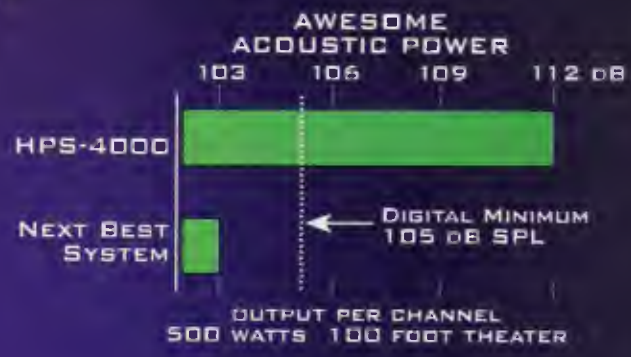
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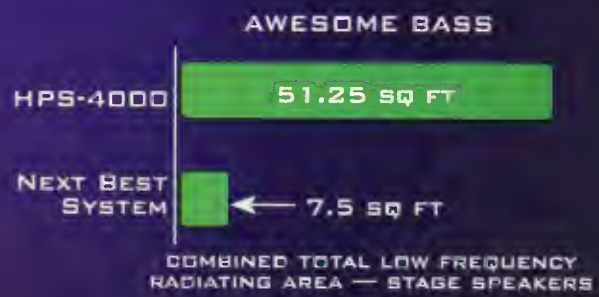
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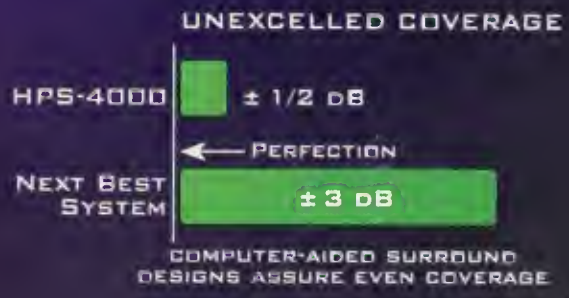
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Rep: Ron Bilodeau
Theatre seating.

Icon International 201, 203, 300, 302
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206-926-8075/fax:206-926-8076
Rep: Suzanne Dyke
Computer ticketing, concessions and info.

Imperial Bondware.....221
75 Chestnut Ridge Rd, Montvale, NJ 07645
201-307-4535/fax: 201-307-6125; Rep: Tarra Luz
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International Cinema Equip.....623, 625
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305-573-7339/fax: 305-573-8101; Rep: Steven Krams
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International Display Systems....718, 720, 719, 721
Rep: Ellen Wilcken

Inter County Mechanical Corp. 1008
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Lucasfilm THX.....715, 717
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THX audio.

M&M/Mars.....723, 725
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Marble Co. Inc. 1025
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800-759-5905/fax: 615-228-1301; Rep: Randy Bauch
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Marcel Desrochers Inc. 66
3500 Rachelie St, Montreal, Quebec, CANADA
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Rep: Gerry Nadeau
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Meridian Worldwide.....428
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Mesbur & Smith Architects.....1021
148 Kenwood Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M6C 2S3
416-656-5751/fax: 416-656-5615; Rep: David Mesbur
Architects specializing in theatre design.

Miller & Kreisel Corp. 730
Rep: Lynn Shubert

MovieAd.....330
475 Ramblewood Dr., Coral Springs, FL 33071
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MovieFone.....1000-1004, 1006, 1007
4 World Trade Ctr., Ste. 5280, NY, NY 10048
212-504-7442/fax: 212-504-7567; Rep: Marty Griffin
Call-in movie info service, advance ticket sales.

MPO Videotronics.....316
Rep: Jocelyn Jones

Multifoods.....104
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800-880-9900, ext.6369/fax: 303-338-6370
Rep: Mike Bates
Full-line concession supply distribution.

MVE, Inc. 207
8011 34th Ave. S., # 100, Bloomington, MN 55425
612-853-9600/fax: 612-853-9661; Rep: Kim Janecek
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National Association of Theatre Owners (NATO).....70
4605 Lankershim Blvd., Suite 340
North Hollywood, CA 91602
818-506-1778/fax:818-506-0269
Rep: Mary Ann Grasso
Trade association for the business, technological and marketing needs of exhibition.

National Cinema Service.....318
P.O. Box 10799, New Orleans, LA 70181
504-734-0707/fax:504-734-0700; Rep: Chris Pierce
Theatre projection and sound equipment.

National ICEE Corporation.....71
303 West Lancaster Ave, Wayne, PA 19087
610-964-7878/610-964-9769; Rep: Terry Goldstein
Icee frozen carbonated drinks, Air Popt popcorn.

National Ticket Company.....619
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800-829-0829/fax: 800-829-0880; Rep: Diane Surak
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NCS Corporation.....607
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Nestle Food Co.....901, 903, 905
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Odell's.....806
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800-635-0436/fax: 702-323-6532; Rep: Michael Blout
Popcorn topping, ODELL'S brand canola oil.

Odyssey Products.....100, 102
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770-448-4873/fax: 770-453-9626: Rep: Eve Miller
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Omega Pattern Works.....205
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800-241-4908/fax:706-272-7617
Rep: Joyce Maxwell
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OSRAM SYLVANIA, Inc.....613, 615
100 Endicott St., Danvers, MA 01923
508-777-1900/fax:750-2089
Rep: David Greening
Osram Xenon lamps.

Pacer/CATS.....809, 811, 908, 910
3701 Wilshire Blvd, #9th, L.A., CA 90048
213-388-7100/fax: 213-388-8666; Rep: Loren Pryor
Computer concession, ticketing, accessories.

Packaging Concepts, Inc. ...420
4971 Fyler Ave., St. Louis, MO 63139
314-481-1155/fax: 314-481-6567; Rep: John Irace
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Paramount Pictures.....307
5555 Melrose Avenue, Hollywood, CA 90038
213-956-8418/fax:213-956-3429
Rep: Marc Mulcahy
Motion picture distributor.

Peavey Electronics.....416
711 A st., Meridian, MS 39301
601-483-5365/fax: 601-486-1278; Rep: Fay Adkins
Digitally-based cinema sound equip., speakers.

Pepsi-Cola Co.....801-805, 900-904
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Proctor Companies.....409, 411
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Concession stands, acoustical, THX Bafflettes.

Promotion In Motion, Inc.....812, 814
3 Reuten Dr., P.O. Box 558, Closter, NJ 07624
201-784-5800/fax:201-784-1010
Rep: Katherine Jamieson
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Promotional Mgmt. Group.....420, 422, 424
5700 Broadmoor, #912, Mission, KS 66202
913-831-7644/fax: 831-7577; Rep: James McGinness
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R&D Electric Design.....328
Rep: Richard Gershman

RDS Data Group, Inc. 223, 225, 322, 324
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519-428-2500/fax: 519-428-9441
Rep: Brad Depooter
Theatre ticketing and concession systems.

Ricos Products Co.....506
621 S. Flores, San Antonio, TX 78233
800-880-1810/fax: 214-637-6739; Rep: Anita Watts
Nachos, popcorn, food service, distribution.

Roberts Oxygen Co. 317, 319
15830 Redland Rd, Rockville, MD 20855
301-948-8100/fax: 301-948-2465; Rep: Bill Hartley

S.A. U.S.A. Inc. 229, 230
7004 Louise Terrace, Bay Ridge, NY 11209
800-955-7474/fax:718-680-1226
Rep: Marcel Vantuyn
Complete sound systems.

Sarnow Candy.....708
P.O. Box 9016, Valley Stream, NY 11582
516-872-4000/fax: 516-872-4072; Rep: Bill Smith
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Schneider Corp. in America.....508
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Schult Design & Display.....55-57
318 Cedar, Pleasant Hill, MO 64080
816-540-4798/fax: 816-540-4790; Rep: Jeffrey Schult
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Screenvision Cinema.....306
275 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016
212-752-5774/fax:212-752-0086
Rep: Darryl Schaffer
Cinema advertising.

Seating Concepts, Inc.....722, 724
4901-600 Morena Blvd., San Diego, CA 92117
619-581-5715/fax:619-581-5725; Rep: Anne Smith
Standard and custom seating.

Smart Products, Inc.....209
307-K West Tremont Ave., Charlotte, NC 28203
800-343-3635/fax: 704-377-4247; Rep: Gary Wood
CinemaSeat child protection seats.

Smart Devices Inc.....710
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404-449-6698/fax:404-449-6728
Rep: Robin Klamfoth
Cinema sound components & systems.

Sony Cinema Products Corp.....601-605, 700-704
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310-280-5777/fax:310-280-2024
Rep: Gemma Richardson
SDDS playback, DCP 1000 and Sony speakers.

SPECO Systems.....308, 310
709 N. 6th Street, Kansas City, KS 66101
913-321-3978/fax:913-321-7439
Rep: Gene Higginbotham

Stein Industries.....520-524
22 Sprague Ave., Amityville, NY 11701
516-789-2222/fax: 516-789-8888; Rep: Andrew Stein
Concession stands, popcorn & nacho fixtures.

Strong International.....59-62
4350 McKinley St., Omaha, NE 68112
402-453-4444/fax: 402-453-7238
Rep: Ray Boegner
Projection and sound equipment.

Summit Foods Enterprises.....301, 303, 400, 402
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Rep: Paul Bontiglio
Klondike Movie Bites, Naya Water, more.

Sunshine Wire & Connector, Inc. 930
Rep: Harvey Keiser

Sweet City Supply.....206
Rep: Joseph Caffrey

Theatre Confections, Inc.....913
795 Monroe, Rochester, NY 14607
716-271-0858/fax:716-271-0859
Rep: Jeffrey Dodge
Concession operations for indie exhibitors.

Theatre Service Corp.....53, 54
800 Brookhurst, Richardson, TX 75080
800-345-5898/fax:214-699-7355
Rep: Alvin Wigington
Screen cleaning process, chemicals, draperies.

TicketPro Systems.....429
870 Mercury Dr., Lawrenceville, GA 30045
770-682-5485/fax: 770-682-8397; Rep: John Shaw
Computer software for entertainment industry.

T.K. Architects, Inc.....404, 406
106 West 11th St., #1900, Kansas City, MO 64105
816-842-7552/fax: 816-842-1302; Rep: Tamra Knapp
Design and planning for new theatres.

Tootsie Roll Industries.....808
7401 Cicero Ave., Chicago, IL 60629
312-838-3400/fax:312-838-3564
Rep: Cheryl Barko
Tootsie Rolls, Junior Mints, Mason Dots.

Tricorp Amusements.....418
5 Veronica Ave., Somerset, NJ 90846-7767
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Rep: Chuck Peitz

Ultra Stereo Labs.....63, 64
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Ultratech Inc.....423
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Rep: Donald Wunderlich
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Universal Cinema Services.....216
Rep: Jason Martinez

Vogel Popcorn.....617
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712-382-2634/fax:712-382-1357; Rep: Dan Gray
Bulk popcorn, popcorn supplies.

Wagner Zip-Change Inc. 504
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Weaver Popcorn Co.....213, 215
P.O. Box 395, Van Buren, IN 46991
317-934-2101/fax: 317-934-4052; Rep: Tom Dodd
Popcorn producer.

Wunder-Bar.....125
Rep: Bret Baker

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ANCHORS AWAY

Movie Theatres Are Retail's New Anchor Tenants

by Herb McLaughlin and Howard McNenny



WARNER'S CORNER: *Warner Bros. and Nichii Co.'s Warner Mycal cinema-anchored retail complexes in Japan have revitalized once-troubled shopping districts.*

Herb McLaughlin is partner-in-charge and Howard McNenny is director of cinema design at Kaplan/McLaughlin/Diaz. KMD is an architecture and urban planning firm with offices in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland, Seattle, Mexico City, Tokyo, Shanghai, Seoul and Kuala Lampur.

Today, the movie theatre is much more than a great place to see the latest Hollywood film spectacular, or even to sample the latest in gourmet snacks. What many theatre operators have not yet realized is that their multiplexes can be a key ingredient in successfully revitalizing our nation's cities.

Find that hard to believe? Here are just a few examples:

In Pasadena, Calif., a downtown shopping district that until a few years ago was a deserted near-slum is now crowded with shoppers and strolling visitors, attracted by an exciting mix of shops, restaurants and two multiplex theatres. On one side of the street is a six-screen theatre operated by United Artists. In "One Colorado," a new center that helped kick off the area's revival, is an AMC theatre.

In San Francisco, the long-established Embarcadero Center recently added a four-screen cinema. Retail shops had enjoyed excellent daytime business five days a week, but were dead on weekends and during evening hours. Since the theatres opened, all that has changed. Many of the stores have extended their hours, and one key tenant, the B. Dalton bookstore, actually relocated from a prime ground floor spot to a second floor location to be closer to the traffic flow of theatre patrons.

One of the earliest examples of cinema-as-anchor is the United Artists seven-plex in the Horton Plaza in San Diego, which opened in the early 1980s. It was at one end of the retail spine, and on the upper level, so theatre patrons had to walk through most of the mall to get there. Horton Plaza has been a phenomenal success as a result of the crowds drawn by the theatres, who shop or eat before or after their movie. This success has spilled over into the entire surrounding area, bringing about a rebirth of a once-decaying downtown. As for ticket sales, the fact that the number of screens has since been doubled to 14 would suggest that UA is also happy with the results.

This is hardly an only-in-America phenomenon. In 1993 we at Kaplan/McLaughlin/Diaz (KMD) were approached by AMC to design their first cinema project in Asia—a 13-screen multiplex in a spectacular $1.4 billion retail development in Fukuoka, Japan, called Canal City Hakata. Today, although open only a short time, the Canal City Hakata multiplex is selling more than 25,000 tickets a week, and the retailers in the center report that sales and crowds are beyond even their most optimistic projections. Once again, the result was a revitalized district in what had been a somewhat run-down part of the city.

Other retail-cinema centers in Japan are becoming equally popular. Warner Bros. has formed a joint venture with Japanese retailer Nichii Co., Ltd., which today operates nine Warner Mycal cinemas (also designed by KMD) located in or adjacent to shopping centers. In many cases the cinema is a revitalizing element for a shopping center in need of help.

The cinema-as-anchor is just as successful in other parts of the world. In Bangkok, the huge Secon Square shopping center has as one of its anchors a 12-screen Golden Village multiplex. Its success can be measured by the fact that a nearby shopping center with no entertainment anchor, completed less than a year before Secon Center opened, is now virtually empty. In Cairo, KMD has found an emerging market for cinema-anchored retail developments. Our first cinema project there, a six-plex near Cairo, sits atop a new retail mall, becoming the traffic generator for the entire complex.

What's fascinating about all these projects, both in the United States and abroad, is the key role played by movie theatres in the success of the entire complex. In the past, we have tended to think of theatres as a beneficiary of mall traffic. In fact, however, it is clearly the other way around. Stores and restaurants prosper because of the presence of the silver screens.

The most often-cited example of the "urban entertainment center" is Citywalk, created by MCA and located right next to its Universal Studios theme park in Los Angeles. This exciting agglomeration of impulse retail, trendy restaurants and a 20-screen Cineplex Odeon multiplex has enjoyed unparalleled success from opening day.

Until recently, however, no one seems to have thought of imitating Citywalk elsewhere. The reason is that conventional wisdom attributed Citywalk's success to its location, right on the pathway between the parking garages for Universal Studios and the entrance to the theme park itself. Citywalk obviously was the

beneficiary of a guaranteed traffic generator that existed nowhere else. But when KMD got involved in the initial planning of the second phase of Citywalk, our studies found that fully 80 percent of its visitors came solely to visit Citywalk, and never went to the theme park.

What we are now finding is that urban entertainment centers are being planned or built in many other parts of the country, from Irvine Spectrum in Orange County, Calif., where Edwards has a 21-screen multiplex plus Imax theatre, to Coco Walk, near Miami, Fla., where AMC is the multiplex operator.

Why is there such powerful synergy between movie theatres and their neighboring retail stores and restaurants? The answers involve everything from basic human psychology to the practicalities of parking and traffic flows.

A recent study done at a midwestern shopping center with a 14-screen multiplex shows just how good the retail/cinema fit really is. The study, reported in Shopping Center Business magazine, is based on surveys conducted during every screening at every theatre between Thanksgiving and Christmas of 1996, and again during March of 1997. It found that the only time when parking demands for shopping and theatregoing rise simultaneously is between 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. on Saturdays. But peak demand for theatre parking is still after 6 p.m., when shoppers typically are not out in force.

What is it about the mix of film entertainment, retail and restaurants that makes for such a reliable formula for success?

Part of the explanation is that our attitude toward shopping has changed. In the first few decades after World War II, when American consumers were still getting accustomed to the notion of consumer abundance, the shopping was itself a form of entertainment. We went to the store—and soon to the mall—as much for the fun of browsing as for the practical need to purchase something.

But today's adults, and certainly their teenage sons and daughters, are no longer dazzled by even the most elaborately displayed merchandise. Shopping has again become a chore. Many consumers have reverted to "target" shopping, where they drive to a mall, run in to pick up a few pre-selected items, and head back to their cars.

When Louis Harris & Associates asked Americans to rank their 10 favorite leisure activities, women rated shopping as tenth. It didn't even make the list for men. Most of us no longer have lots of spare time to spend browsing. Back in 1950, for example, only about a third of all women were earning paychecks. Today that percentage has doubled, and is even higher for women over 35. Men are also busier than ever. But in 85 percent of American homes, the shopping is still done by women; they are about 73 percent of mall shoppers, according to the Mass Retail Association.

When women and men do make time to shop, they like the experience to be enjoyable.



"ONE" WAY OR ANOTHER: *The AMC-anchored One Colorado in Pasadena, Calif., has helped increased business in all the neighboring stores.*

In the past, we have tended to think of theatres as a beneficiary of mall traffic. In fact, however, it is clearly the other way around.

It's no accident that the most successful retailers work hard to make their store environments entertaining.

While young consumers are the core of the movie market, there are plenty of older ticket buyers. In the Louis Harris survey's question about favorite leisure activities, going to the movies was tenth on the list for men, and seventh for women.

What is different about the younger movie audience is that it is heavily influenced by TV, electronic games and other high-impact forms of entertainment. They are drawn to movies, especially in a multiplex setting, because the theatre offers them a constantly fresh selection of entertainment experiences. Everything else in a shopping center—the architecture, the merchandise on display, the restaurant menus—is comparatively static. A multiplex theatre can provide a completely different entertainment experience every day. That's a powerful tool to generate return visits.

Why, then, are restaurants the third vital element of a successful urban entertainment center? It's not as if heavy exposure to Nintendo and the Internet results in an uncontrollable appetite for café latte or tiramisu. The real appeal of many of these trendy food spots is social; people go for the companionship, not the croissants. Our urbanized and anonymous communities offer fewer opportunities to simply meet and mingle. Many Americans are starved for the kind of casual socializing that once was commonplace in town squares, and that still is in European plazas. Restaurants in an entertainment-oriented retail center are an ideal setting for relaxing with friends and for people-watching.

The combination of retail, food and cinemas is a powerful formula for success. The best example of what it can mean, both for the center itself and for its community, is the aforementioned One Colorado in Pasadena. A lovely city best known for the annual Rose Parade, Pasadena's old retail core along Colorado Boulevard had by the 1970s become a near-slum of decrepit brick buildings. Shoppers avoided the district, and nearby residential areas were falling into decline. That began to change with the development of the retail-and-entertainment complex that opened in the early 1990s. One Colorado was designed by KMD to preserve the elegant brick facades that lined the boulevard while creating a modern shopping center.

A street that once mixed a handful of struggling shops among long-vacant buildings now has retailers and eateries like Banana Republic, J. Crew, Barnes & Noble, Blockbuster, The Gap, Victoria's Secret, The Cheesecake factory and dozens of other national names, along with an estimated 200 local and regional names.

The success of the center has spilled over into nearby streets. In all, the district now has more than a million square feet of stores, restaurants and movie theatres. Rents have soared to $4 per square foot. Sales tax revenues to the city top $1 million a year.

The most significant part of the One Colorado story is that there is nothing unique about its success. There are scores of smaller cities all across America whose aging downtowns could be dramatically revitalized by a well-planned entertainment retail center. The same basic approach could be applied with equal success to blighted or declining neighborhoods in our largest cities.

The movie theatre is a critically important ingredient for these revitalization projects. They are often the difference between success and failure. This gives theatre operators a powerful incentive to get actively involved in the planning of these centers from the earliest possible stage. It also provides a strong position from which to make sure that developers, local politicians and other tenants understand the theatre's key contribution to the center and to the community.

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ATTACK OF THE PURLOINING REVISIONISTS

by Paul R. Maracin

The dark, disturbing 1932 Warner Bros. film "I Am a Fugitive From a Chain Gang" has one of the more memorable closing scenes in movie history. Portraying an escaped convict, Paul Muni is asked how he lives. His response: "I steal."

The same could be said of some current filmmakers who, bereft of original ideas, have leaned toward remakes and sequels. In doing so, they are pilfering titles and characterizations of proven winners, but in the process more often than not they have unconscionably butchered the story line. Already consigned to cinematic oblivion, the unlamented "The Scarlet Letter" is a prime example of when to leave well enough alone. The author's message was not only altered but obliterated. Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel previously had been given three screen treatments, all credible. The first was a 1926 silent with Lillian Gish; next came a 1934 sound version starring Colleen Moore. There was a German production in 1973, with English subtitles, directed by Wim Wenders.

In Hawthorne's novel, the transgressors who flouted the mores of 17th-century New England were punished. Screenwriter Douglas Day Stewart and director Roland Joffe had other ideas, however, and as a consequence their 1995 release evoked derisive guffaws from film observers. Instead of a grim scene at the scaffold (which would have made for great theatre), their "Scarlet Letter" had adulteress Hester Prynne riding off into the sunset with her ecclesiastical impregnator, Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale. Shades of a Gene Autry "B" western, with Gene warbling "I'm back in the saddle again."

On the subject of remakes, producer Arnold Kopelson has said, "There's a shortage of good projects. You see some of these great movies, with well-thought-out story lines, and they offer a very fertile area." Can we now look forward to a spate of remakes? There are all kinds of outstanding stories out there that could be mutilated if the goal is to scrap the author's unsettling denouement. John Steinbeck aficionados might cringe on speculating what Tinseltown revisionists would do with "Of Mice and Men." We can see it now: Instead of taking matters into his own hands and shooting Lennie so as to spare him from extrajudicial vengeance, George takes the money he has been saving to buy their own farm and hires legal counsel. The canny lawyer convinces a jury that Lennie did not kill Curley's wife and that he was in fact a victim of police conspiracy.

Current filmmakers, bereft of original ideas, have leaned toward remakes and sequels. In doing so, they are pilfering titles and butchering proven story lines.

Who can forget the dramatic finale in the David O. Selznick screen version of "A Tale of Two Cities," Charles Dickens' novel set in the period of the French revolution? Sydney Carton (Ronald Colman) is led to the guillotine, nobly accepting death after changing places with Charles Darnay. As the camera slowly ascends skyward, we hear Colman's somber voice intone: "It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known."

Those moving words are straight from the pen of Dickens, but obviously the old master wordsmith had no idea of how to bring a story to a satisfactory conclusion. Director Jack Conway and Colman should have known better. But that can be remedied. In a new version, the guillotine malfunctions, and in the ensuing confusion Carton escapes into the crowd with the aid of a conniving warder. He subsequently resurfaces, with a new identity as Master of Ceremonies at Folies-Bergere.

And there's "Gone With the Wind." Surely the current breed of screenwriters can better Margaret Mitchell's bland ending. In the faithful adaptation of the book, Rhett (Clark Gable) bids adieu to Scarlett (Vivien Leigh) in the famous front-door take in which he recites the line of frankly not giving a damn. This must be changed; it's too tame for today's sated audiences. In the remake, we can have Rhett excoriate Scarlett with a string of expletives (almost obligatory in present-day scenarios), and some film critics will doubtless acclaim this as "unfettered dialogue." Not to be outdone—and relegated to second-class citizenry—Scarlett with reply in kind, and you can be sure she won't use the innocuous interjection "fiddle-de-dee!" As the two exchange vulgarities at the doorway, Rhett suddenly has a change of heart; he sweeps Scarlett off her feet and dashes up the stairway with her in his arms in a reprise of an earlier scene. The film ends as the bedroom door slams shut. Then again, some filmmakers would likely insist the door remain open. Well, whatever sells.

What has precipitated the trend toward remakes and sequels? Writing for The New York Times News Service, Bernard Weinraub quoted one Hollywood producer who had this to say about contemporary decision-makers in the film industry: "Creative executives are young, inexperienced people who have gone to the same schools, wear the same clothes, drive the same cars, eat in the same places, are way in over their heads, and have no life experience other than television."

For affirmation of this development, we need only consider New Line Cinema's planned remake of "The Women." The Clare Boothe stage hit was adapted for the screen in 1939 by Anita Loos and Jane Murfin, with the uncredited assistance of Donald Ogden Stewart. The script for the remake, which is in preproduction, is being written and "updated" by Diane English. Her claim to fame? She created TV's "Murphy Brown."

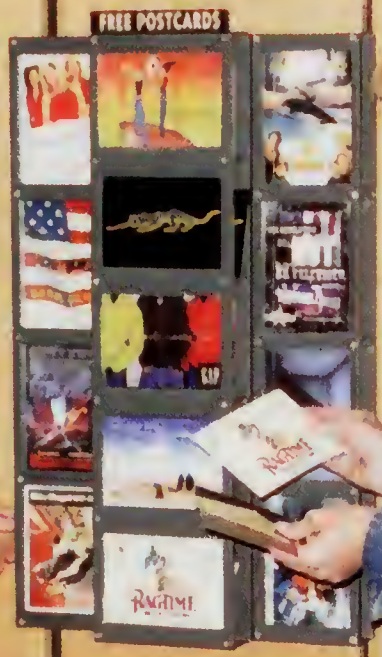
And are you ready for this? Time Warner has announced plans to produce a sequel to "Casablanca." If Claude Rains were around today, his reaction would probably be: "I'm shocked. Shocked!"

Paul R. Maracin is a journalist, moviebuff and regular **BOXOFFICE** *reader. His daughter, PKay Krieg lives in Germany and writes regularly for* **BOXOFFICE** *about the motion picture industry there.*

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IT STARTS WITH NATO

NATO's Training Tapes Are Invaluable to Circuits on the Grow

by Michael Payne



Mary Ann Grasso, NATO



Barry Myers, AMC

Employees come and go—that's a fact of life for the theatre owner. High employee turnover, while not without certain financial advantages, has a major downside: training. As new employees arrive on a regular basis, teaching these new hires their jobs can become a full-time job in itself.

How do theatres combat this training problem? "The larger theatre circuits often produce their own training films and materials," says Jeff Logan, president of Logan Luxury Theatres. "But the smaller guys like us don't have the money or the resources to do it ourselves."

That's where the National Association of Theatre Owners (NATO) comes in. Spurred on by the need for such training materials by smaller theatre circuits—as well as interest from the larger circuits for more comprehensive training tools—NATO decided to produce a nine-tape video training series for theatre employees, entitled "It Starts With You!" (see accompanying reviews, p. 98). "Our goal was to make a training tape series that set a level standard for theatre employee functions," says Mary Ann Grasso, executive director of NATO. "This allows a consistency within our industry to present an entertaining and enjoyable moviegoing experience."

Grasso began the ambitious project by putting together a committee of contributors from both the smaller theatres chains and the giants. Logan notes, "The committee was specifically made up of representatives from circuits of all sizes. Barry Myers [international corporate training manager] of AMC represented the big guys, Maureen McNamara [training director] of Landmark represented the middle, and John Saag [vice president] of Associated Theatres of Kentucky and myself represented the smaller circuits. The whole point was to come up with something that every theatre will be able to utilize."

Working so closely with "competitors" proved to be illuminating. "As the little guy," says Logan, "I was impressed by how open and responsive the bigger guys were." Saag agrees, saying "I was a little apprehensive going into this, but everybody jelled together. It was truly a collaborative effort."

McNamara was also impressed by the teamwork. "It was an incredible experience, working together in such a cooperative environment," she recalls. "We had some very intensive conference calls, going over scripts, outlining stuff...but it was amazing to me how much time and energy each company put into the project, how they saw the value of it." Myers adds, "It was a lot of fun and the process went extremely smoothly. I made some very good friends."

Foremost on the committee's minds was creating a training tool that would be informative without being boring. "It wasn't just the knowledge," explains Logan. "I mean, we all work in theatres, we know how things work. But it was the way to present that knowledge that was the challenge. You throw a manual in front of someone and they fall asleep. So that's why we decided to make a film, one that was entertaining and informative at the same time."

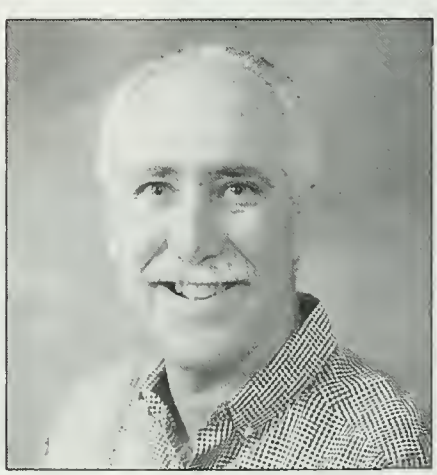
To help them decide just how "It Starts With You!" would be structured, the committee looked to an obvious source: "We collected other training tapes and materials from the major theatre circuits," Logan states. AMC, Regal, UATC and Cineplex all graciously donated their own training videos for the com-



Scott Henson, Metro Productions



Jeff Logan, Logan Luxury Theatres



John Saag, Associated Theatres of Kentucky

mittee to view. "We watched so many tapes," recalls McNamara, "and we intently tried to learn from each one of those. We sort of took the best from the best."

To produce the actual filming, the NATO committee chose Metro Productions of Kansas City, Mo., which previously produced commercials and training films for such companies as Wal-Mart, Blockbuster Video, and Toyota Motor Corp. Scott Henson and Roger Hull, two writer/directors for Metro, worked in collaboration to organize the shooting scripts and direct the nine tapes in the series.

"What I brought to the table," says Henson, "was my experience shooting in theatres when they're open." Because NATO didn't have the budget to build an entire theatre set, they decided to shoot "on location" in an actual theatre. Barry Myers of AMC got permission to use the AMC Independence Commons in Kansas City. "Because [AMC's] home office is here in Kansas City," Myers states, "the Independence Commons is accustomed to such unusual requests." Myers also helped coordinate other production materials, such as the theatre uniforms that were to be the "costumes" for the project. But, in order for the tapes to be useful for all theatre chains, Myers didn't use specific AMC uniforms. "Obviously, we had to make the tapes generic as far as brand identity," he points out.

By all accounts, it was a hectic shoot. "We filmed all nine of them in two weeks," states Mary Ann Grasso with pride. "I can't even believe we got through it." It was no small feat, considering that each of the nine segments averages 10 minutes in length—that's the equivalent of a feature-length project in merely 14 days. To help speed up the shoot, director Henson didn't film in sequence. "It was crazy," he recalls with a laugh. "It's Tuesday morning, and you have to shoot every scene in that location for all nine films—then let the editor figure it all out later."

Perhaps the toughest—and ultimately most rewarding—production decision occurred before the actual filming: choosing the actor "hosts" of the video series. "In order to maintain a sense of continuity through all nine films," informs Grasso, "we decided to have the same two actors host every segment."

"We wanted to find people who were dynamic and fun," says McNamara, "but could still carry the [training techniques] in a lively and professional way." To that end, director Henson began with a casting call in Los Angeles.

"I flew out, auditioned the best picks in person, and put those auditions on tape," he explains. The NATO committee then reviewed the audition tapes, after which they easily chose stage actress Heidi Gott (who is currently touring with "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" play) and Sci-Fi Channel regular Roger Lodge to be the hosts of "It Starts With You!"

"The two of them just jumped out and off the screen for us," McNamara says. "We all thought there was really only one choice. It was interesting how the committee all agreed." Logan was also very pleased. "I think we really got lucky with them; they had amazing chemistry together. I think they're real finds. They have a banter that is humorous and entertaining, which is what we want, based on the target audience."

Director Henson concurs. Knowing that the target audience—teenagers—are turned-off by ultra-serious, documentary-style filmmaking, Henson attempted to make good use of the hosts' comic abilities, aiming for a light-hearted and humorous approach. "If the employees get bored with the tapes and don't watch them, they're useless," Henson stressed. "If you don't make them entertaining, you've wasted your time."

Seeing the finished product, the NATO committee all agree that their time was anything but wasted. McNamara feels "It Starts With You!" is a godsend to mid-sized theatre circuits like Landmark. "We're growing to the point of needing training programs that focus on enhancing the overall presentation of our business. But [by ourselves] we really couldn't afford to do something like this." Saag agrees. "For me, as a small circuit, I have got to believe this is the best thing NATO has done for the small operators," he states. "Despite all the great things [NATO] has done in the past, this is the tool I can use the most. This is how you run a theatre."

THE TALE OF THE TAPE

BOXOFFICE Reviews the NATO Training Tape Series

Each of the nine videos in the NATO Training Tape Series "It Starts With You!" covers a different aspect of theatre operations. Without exception, all the tapes (each around 10 minutes long) are expertly produced, humorously involving, and jam-packed with valuable training information. What follows are short reviews of each segment.

"Orientation: It's in Your Hands"

The first tape in the series, "Orientation" points out how the "magic of the movies" has much to do with the skills and attitudes of the theatre employees. The tape outlines the various job positions and how they interact, thereby stressing the importance of teamwork and why learning such work ethics can only help out the new employee in the future. In this way, the tape can also be useful as a recruiting tool, even explaining that many famous filmmakers once began their careers as movie theatre employees.

"Boxoffice: First Impression"

This tape stresses that because the boxoffice attendant is the first theatre employee the customer meets, he or she plays a key role in creating an enjoyable moviegoing experience. It's explained through demonstrations exactly how the attendant should act (utilizing eye contact and smiling but remaining businesslike, for example) and how to keep a clean, well-organized boxoffice. The tape even shows how to spot a counterfeit bill.

"The Usher: You're the Host"

It's pointed out that the usher is really the "host" of the theatre, and therefore should impart a fun-spirited attitude to the customers, setting the mood for the evening's enjoyment. The tape shows how to manage the movie crowds, keep the lobby clean and safe, and, most importantly, how to deal with difficult customers without losing one's cool.

"Concessions: The Difference Is You"

The focus here is that the main difference between the movie experience at a theatre and at home is the concession stand, and therefore it's important to provide fast, friendly and accurate service. There are even sales tips on how to reel the customers in and get them to purchase more than they wanted.

"Film Presentation: Presentation Is Everything"

Designed mostly for projectionists, this video reviews standard practices of the trade. It's more technical in content than the other tapes, and appropriately so. It points out daily operating procedures, how to check sound and picture quality, and includes the "Five Golden Rules" of film projection. It also contains an extensive troubleshooting section that is valuable to both new and experienced projectionists.

"Safety and Security: Accident and Incident"

Through step-by-step demonstrations, this tape shows many various emergencies that commonly occur and how to deal with them. It stresses the importance of not admitting guilt and/or liability. There's a good primer on how to avoid crime, and what to do should a crime take place. The tape also explains how to handle the bigger, not-so-common emergencies, such as a tornado warning or even a fire.

"Serving Patrons with Special Needs: Dignity and Respect"

"Never touch a customer's wheelchair without asking first" is only one of the many lessons in this important behavioral guideline on how to treat the handicapped and the elderly. As the title indicates, the tape stresses "dignity and respect." It demonstrates the various service accommodations (such as assistive listening devices) that exist to help make the moviegoing experience more enjoyable for those with special needs.

"Sexual Harassment: Don't Cross the Line"

Perhaps the most important tape in the series, "Don't Cross the Line" does an admirably accurate job of pointing out exactly where the line falls. Although the tape is aimed at young adults in the theatre industry—explaining that rules of conduct differ between school and work—this video could benefit any employee in any workplace.

"Ratings: Informed Decisions"

Unavailable for viewing at press time, the tape focuses on the MPAA ratings system and its value to moviegoers.—*Michael Payne*

Europa Europa

Our outgoing BOXOFFICE European correspondent on the state of the Continent *by Melissa Morrison*

For the last 18 months, **BOXOFFICE** *has had the great good fortune of providing page space to Melissa Morrison, our European correspondent, formerly stationed in Prague, and one of the most talented young commentators to come our way in some time.*

Melissa recently resettled back in her native country, the U.S. Her commitment to the readership of **BOXOFFICE** *was such that she immediately proposed the following article—a kind of debriefing of what she learned about the European market as she pounded our journalistic beat. As a thumbnail sketch of across-the-board trends and developments, it may be one of the most useful articles we've ever run.*

Readers interested in the exhibition scene are also directed to our July "Giants of International Exhibition Directory" and its accompanying tables—all of which were compiled by Melissa. As for Ms. Morrison, all of us at **BOXOFFICE** *would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank her for a job well and imaginatively done. We look forward to regular appearances of her byline in our pages.—**Editor***

A quick game of "Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon" encapsulates the current state of Europe's cinema industry. The object of the game, which was popularized by some of the wackier elements on the Internet, is to link any actor or film personality to randomly selected pop culture icon Kevin Bacon in six "moves" (i.e., direct links) or less. So: Nikita Michalkov to Kevin Bacon. Ready? Go!

Michalkov, the Oscar-winning Russian star and director of 1994's "Burnt By the Sun," is currently making "The Barber of Siberia" with Julia Ormond, who was the female lead in "Legends of the Fall," which also starred Brad Pitt, who was in "Sleepers" opposite Kevin Bacon! And with two degrees to spare.

That actors hailing from the two countries whose Cold War antagonism was responsible for Sylvester Stallone's entire '80s oeuvre can now be linked by a drinking game says a lot about Europe's industry in the '90s. The German guy downing a Lowenbrau in a Munich pub is more likely than ever to have seen mainstream American films like "Sleepers" and "Legends," thanks to the multiplexes that have mushroomed up around the continent. As for European movies, Michalkov isn't the only foreign filmmaker using Western actors and filming in English; he's just part of Europe's bid to challenge Hollywood by pooling resources and targeting international audiences. The fall of communism in the former East bloc has opened up a promising new market for all aspects of the industry. Somewhere in Hollywood, Bacon's agent must be smiling.



MUCH TWO MUCH: *A bomb in the U.S., the Antonio Banderas-Melanie Griffith-starring "Two Much" was a smash in Spain, demonstrating the wisdom of international co-financing arrangements.*

Multiplexity

Non-European companies currently lead the multiplex revolution. The British journal Screen Digest credits the European multiplex wave to the American companies Warner Bros. and United Cinemas International (UCI), the latter of which is a joint venture between Universal, MGM and Paramount studios. These companies first arrived in the mid-to late-'80s to supplement their distribution arms, and have been expanding steadily: Each has built approximately 260 more screens since 1990.

AMC has dipped a tentative toe into the market, starting with Spain and Portugal, while Australia's Village Roadshow has announced one of the most ambitious campaigns in exhibition history: 2,000 more screens worldwide by the end of the century, including sites in virtually untapped Italy and Greece. Since neither AMC nor Village has distribution concerns in Europe, their execs obviously feel exhibition alone is a fruitful enterprise.

Bets are on the United Kingdom for the distinction of becoming the first European country to reach screen saturation. It will take at least another year, however, according to industry observers. Among the companies helping to achieve that goal is Cine-UK, formed explicitly to build multiplexes in Britain. Run by former Warner Bros. International head Stephen M. Wiener, an American, the company's corporate strategy is to build in family-entertainment areas that include such features as bowling alleys and pizza restau-

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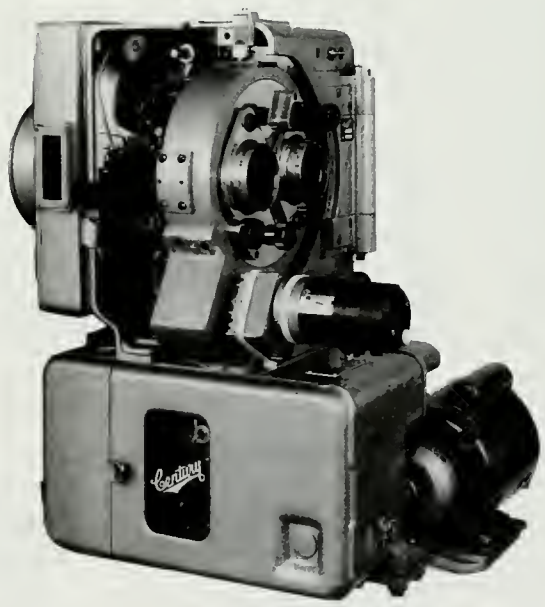
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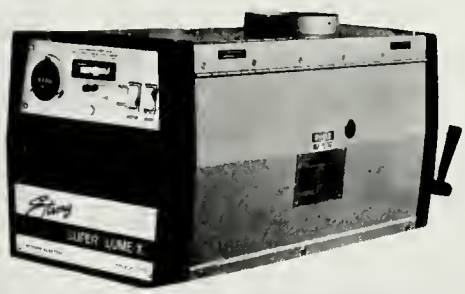
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rants, particularly in places overlooked by established circuits. Virgin/MGM is another maverick, with its concept of high-grade theatres, complete with special areas featuring a private bar and waitress service. Virgin plans 37 multiplex sites, which will make it the country's biggest multiplex chain.

As **BOXOFFICE** reported in July, France remains one of the most-closed countries to foreign exhibitors (*see article "Pas De Deux," **BOXOFFICE** vol. 133, no. 7, July 1997*). Its dominant cinema-operators—Gaumont, Pathe and UGC—also operate distribution and production arms, triple-twine against outside invaders. Another obstacle is legislation limiting new theatres to 2,000 seats, a response to fears that suburban megaplexes will suck cinema-goers out of city centers.

The Netherlands is an example of a country that, albeit tiny, has tremendous boxoffice potential, with residents currently averaging a low one trip per person annually to the cinema.

Other countries that top circuits are beginning to mine are those of Eastern Europe—primarily Hungary—and Southern Europe. Italy is one of Europe's largest markets—admissions in '95 were 91.4 million—despite several hindrances: It's underscreened, and the traditional cinema-going season lasts only 10 months. Spain is tapped for a growth spurt in virtually all areas of its film industry. Admissions have soared by 20 million since 1988, exceeding 100 million in 1996, but its attendance rate is still considered small. A clutch of exhibition companies, both local and foreign, have swooped in to change that, including Spain's Lauren Film; a collaboration among Warner Bros., Spain's PRISA and Portugal's Lusomundo; and AMC International.

The burgeoning free-market economies of Eastern Europe have attracted capitalists of all stripes, and cinema circuits are no exception. Hungary is the site of the most activity. Toronto-based Cineplex Odeon chose the capital, Budapest, for its first European multiplex. CEO and President Allen Karp said Hungary's strong economy, stable government and central location in Eastern Europe made it attractive. Odeon's next intended sites, besides Italy, are also Eastern and Central Europe: Germany, Austria, Poland, and the Czech Republic. The Australian exhibition giant Village Roadshow also built a Budapest cinema in a joint venture and plans three more over the next two years.

Spreading the Joy

Exhibition and distribution are closely linked in Europe. The United Kingdom has the greatest concentration of ownership and the greatest degree of integration between the two sectors, according to the British Film Institute. So much so, in fact, that in 1994 the government's Monopolies and Mergers Commission investigated. It concluded that, indeed, the major U.S. distributors, as well as such domestic ones as Entertainment, First Independent, and Guild and Rank constituted a complex monopoly in distribution, but said such a formation wasn't hurting anyone. Even so, U.K. distributors face a tough market: huge media and marketing costs and a screen shortage. As a result, a lot of majors let U.S. movies go straight to video there.

France's vertically integrated sector bolsters the country's strong loyalty to its own movies. It's also the only non-English-speaking country that routinely subtitles its foreign films rather than dubs them. The annual September festival at Deauville generates a lot of coverage for U.S. films, so most distributors wait till then to release their biggest American movies.

Distribution of Italian films abroad has declined hugely in recent years—by 80 percent, according to one estimate. Hope for the industry as a whole is pinned on the new deputy prime minister who oversees film, Walter Veltroni. In terms of exhibition, he is expected to get an agreement from multiplex operators to establish domestic quotas, thus improving the chances for domestic films' distribution. In smaller countries such as the Netherlands, distributors must compete with too many prints on too few screens. As a result, releases are stratified into art-house movies and blockbusters, with middle-budget films getting squeezed out of the cinemas.



MAKING WAVES: *"Breaking the Waves" had it all: Danish director, Scottish set, French backing, English actors and international acclaim.*

Admission Positions

The English, German and French are Europe's most avid cinema-goers. Britons, for example, are expected to buy 130 million movie tickets in 1997, an increase of five percent over the previous year. American blockbusters like "Independence Day"are credited with juicing up European cinema-going. Some countries have also experienced a renaissance with domestic films. Germany, for example, experienced a domestic revival in 1996 with a string of comedies, one of which, "Werner Das Muss Kesseln!", was the most popular movie of the year after "ID4," earning a *zer gut* $31 million. According to the Media Salles yearbook, a publication of the European Union and Italy, such low-budget comedies have catapulted the market share of domestic product to its current level of 19.5 percent—almost twice the usual.

Though summer is America's blockbuster season, that's when Europeans traditionally stay out of cinemas. (Southern Europe's summer-only outdoor theatres are an exception.) Some exhibitors and distributors are targeting this weak spot by banding together and launching media campaigns and discounts designed to entice people into cinemas, such as the German distributors' 1996 initiative, "Der Sommerhit: Kino." The $20 million campaign focused on U.S. and German films.

An effect of a summer vacation from the movies is an autumn glut. In '95, there was one big opening (250 to 350 screens) in major territories every week between August and October. Distributors rush to circulate their accumulated surplus of American blockbusters, typically resulting in shorter runs of two to three weeks, half the time conventional wisdom says is necessary for a film to maximize its earning potential.

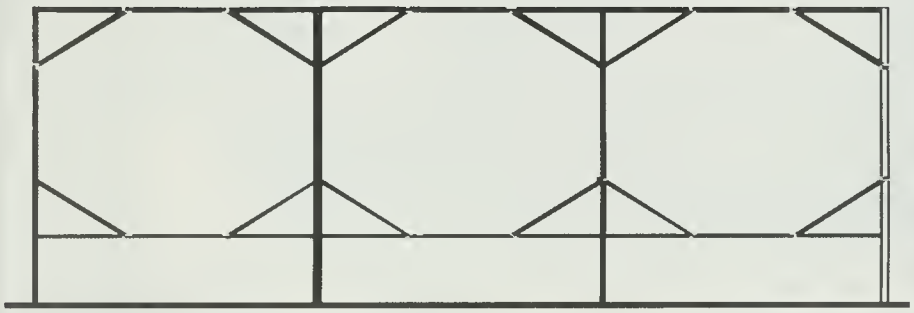
Home Movies

U.K. producers do better than any other European country, because they share a language with the world's most rabid filmgoers, the Americans. Even so, that's not a lot of flicks: Only one to four films annually make back their productions costs. And that's only films that manage to get a distributor. The Arts Council's National Lottery Fund helped films reach production, dedicating $41 million for 35 projects from September '95 to December '96. Up to 150 films could be launched by the council's "studio" franchise initiative, which could revolutionize the British industry with the largest handout ever: $65.4 million for each franchise, spread over six years.

The German success with local comedies bodes well for its industry, while France has long been protective of its films and nurtured them accordingly. Other countries are not as fortunate. The tradition of government-subsidized films is ending. Spain and Italy have reduced subsidies to a trickle. Italy hopes new minister Veltroni makes good on his promise to compensate with tax changes that encourage private investment in production. Mean-

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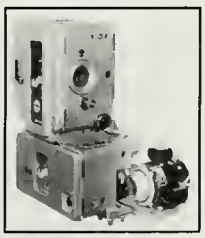
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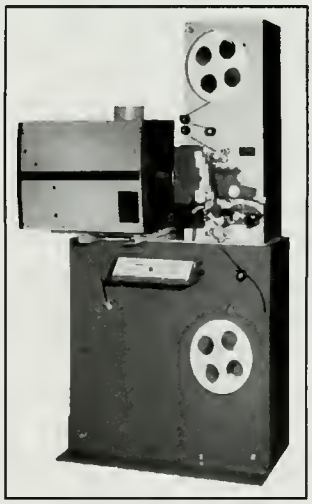


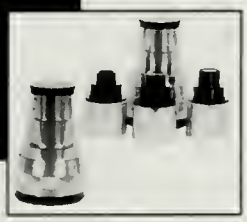
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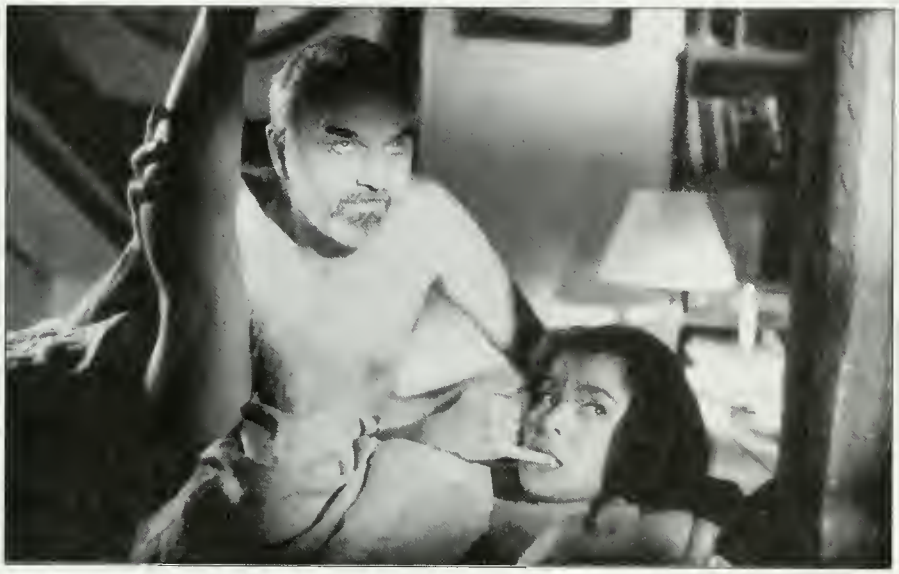
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Response No. 15

while, Spain found an answer in co-productions with the Americans: "Two Much," starring Spanish heartthrob Antonio Banderas and American Melanie Griffith, earned $1.3 million in its 1995 opening, eventually becoming the most successful domestic film of all time.

Eastern Europe's domestic cinema is one of the casualties of emerging capitalism—albeit a temporary one. The governments can't afford subsidies, while newborn private production companies are struggling to gain a foothold. For example, in the Czech Republic, Oscar-winning "Kolya" aside, production has fallen from 40 to 50 features annually to 20.



CZECH-ING UP: *Despite the Oscar-winning "Kolya," the East bloc remains under-financed and in a post-Communist slump, with production fall-off running as high as 60 percent in the last 10 years.*

Two are Better Than One

Increasingly, European countries are working together, pooling their resources in order to compete with Hollywood's products. "The Ogre," the 1996 film by Germany's Volker Schlondorff, is but one example: Its German, French and British co-producers amassed $17.7 million, hired an international star (American John Malkovich), and made the movie in English—clearly with an eye for an audience beyond its producing countries.

The United States is also getting into the act. In late 1995, the American Film Marketing Association (AFMA) signed an agreement with Nederlandse Vereniging van Speelfilmproducenten (NVS), the Dutch film producers' association, to collaborate on English-language movies. It marked the first private-sector agreement between European and American trade associations.

One of the most interesting trends in European co-production is the partnering of Western European countries—typically better-funded—with not-so-well-funded Eastern European countries. Turkey is an example: In 1994, the government suspended subsidies for filmmakers—unfortunate timing, since production had reached an all-time low of 11 films the previous year. However, domestic production has started to improve thanks to European co-productions such as the 1995 Spain/Netherlands/Turkey collaboration "Istanbul Under My Wings," with support from Eurimages, a Council of Europe funding program. The film was one of the most successful in Turkey in a decade.

Americans Abroad

American studios and independents have spread their reach further over the Continent, tapping into local productions as well as intensifying their distribution of European products. Britain and the United States have long held a special distributing relationship. The United Kingdom, however, has never had a hotter market for its independent distributors than today's America, as the 1997 Oscar nominations signaled.

Miramax and Gramercy are among the most loyal patrons. Miramax Films has committed to the production of films by establishing an outpost in London, from which it helped finance the Sundance-shown "Brassed Off" and others. Fox Searchlight fully financed "The Full Monty," which also premiered at Sundance. These companies' participation in British filmmaking shows confidence in the commercial prospects of U.K. films.

But American companies are also making further inroads into non-English-speaking countries, including Italy and Germany. In Germany, for example, the local distribution branch of Buena Vista International launched a new production arm from which to back domestic projects. Buena Vista Production plans to produce four to six pictures in 1997 with local partners. Disney and Warner Bros. have also collaborated on local productions, while Fox and Columbia are reportedly interested in doing likewise.

The Wild East

The first multiplexes in former Soviet-bloc countries have had a dramatic effect, reviving film attendance that had dived sharply since 1989's domino-style revolutions. Openings in Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland in 1996 jolted attendance figures. Poland's Kino Femina, for example, attracted 61,000 ticket-buyers in its first month—nearly twice what all other local cinemas combined drew in total.

Needless to say, the former Soviet bloc is ripe for an exhibition invasion. Of all the viable Eastern European countries, Russia, with its vast population and burgeoning, if uneven, development of a leisure class, seems the most neglected. Only one local company, Golden Ring, has announced plans to build a chain of multiplexes across the country. Russia's first multiplex, the Kodak Kino Mir, opened promisingly in Moscow in 1996.

Finnkino, Finland's exhibition/distribution giant, has crossed the Baltic to become No. 1 in Latvia's developing market. Finnkino discovered it can raise prices in Latvia's still-struggling economy, and plans to pioneer the first multiplex in the capital, Riga. Lithuania and Estonia are also being eyed for development by the Scandinavian countries, whose languages and customs are similar.

All Together Now

The dissolution of borders between countries is intended to make the continent a unified economic force. In doing so, European union will address one of the primary weaknesses of European cinema: the fact that no single country has the budget or audience to compete with the Americans. The merging of boundaries has raised fears among some filmmakers that national identities will be diluted, as in 21 chefs making one soup. Optimists point to films such as Lars von Trier's "Breaking the Waves:" Danish director, Scottish set, French backing, English actors—and international acclaim.

The European Union's formal program for developing a pan-European industry is called MEDIA. The program, which has $310 million ECU (US$353 million) to spend, is open to the 15 member states of the EU. Some of its outreach extends, via the organization Audiovisual Eureka, toward countries in the former Soviet bloc. The current program, which ends in the year 2000, focuses on the wider distribution, development and screening of films, and professional training programs. A separate pan-European organization, Eurimages, has similar programs but is open to its 25 Council of Europe-member countries, many of which are not part of the EU. Since its founding in 1989, it has helped distribute, screen, and finance hundreds of films, including "Breaking the Waves" and "Kolya."

End Credits

The European market is currently in the throes of great changes as some of the most important events of the latter 20th century reverberate across the continent. The fall of communism and the unification of Europe, combined with one of the most revolutionary events in the history of the cinema industry—multiplexing—have created an era of unprecedented links between filmmakers, distributors, exhibitors and others. In other words, the industry is creating its own version of Six Degrees.

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THE 'ART' OF ASHEVILLE

Entrepreneur John Cram Revives Art Theatre in North Carolina's All-American City

by Eric Gipson



PLAY IT AGAIN, CRAM: *John Cram in front of the refurbished Fine Art Theatre on bustling Biltmore Avenue. The cinema has helped revitalize the downtown section of Asheville, N.C.*

John Cram's grin—beaming of energy, enterprise and a sense of mischievous fun—has been well-known to the residents of Asheville, N.C., for 25 years. These days, his smile is particularly ebullient when he opens the door of the Fine Arts Theatre, the newly restored 51-year-old cinema on Biltmore Avenue, the city's main street.

In the mid '80s, few Asheville residents would have envisioned that the Fine Arts Theatre would make such an architectural and operational comeback. The cinema originally presented mainstream films and occasional vaudeville shows until 1960, when it began a 25-year stint as Asheville's adult theatre until closing in 1985. The resurrection of the cinema mirrors the rebirth that has taken place throughout the city, located in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina.

Asheville has always enjoyed a certain degree of renown: for its mountain scenery and four-season climate; as the inspiration for Thomas Wolfe's "Look Homeward Angel"; and as a getaway and retirement destination for the wealthy, literary and famous. More recently, the city has received a variety of national press: as winner of the All-American City title and as haven for everyone from New Age followers to businessmen escaping big-city life. Observing the city's upsurge in population and the downtown bustling with restaurants, galleries, shops and tourists, a first-time visitor would be hard-pressed to believe the locals who often say, "Ten years ago, one did not have to look both ways before crossing Biltmore Avenue." It has been an incredible transformation, most residents agree, that has been achieved through the vision and sweat of those who preceded the city's recent turnaround.

John arrived in 1972, newly graduated from the University of Wisconsin, and set up shop in South Asheville with some mugs, bowls and goblets. While his first month's earnings were $16.70, his New Morning Gallery would eventually gain regional prestige. Soon after, John set his sights on downtown Asheville. "I was always impressed by downtown Asheville's infrastructure, with its Art Deco buildings and history," he says. "It just didn't have enough people."

In 1989, John opened the Blue Spiral I gallery on Biltmore Avenue—now recognized as having been a major force in downtown Asheville's comeback. Adjacent to Blue Spiral I, however, was a space which tapped into a love John has held since a child. "Just what if...," he thought, looking at the shell of the empty Fine Arts Theatre.

"I've always loved film and studied it at the University," he says while munching on popcorn in the theatre's upstairs Critic's Lounge. "While I couldn't indulge that interest through managing the shops and gallery, I guess I infused latent theatre tendencies in my work—such as the idea of just putting on a good 'show' and naming Blue Spiral I after the monolith in '2001: A Space Odyssey.'" John also saw the need for a theatre of the right kind. "Despite the fact that this town was growing in so many ways, and was developing a progressive reputation, the fact was there were a lot of first-rate movies that were missing this town. So this enterprise had to be an extension of my art relationship to the community."

When John purchased the building for $100,000 in 1990, it seemed only the latest, yet hopeful chapter in the tired history of a building which served as a bittersweet memory for most residents. On October 24, 1946, the theatre opened as The Strand, with more than 1,000 customers turning out for the films "Let's Go Steady!" and "The Town Went Wild." In those days, the downstairs 200-seat cinema was for "Whites Only," and the black population was restricted to the upstairs 80-seat section until segregation ended in 1964. In 1960, the theatre began showing "nudist" films, such as "Nature's Paradise." ("See actual film shots of the World Naturist Congress!")

The theatre closed that year, reopened in 1962 (in the erotic genre), closed in 1963 due to a lack of first-run films, and, once more that year, reopened—again as an "adults-only" cinema.

Nudist films evolved into hard-core cinema (while the upstairs section shifted to showing gay films), and pornography was the theatre's hallmark from the late '60s until 1985, when tough obscenity laws ended a 30-year run of one of the two most common Asheville fibs: "The car has 20,000 miles" and "I've never been to the Fine Arts Theatre." The theatre was then rented out for concerts, plays and film screenings—and even saw a stint as home to the Asheville Metropolitan Church—before John purchased the building from the Community Arts Council. "When I purchased the theatre, a lot of the arts community thought, 'Let's make this happen right away and open it.'"

But John wanted to renovate the theatre properly and knew patience was a crucial factor. In 1990, Biltmore Avenue was home to abandoned buildings, but John had an intuitive feeling that—and he was not sure precisely when—better times would come for downtown Asheville. Thus, he took it slow with the building's renovation. The theatre was not a grand cinematic palace; however, its functional character had just enough subtle frills and retro appeal to inspire his creative eye.



TWO THUMBS UP: *Customers enjoy the Fine Art's upstairs Critic's Lounge and bar—converted from the former manager's apartment.*

After a bit of P.T. Barnum-ing with the bank, John secured funds to begin renovations which would total $650,000. He brought the building up to code and installed new seats, new carpets, new paint and new curtains, all coordinated in rich art deco color blends. There were some go-arounds—like taking out the wall which separated the upstairs balcony theatre to make a singular theatre, until learning that having a second upstairs theatre would be more profitable. And there were some opulent and very calculated refinements, one being the conversion of the previous management's apartment, located behind the upstairs theatre, into a "Critic's Lounge" complete with a bar. Operational and booking assistance came by way of Dick Morris, a Sarasota, Fla. agent whose company, Morris Productions, continues to book films for the Fine Arts Theatre. "Dick taught me much about the rhythm of showing a film and building an audience, i.e., if it's popular, then you need to hold it over. He's probably saved me several hundred thousand dollars." On the technical side, Frank Worthington, of Raleigh, N.C.-based Cinetech, installed new projectors and sound equipment. "Frank kind of camped out in Asheville and taught us novices the 60 steps, or what seems like 60 steps, of running the projector," says John. "I learned it, although I had not used that part of my head in a long time." By 1996, renovations were almost complete and downtown Asheville was thriving. Considering these factors, John knew it was time. D-Day was set for Friday, the 13th of December; H-Hour was 6:30 p.m. "The last seats were being installed at 6:05 p.m.," he adds.

On that cold, rainy and windy evening, a long line of patrons—including families, college students and adults of varying ages and tastes, from the terminally hip gallery crawlers to those who had not set foot in the theatre since 1959—streamed in to behold two classics: the restoration marvel of the Fine Arts Theatre and, onscreen, the beautiful and resplendent black-and-white love agony of Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman in "Casablanca." Showing in tandem was "Cinema Paradisio" (which John calls "a wonderful metaphor for the theatre's re-opening") and "Blade Runner."

"In the lobby after the show, people kept saying, 'Thank you, thank you,'" says John. "About all I could manage to do was say 'thank you' [back]—and then sit down for a good drink." Meanwhile, coworkers covertly saw to it that the Fine Arts marquee read, "Play it again, Cram." Titles have since included such films as "Shine," "Johns," "Brassed Off," "Pink Flamingos," "Ulee's Gold," classics like "Vertigo," and a strong offering of Shakespeare, including "Twelfth Night" and "Hamlet." "It's been a quality mix of first-run, independent, art and classic films," says John. "And now Asheville is getting them about the time they play in Charlotte and Raleigh, which is a good step for this town."

Multiplex cinemas in the Asheville suburbs pose some competition, John says, but not to any bothering point. "Sometimes, I lie awake at night and think, 'Ooh, if I had "Jurassic Park" I'd have full seats all the time,'" he says. "And, likewise, the 'plexes want films such as 'The English Patient' and 'Shine,' the latter of which I was able to get, and it did very well." But John never forgets his commitment to his format, or its advantages. "The 'plexes here tried to show 'Secrets and Lies' and no one went. I brought it back for a special engagement and it did three times as well. Sometimes, the art films can get lost out there if they're not in the right venue."

The feedback and satisfaction of his patrons have provided the ultimate balance sheet.

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"Now," says John, "we have people of all ages coming to almost every film because it's their clubhouse, where they want to see their friends."

The Fine Arts Theatre is also a feather in the cap for downtown Asheville. As the cinema does not have its own parking lot, it creates "a ripple in business community," John says, citing a nearby restaurant's doubling of receipts after the theatre opened. "If you park to go to a movie, you want to make it an evening and visit other businesses. People are willing to make a little bit more of an effort, to walk the block or two or three. It's starting to come together, to be what a city is supposed to be—a place where people gather together for a great variety of functions and socializing."

As with his gallery and shops, John plans a certain amount of hands-on tenacity until he is satisfied of the theatre's independent success. He's hired a manager and has a large part-time staff which he "pays a bit more than the industry norm, but I expect a bit more from them." With basic operations intact, he now wants to explore different promotion techniques, as in his faxing area colleges about "Looking for Richard" or using Asheville's abundant bed-and-breakfasts as a conduit.

John says he also plans to expand the theatre's lobby with a dessert bar. And he might consider use of the the Fine Arts Theatre stage. The restored stage recently got a trial run from a group of children who put on a school show—a show which went fine until some of the kids caused a small and harmless fire by putting the curtain over the floor lights. "I keep my hair short for a reason--so I can't pull it out," says John, laughing. "I've been having fun, but I'm obviously still learning."

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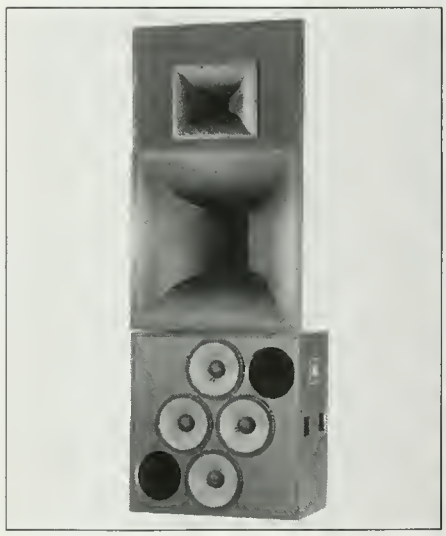
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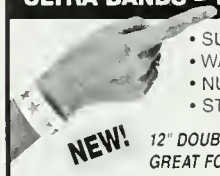
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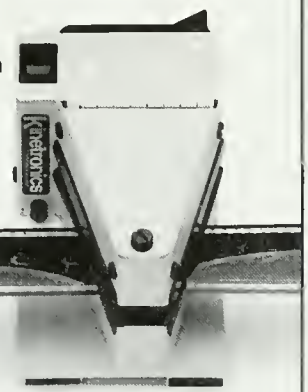
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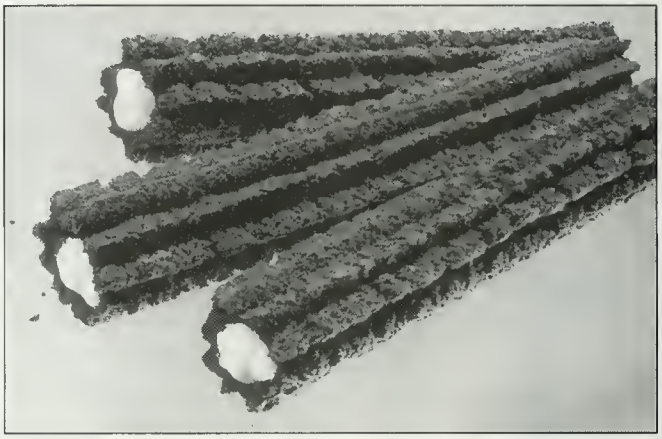
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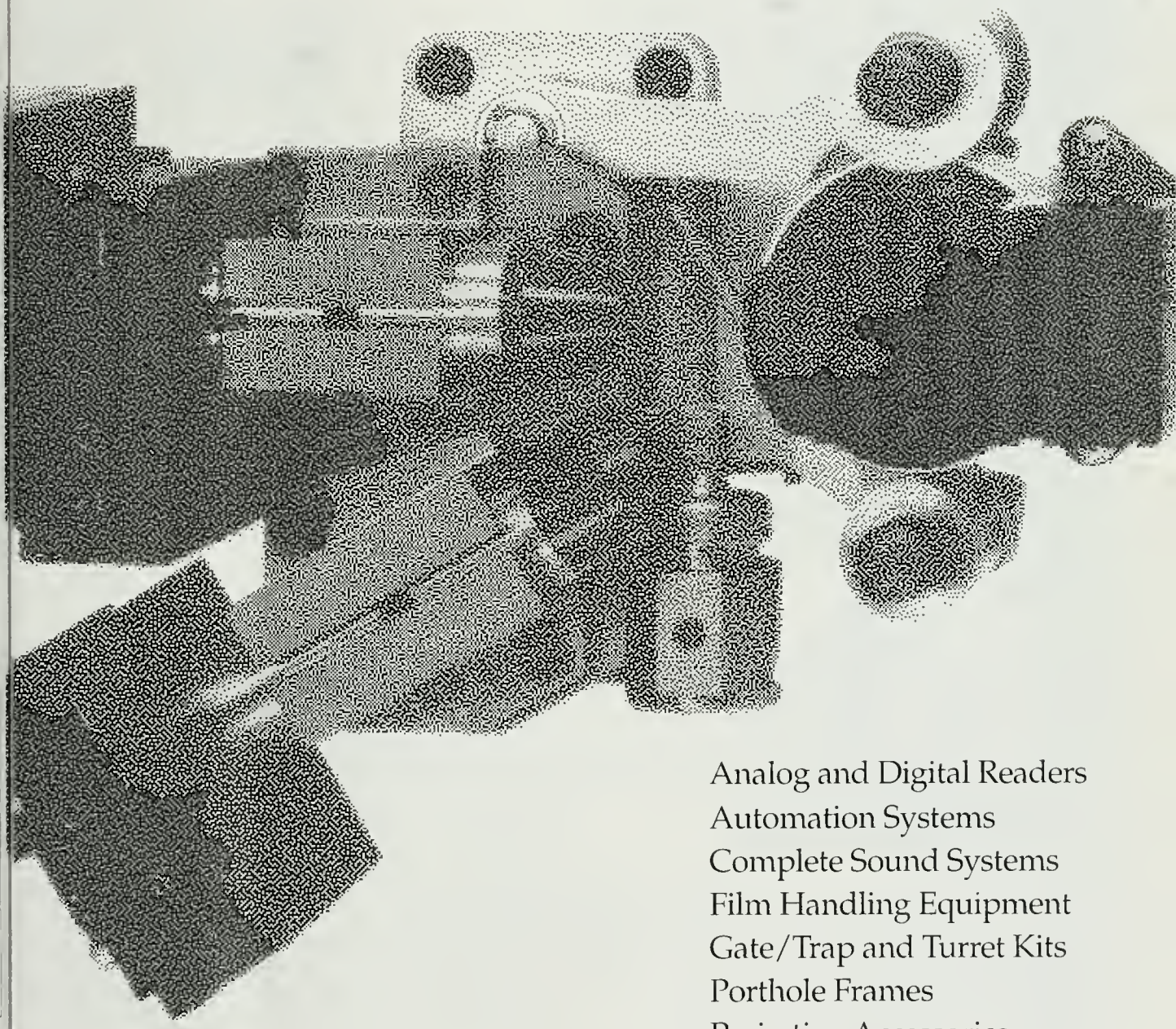


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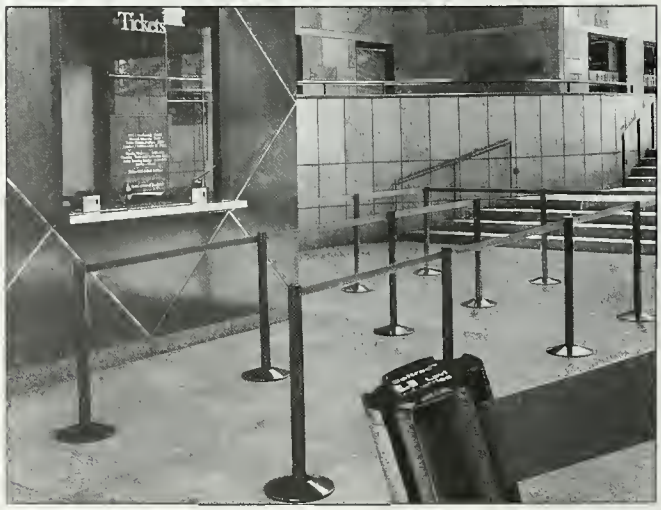
CardLogix has announced that it has formed a strategic alliance with **MPO Videotronics** to jointly provide **Smart Cards, software and interactive touchscreen terminals** to movie theatres for **automatic ticketing.** MPO Videotronics supplies interactive terminals for streamlined customer-activated movie ticketing and concessions. The new Smart Card-based system lets customers avoid long lines and carry



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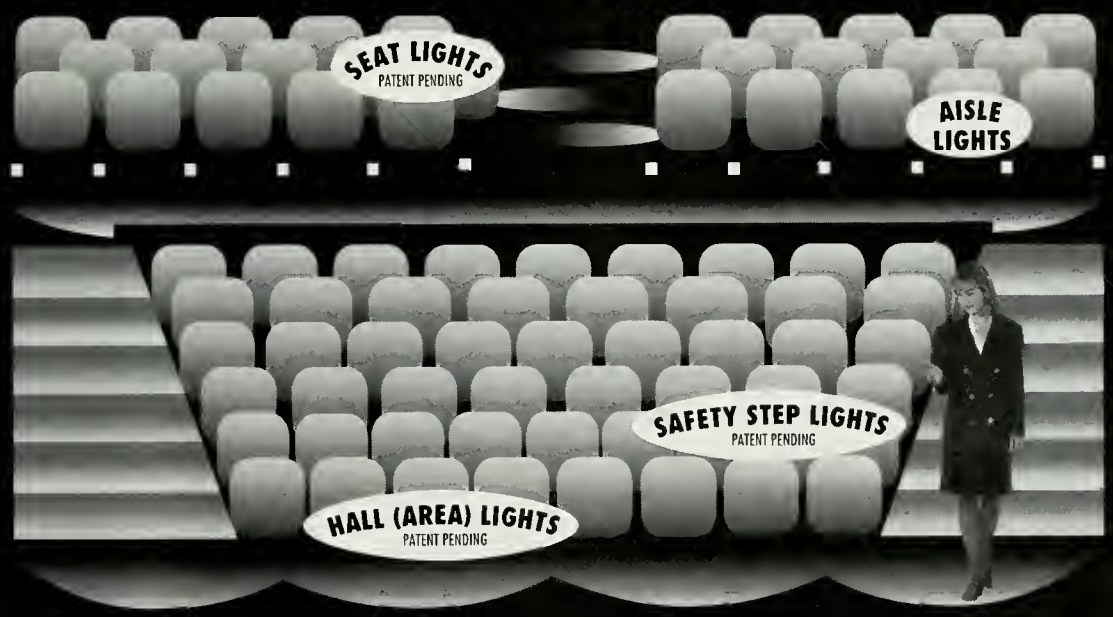
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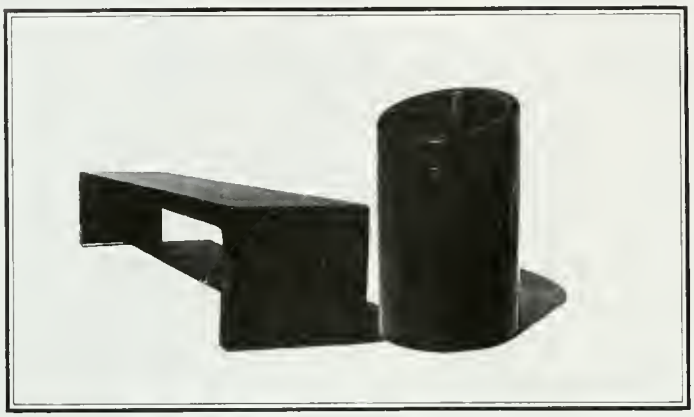
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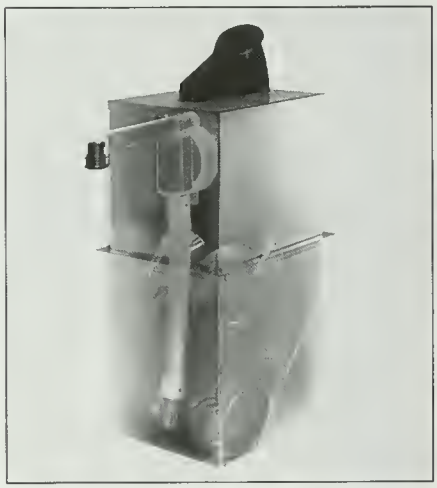
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ShowEast 1997 New Products Guide

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The **Swan Corporation**, makers of Swanstone reinforced solid surfacing, have released an **eight-page catalog** featuring their **complete line of vanity tops and bowls.** Swanstone does not need special care. Stains and cigarette burns wipe off with a sponge and mild abrasive cleanser. Swanstone vanity tops and bowls carry a 25-year warranty against cracking. For more details, write The Swan Corporation, Dept. #248, One City Centre, St. Louis, MO 63101, or call (314) 231-8148. Internet address: http:/www.theswancorp.com.

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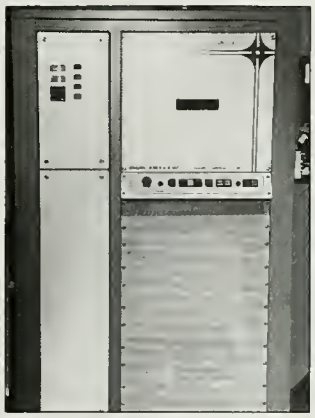
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ShowEast 1997 New Products

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An **automated voice response system** is being introduced by **Unique Telecom Solutions**. Called **Film-By-Phone**, this system allows people to find movies by feature title, category or location; hear descriptions of previews of select films; and check show times and directions to different theatres. Call (888) 70-VMAIL or write Unique Telecom Solutions, 354 Crown St., Brooklyn, N.Y., 11225.

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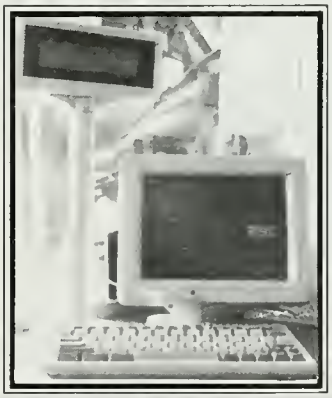
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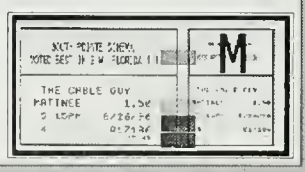
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BOXOFFICE

REVIEWS

November 1997

★★★★★ OUTSTANDING
★★★★ VERY GOOD
★★★ GOOD
★★ FAIR
★ POOR
(no stars) BOMB

REVIEWS

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VENICE FEST/ DAY AND DATE: NOV. 21

DECEIVER ★★★1/2

Starring Tim Roth, Renee Zellweger, Chris Penn and Michael Rooker. Directed and written by Josh and Jonas Pate. Produced by Peter Glatzer. An MGM release. Drama/thriller. Rated R for violence, language and some sexual content. Running time: 101 minutes. Screened at the Venice film festival. Opens 11/21.

This darkly comic psychological thriller/murder mystery stars the always compelling Tim Roth as Wayland, a disturbed genius accused of killing a prostitute (Renee Zellweger, doing a change-of-pace role from "Jerry Maguire"). But he turns the tables on the investigators ("Mulholland Falls'" Chris Penn and "Rosewood's" Michael Rooker) by using his superior mental abilities to unnerve and manipulate them.

A compulsive liar, temporal lobe epileptic, alcoholic, and filthy rich summa cum laude Harvard psychology graduate with a 151-point IQ, Wayland finds dark games a gleeful distraction from the empty bitterness of his life caused by familial disharmony and other deep-seated emotional problems, and the cocksure but cerebrally inferior detectives are perfect targets for our intellectually formidable antihero.



TRUTH AND CONSEQUENCES: *Renee Zellweger and Tim Roth star in MGM's "Deceiver."*

Although some of its plot elements are ultimately a little convoluted and confusing, "Deceiver" (which played at Venice under the title "Liar") is a fascinating character study, an impressive actors' showcase, and a superior thriller. Filmmaking brothers Josh and Jonas Pate ("The Grave") show great promise, confidence and originality, particularly exemplified by their uniquely wry method of character exposition.—***Christine James***

FESTS

TORONTO

*Too many late starts and too many disgruntled journalists who had trouble seeing all the films they needed to see somewhat marred the 22nd Toronto International Film Festival. But there were more films that curried favour with audiences and critics alike than in past years, including Curtis Hanson's "L.A. Confidential" and Paul Thomas Anderson's "Boogie Nights," which together shared the critics best-picture nod (followed by David Mamet's "The Spanish Prisoner" and Atom Egoyan's "The Sweet Hereafter"). Thom Fitzgerald's "The Hanging Garden" and "The Sweet Hereafter" shared the best Candian feature nod, the first time that award has been split between two contenders; "L.A. Confidential" and Lee Tamahori's "The Edge" come in third and fourth. Carine Adler's U.K. first film "Under The Skin" took the Fipresci international critics prize, and Vincenzo Natali's thriller "Cube" was named best Canadian first feature. Other favorites included Venice-fest best picture winner "Fireworks," "Fudoh: The New Generation," "Washington Square" and "Twenty-FourSeven."—**Shlomo Schwartzberg, Canadian Correspondent***

KISS OR KILL ★★★

Starring Frances O'Conner, Matt Day, Chris Haywood and Barry Otto. Directed and written by Bill Bennett. Produced by Bill Bennett and Jennifer Bennett. An October Films release. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 96 minutes. Opens in November (undated).

There is something extremely likable about this dark and quirky dramatic thriller, which has much to do with the two leads, Frances O'Conner and Matt Day (who both also starred in "Love and Other Catastrophes"). In fact, the problem of the Down Under film is that it's just too darn likable to be a workable thriller. Filmmaker Bill Bennett (who returns to his home country after his less-than-successful American effort "Two If By Sea") begins the film with a powerful opening scene and a Dylan Thomas quote, both of which seem more substantial than the film that follows.

Call it "Two If By Outback," but "Kiss or Kill" is a tale of two grifters, Nikki (O'Conner) and Al (Day), who make their living by doping and robbing married businessmen that Nikki picks up in bars. But, when their latest mark accidentally dies, they take to the road with an incriminating sex tape of a local sports celebrity, Zipper Doyle (Barry Langrishe), that they found in the dead man's briefcase. When folks on their trail start ending up dead, each begins to suspect the other. They find themselves not only on the run from the two detectives and Doyle, but also from their growing suspicions.

Although the film has something to say about how much we really know our lovers and about the nature of trust, it simply isn't

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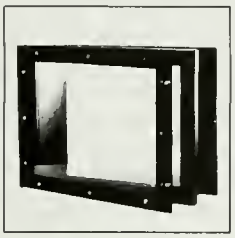
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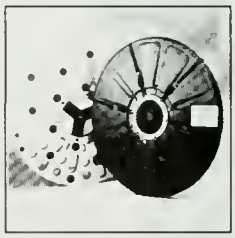
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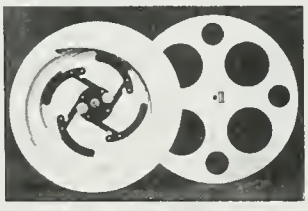


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Response No. 36

clear exactly what that is. The loose, documentary style is a double-edged sword, allowing for a carefree immediacy and yet keeping us distant from the emotional core of the characters. A layer of real fear is lacking from the film, and it's never truly believable that either Nikki or Al is a killer. Still, the performances are lovely, the odd characters engaging and the filmmaking quirky. And there is a scene between two detectives (Chris Haywood and Andrew S. Gilbert) that is worth the price of admission all by itself.—*Susan Lambert*

ONE NIGHT STAND ★★★

Starring Wesley Snipes, Nastassja Kinski, Robert Downey Jr. and Kyle MacLachlan. Directed and written by Mike Figgis. Produced by Mike Figgis, Annie Stewart and Ben Myron. A New Line release. Drama. Rated R for strong sexuality and language, and for drug content. Running time: 103 min. Opens 11/14.

There probably isn't another contemporary director who can put inchoate moods and sexual undercurrents on the screen quite like Mike Figgis, as shown in "Stormy Monday," "Internal Affairs" and "Leaving Las Vegas." Although in "One Night Stand" he's working from a simpler and less developed story than in his previous films, the emotions he gets at are anything but simple.

Max Carlyle (Wesley Snipes) is a commercial director who is happily married to Mimi ("The Joy Luck Club's" Ming-Na Wen) in Los Angeles. One night during a trip to New York, he meets another woman, Karen (Nastassja Kinski), who is also married. Their chance encounter leads to just a one-night stand, but when Max returns home he is no longer the same person. When he goes back to New York a year later to visit his friend Charlie (Robert Downey Jr.) who is being hospitalized with AIDS, he finds out that Karen is married to Charlie's brother Vernon ("Showgirls'" Kyle MacLachlan).

Despite a miscue at the beginning that has him talking to the camera, Snipes (who won the best actor prize at the Venice fest for his work here) hasn't been this good or this engaging since "Rising Sun." And Kinski, who's prone to brooding, shows a frisky and sensual side that hasn't been evident since James Toback's "Exposed." Downey, who has the role of the dying artist, also turns a cliche into a tour-de-force, delivering what Tom Hanks only promised in "Philadelphia."

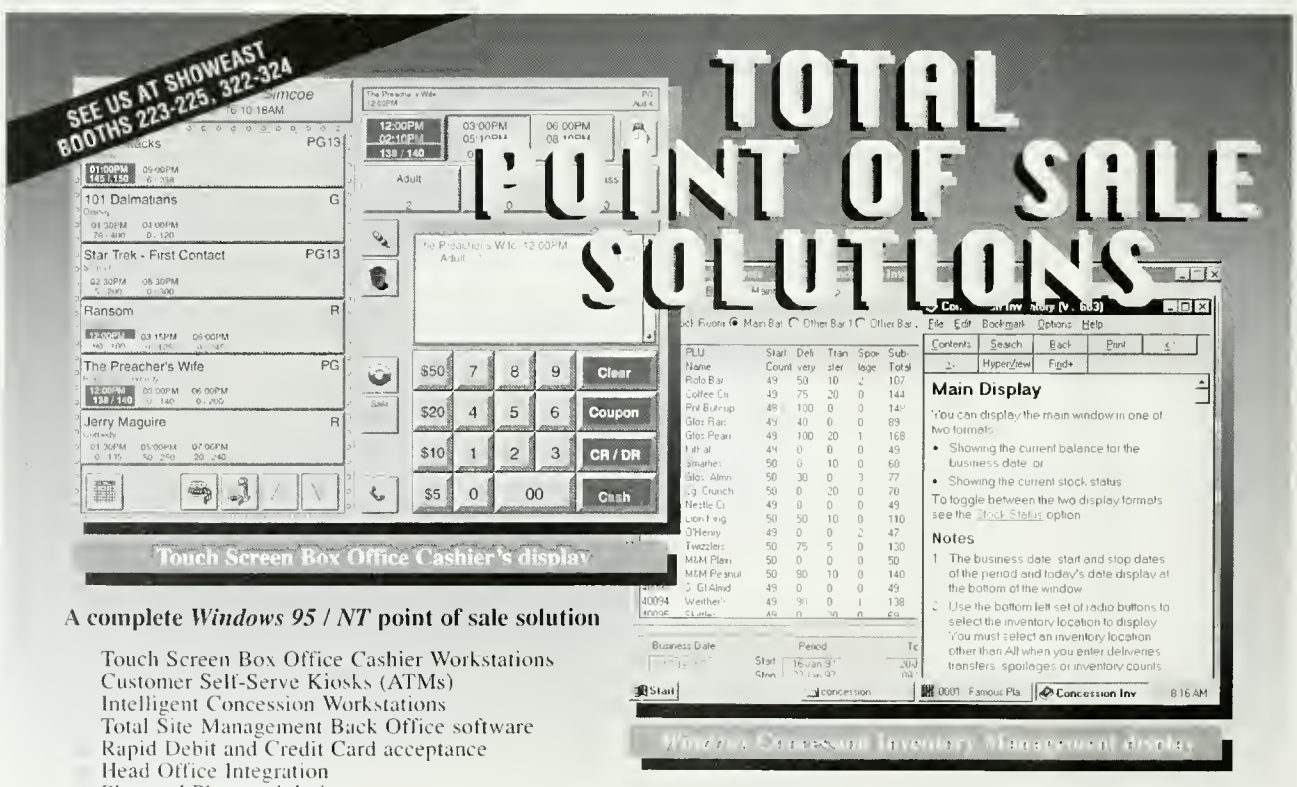
"One Night Stand" could be an appropriate bookend to Hal Ashby/Robert Towne's "Shampoo" (1974). "Shampoo" was about how the hopeful and hedonistic '60s came to an end, with people pairing off and settling for something less from sexual partners than they once desired. "One Night Stand" is about hedonistic people who've lived compromised lives and are now trying to find new ways to sexually and emotionally connect within the diminished expectations of the '90s.—*Kevin Courrier*

THE TANGO LESSON ★1/2

Starring Sally Potter, Pablo Veron and Heathcote Williams. Directed and written by Sally Potter. Produced by Christopher Sheppard. A Sony Classics release. Drama. French- and Spanish-language; English subtitles. Rated PG for brief language and some violent images. Running time: 101 min. Opens 11/14 NY.

In "The Tango Lesson," Sally Potter ("Orlando") returns to her roots as a professional dancer (which she was before she started making short dance films in 1972). Instead of celebrating movement or exploring the cultural roots of the tango itself, she turns the story into a self-serving examination of the issue of control in romantic relationships.

Potter plays a film director working on a script that seems to be about fashion models brought together by a legless designer who involves them in a photo shoot—and then the models start getting assassinated by snipers. While Hollywood producers are trying to decide what to make of this rather questionable idea for a movie, Potter takes tango lessons from a passionate hunk (Pablo Veron) who has just lost his dance partner. While they do the tango, they also



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do the dance of love. The idea Potter seems to be putting across is that, in the tango, the female follows, whereas Potter's instincts as a director means that she should lead. By the end, she leads all right; she even starts to sing, which should just about get audiences hoofing right out of the theatre.

As in "Orlando," Potter combines the instincts of a theoretical feminist with a Harlequin romantic, which means that as a dramatist she's both abstract and sentimental. Put another way, in "The Tango Lesson" and "Orlando" she wants audiences to be swooning with her petulant heroines and their sexual fantasies while at the same time learning important political lessons about gender and control. "The Tango Lesson" certainly looks better than "Orlando," with Robby Muller's black-and-white cinematography giving the film at the very least a graphic vitality.—*Kevin Courrier*

THE WINGS OF THE DOVE ★★1/2

Starring Helena Bonham Carter, Linus Roache, Alison Elliott and Charlotte Rampling. Directed by Iain Softley. Written by Hossein Amini. Produced by Stephen Evans and David Parfitt. A Miramax release. Drama. Rated R for sexuality. Running time: 108 min. Opens 11/7 wide.

This is a handsome adaptation of Henry James's 1902 novel, which (like "The Bostonians," "Daisy Miller" and "The Portrait of a Lady") deals with the emergence of the modern woman in a world bound by tradition, corruption and hypocrisy. But what the movie lacks is the excitement and friction of the new clashing with the old. Iain Softley ("Backbeat," "Hackers") doesn't generate his usual impudent energy.

In "The Wings of a Dove," Kate Croy (Helena Bonham Carter) finds a place in high society thanks to her Aunt Maud (Charlotte Rampling), who also keeps her desperately poor father alive providing she abides by her wishes to marry respectably. But Kate is in love with a young and penniless journalist, Merton Densher ("Priest's" Linus Roache). When Milly Theale ("The Spitfire Grill's" Alison Elliott), an attractive and wealthy young American heiress—who also happens to be dying—arrives in England, Kate launches a plot that she hopes will allow her to marry Merton without having to defy her aunt.

Part of what's wrong with "The Wings of a Dove" is Bonham Carter, who has played this kind of role too often. Her Kate comes across as too fractious rather than someone torn by her ambitions. Roache, however, is quite convincing as a man whose deeper emotional yearnings get the better of him. And Elliott is able to bring out Milly's dignified search for happiness and friendship without it seeming mawkish. As for Softley, a director who tries to pay reverence to a classic novel often can't make the material his own. "The Wings of a Dove" is not a terrible adaptation (like Jane Campion's "The Portrait of a Lady"), it's just not an exciting one.—*Kevin Courrier*

BOOGIE NIGHTS ★★★

Starring Mark Wahlberg, Julianne Moore and Burt Reynolds. Directed and written by Paul Thomas Anderson. Produced by Lloyd Levin, John Lyons, Paul Thomas Anderson, Joanne Sellar and Daniel Lupi. A New Line release. Comedy/drama. Rated R for strong sex scenes with explicit dialogue, nudity, drug use, language and violence. Run time: 150 min. Opens 11/7 wide after mid-Oct. ltd bow.

A lengthy look at the world of pornographic filmmakers, circa the late '70s and '80s, "Boogie Nights" is a well-crafted, well-acted entertainment but one that doesn't dig too deep into its subject. Seen mostly through the eyes of Eddie Adams ("Traveller's" Mark Wahlberg), a naive, aimless California youth who lucks into a new career as a porn star, "Boogie Nights" covers a trajectory that could be called The Rise and Fall of a Porn Star. At the outset, Eddie, who's renamed himself Dirk Diggler, is riding high, embraced by a happy, oblivious family of outsiders, including amiable Jack Horner (Burt Reynolds), a director with delusions of grandeur; his sweet wife, actress Amber Waves ("The

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Lost World: Jurassic Park's" Julianne Moore); Buck ("Devil in a Blue Dress'" Don Cheadle), an actor who really wants to operate a stereo store; Rollergirl ("Swingers'" Heather Graham), who takes off everything but her skates; and Little Bill ("Fargo's" William H. Macy), a behind-the-scenes organizer who's always catching his wife in compromising positions.

Their shenanigans are bracketed by the awful but catchy disco music and horrendous fashions of the time, and "Boogie Nights" doesn't delve much deeper than that. It too neatly divides the "innocent" '70s from the "bad" '80s, with everything falling apart for the film's mainly superficial characters. AIDS is not mentioned and, although video is referred to as "the wave of the future," its impetus in bringing porn out of disreputable theatres into the average American's home, and making it more popular than ever, is flagrantly ignored.

Paul Thomas Anderson ("Hard 8") is a very talented filmmaker, effectively going in a blink of the eye from comedy to Tarantino-inspired violence, but he doesn't have a brain in his head. "Boogie Nights" could have been a filmic version of Terry Southern's brilliant satirical porn novel "Candy," but the film, if enjoyable, says nothing about America. Like most porn, it's as superficial as they come.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

SICK ★★

Starring Bob Flanagan and Sheree Rose. Directed and produced by Kirby Dick. A CFP release. Documentary. Unrated. Running time: 89 min. Opens 11/8 NY/LA.

This documentary—subtitled "The Life and Death of Bob Flanagan, Supermasochist"—directed by Kirby Dick concerns an underground masochistic performance artist who died of cystic fibrosis. "Sick" is the shockingly graphic story of the fast life and slow death of Bob Flanagan, a hero of sorts to those in the sexual underground who find an evening of piercing, poking and prodding more interesting than, well, an evening in front of the tube with the dog. Rising to notoriety on the success of several explicit short films he completed with his wife and dominant master, Sheree Rose, in the late 1980s, Flanagan succumbed to congenital CF, which he incorporated, quite ironically, into performances until his 1996 death.

This is a film that in no uncertain terms is for mature audiences only. It contains language and depicts sexual acts that most will find appalling and intolerable, and this fact overshadows any enticing human element the film tries to extend. Nevertheless, a select group will surely find it challenging and, dare we say it, informative.—*Jon Alon Walz*

GATTACA ★★

Starring Ethan Hawke, Uma Thurman and Jude Law. Directed and written by Andrew Niccol. Produced by Danny DeVito, Michael Shamberg and Stacey Sher. A Columbia release. SF. Rated PG-13 for brief violent images, language and some sexuality. Running time: 112 min.

Set in the 21st century, "Gattaca" tackles the high sci-fi concept of genetic manipulation in a future in which potential for disease, defects and aptitudes can be fully determined right at birth. Those deemed inferior—the invalids—are tossed on the lower rung of society, while the perfect specimens have the run of their world, their every dream and wish fulfilled. So what happens when one Vincent Freeman ("Before Sunrise's" Ethan Hawke), a sickly youth whose life span is limited, decides he wants to ascend the highest peaks and join a momentous manned mission to Titan? He switches identities with a paraplegic super-athlete ("Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil's" Jude Law) and goes to work at Gattaca Corp., where his dream seems about to come true.

Begging the question of why this medically superior future society can't heal a broken back, "Gattaca" betrays its lack of imagination at virtually every turn. It's one of those annoying SF movies that doesn't look futuristic and that doesn't really deal with its main idea, which is the meaning of humanity and how it can be determined. Instead, writer/director Andrew Niccol takes a side trip into mystery as a murder threatens Vincent's standing at Gattaca. The who-

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dunit aspect is old hat and it takes up too much time before trickling to a flat resolution.

In the lead, Hawke turns in a humorless performance, as does Uma Thurman as a fellow employee who discovers his secret. Even appearances by Gore Vidal as Gattaca's head and Alan Arkin as a sardonic detective investigating the murder don't add much to the proceedings. Niccol does have an eye for beauty and "Gattaca" is certainly well designed. But the movie, like Michael Nyman's excessively sentimental score, is underwhelming. It's SF on the surface but it doesn't stimulate the way the best science fiction does.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

SWEPT FROM THE SEA ★

Starring Vincent Perez, Rachel Weisz, Ian McKellen and Kathy Bates. Directed by Beeban Kidron. Written by Tim Willocks. Produced by Polly Tapson, Charles Steel and Beeban Kidron. A TriStar release. Drama. Rated PG-13 for elements of theme and some sensuality. Running time: 114 min.

You can sweep this one right back where it came from. It's an embarrassingly florid romantic melodrama from director Beeban Kidron ("To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything, Julie Newmar"). Based on a Joseph Conrad short story ("Amy Foster"), it dredges up just about every cliche imaginable. Stormy seas, lovers perched on horizon's edge, repressed townfolk perched on the edge of madness, and fits of screaming passion: All are served on a platter of John Barry's crashing music, which makes one think the theatre's being bombed.

Amy Foster ("Chain Reaction's" Rachel Weisz) is a simple girl who's considered an outsider in her small town of Colebrook. One day she falls in love with Yanko ("The Crow: City of Angels'" Vincent Perez), a Ukrainian survivor of a shipwreck. Initially he's thought by the town to be mad and dangerous, until he's befriended by Dr. Kennedy ("Richard III's" Ian McKellen), who recognizes Yanko's intelligence and starts to teach him English. When Yanko and Amy get married, the townsfolk become upset and drive the couple to tragedy.

This is basically the same kind of purple masochism that had some critics and audience members applauding "Breaking the Waves" last year. The difference is that this is a much more old-fashioned romantic weeper.—*Kevin Courrier*

SEVEN YEARS IN TIBET ★★1/2

Starring Brad Pitt and David Thewlis. Directed by Jean-Jacques Annaud. Written by Becky Johnston. Produced by Jean-Jacques Annaud, John H. Williams and Iain Smith. A TriStar release. Drama. Rated PG-13 for some violent sequences. Running time: 139 min.

Perhaps it's unfair to burden a simple movie with world concerns, but as an art form the cinema does deal with human concerns. Despite an intriguing story (adapting Austrian mountaineer Heinrich Harrer's book), a challenging mix of the ugly and the dashing in a lead performance by Brad Pitt, and a series of provocative locales, this Mandalay production fails to create an acceptable story of a man and his values even on the film's own terms.

"I'm Austrian, I'm a climber, I have nothing to do with your silly war," Harrer (Pitt) tells a British officer as he is arrested in 1939 during a Himalayan ascent. Although a voluntary member of the Nazi party since 1933 (a fact not made clear in the film) and an SS athletic trainer (ditto), Harrer wants to conquer peaks, not peoples. Portrayed as a relentlessly cruel man, Harrer has already made a disaster of his marriage, which has borne him a son he has yet to see. Escaping from internment, Harrer and fellow climber Peter Aufschnaiter (David Thewlis) head into Tibet where, although the movie also muffs this point, Harrer apparently has a change of heart after befriending the young Dalai Lama (Jamyang Wangchuk) and, witness to the Chinese invasion, seeing how evil is transgression. The movie ends in 1951 Austria with father and son and a Tibetan flag atop a mountain. The air virtually rings with a supposed purity of heart.

Although Harrer would have been present for Kristalnacht and the early concentration camp builds, he was virtually in another world when World War II and the



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likes of Auschwitz were in full swing. But that world of his is also resolutely immoral: There is no mention made of an apology to his ruthlessly mistreated wife, and his eventual union with his son occurs not because the boy needs him, but because Harrer decides he needs his son. The work of director Jean-Jacques Annaud ("The Lover") is undone by an unfulfilling script by Becky Johnston ("Prince of Tides"); in her telling, not even a wealth of time spent with one of the holiest humans on earth could remake Harrer into the good man "Seven Years in Tibet" wants us to believe him to be.—*Kim Williamson*

THE ASSIGNMENT ★★1/2

Starring Aidan Quinn, Donald Sutherland and Ben Kingsley. Directed by Christian Duguay. Written by Dan Gordon and Sabi H. Shabtai. Produced by Tom Berry and Franco Battista. A Triumph release. Drama. Rated R for strong violence, sexuality and language. Running time: 115 min.

The turbulent life story of the notorious Venezuelan terrorist known as Carlos has been freely adapted to the screen in an occasionally intelligent but more often inept manner. Not only does the film inflate Carlos's "accomplishments," it resorts to the worst cliches and overacting in doing so.

The film begins excitedly enough, with Carlos throwing a grenade into the midst of a crowded Parisian cafe. A moment earlier, he had begged a light and revealed himself to a CIA operative (Donald Sutherland) who goes by the name of Jack Shaw. Shaw swears revenge and finds his chance when the Israeli Mossad, led by Amos (Ben Kingsley), picks up a man they think is Carlos. He's actually a U.S. Navy man named Annibal Ramirez (Aidan Quinn), which is Carlos's last name, and he's a dead ringer for the terrorist. Amos and Shaw decide that they will use the fake Carlos to get the real one killed.

"The Assignment" does avoid political correctness by not equating the two sides or giving any justification for Carlos' murderous acts. Nor does it condemn the Western powers or Israel for going after Carlos in the first place. Eliminating him is simply a necessity. But if "The Assignment" shows some sophistication in its portrayal of the two sides, it's still burdened by some overblown dialogue and Sutherland's teeth-gnashing turn as the obsessive Shaw. Helmer Christian Duguay ("Screamers") is also not a suspense director; except for one Libyan chase scene, he fails to juice the film.

But Quinn is a standout as Annibal, who's in over his head and against his will. But the subplot of his assumed identity turning him into a brutal replica of Carlos is dealt with too late in the film to have much impact. Despite core smarts, "The Assignment" makes the grade only as melodramatic pap.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

TELLURIDE

EVE'S BAYOU ★★★

Starring Samuel L. Jackson, Lynn Whitfield, Debbi Morgan and Diahann Carroll. Directed and written by Kasi Lemmons. Produced by Caldecott Chubb and Samuel L. Jackson. A Trimark release. Drama. Rated R for sexuality and language. Running time: 108 min. Opens 11/7 wide after 10/24 NY/LA bow.

"Eve's Bayou" is a very promising writing/directorial debut for Kasi Lemmons, till now an actress ("Fear of a Black Hat"). Eve (Jurnee Smollett) is 10 years old and lives in a prosperous Black Creole family in Louisiana in the early '60s. Eve's father, Louis ("Pulp Fiction's" Samuel L. Jackson), is a popular and successful doctor. Eve begins to discover what is going on beneath the seemingly happy surface of her family life. She accidentally sees her charming father being unfaithful to her beautiful mother ("A Thin Line Between Love and Hate's" Lynn Whitfield). Her Aunt Mozelle (Debbi Morgan), whose three husbands have each died unexpectedly, predicts the future. As Eve discovers more family secrets, she believes that to save her family she must make a pact with a voodoo woman (Diahann Carroll).

The ensemble, from Smollett and the young actors playing Eve's brother and sis-

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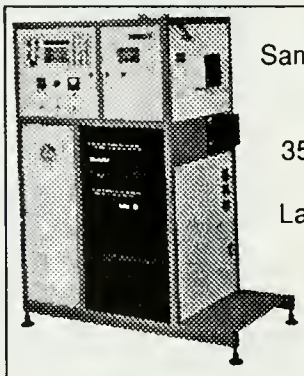


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ter to the veteran Carroll, is very impressive. The actors bring out the subtle and complicated relationships. Jackson (who also produced) is charismatic as the father Eve comes to believe is a source of family problems; Whitfield and Morgan are very affecting as Eve's unhappy mother and aunt. Vondie Curtis Hall (the director's husband, who helmed "Gridlock'd") plays Aunt Mozelle's latest lover, who is not afraid of the curse that Mozelle believes has tragically ended her three marriages.

"Memory is a selection of images," Eve says. This also describes Lemmons' assured direction, which accumulates the daily details of growing in vibrant Louisiana as filtered through a child's perception. Lemmons skillfully shows the old superstitions that are mixed in with the family's modern lifestyle.—*Ed Scheid*

GUMMO ★★

Starring Jacob Reynolds, Nick Sutton, Chloe Sevigny and Linda Manz. Directed and written by Harmony Korine. Produced by Cary Woods. A Fine Line release. Drama. Rated R for pervasive depiction of anti-social behavior of juveniles, including violence, substance abuse, sexuality and language. Running time: 89 min. Opens 10/17 NY/LA/Tor.

"Gummo" is the first directorial effort of 23-year-old Harmony Korine, who wrote the screenplay for the controversial "Kids." This film, also written by Korine, is set in Xenia, Ohio, a small town that was devastated by a tornado a few years before and still reeks of poverty and emptiness. The residents live in rundown houses with tattered furniture and high piles of unwashed clothes; cockroaches abound.

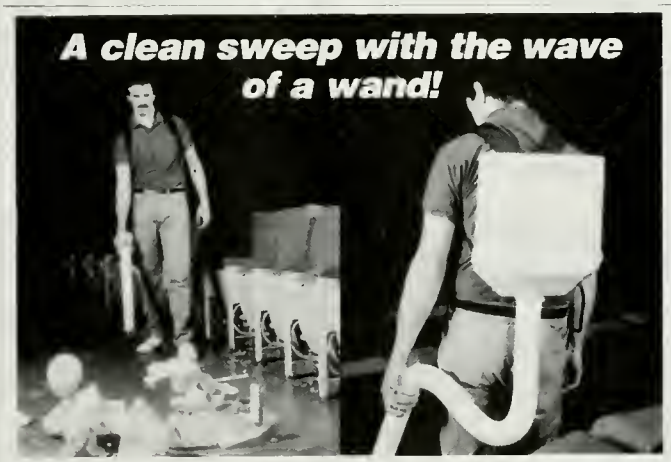
Korine has shot "Gummo" in the straightforward style of a documentary. Grainy footage is intercut throughout, frequently giving the film a home-movie look. To maintain realism, Korine uses many nonprofessionals; he cast Nick Sutton in the leading part of Tummler after seeing him on a "Sally Jesse Raphael Show" about former troubled teenagers. "Gummo" contains many disturbing and realistic scenes of lives without values or guidance, and the young characters' obscenities add to the unsettling mood. But there's more unsettlement: To relieve their boredom, two teenage friends, Tummler and Solomon (Jacob Reynolds), kill stray cats to sell to a Chinese restaurant, and they use the money to get high from sniffing glue; a man pimps for a retarded girl; after a father loses an arm-wrestling match to his son, he demolishes the furniture in a room.

The most bizarre scenes are of a silent boy with a sad face and wearing pink bunny ears who travels through the town. Chloe Sevigny (another "Kids" vet) designed the costumes for "Gummo" and plays a white-haired girl searching for her missing cat. One of the few adult actors in the cast is Linda Manz ("Days of Heaven") as Solomon's mother, who unexpectedly tap-dances in tribute to her dead husband. Korine's screenplay for "Kids" used a suspense element to hold the film together. In contrast, the various stories in "Gummo" remain disconnected, making the film rambling and unfocused. The film also loses interest because Korine never penetrates his characters' troubled surfaces.—*Ed Scheid*

U-TURN ★★★

Starring Sean Penn, Jennifer Lopez, Nick Nolte, Powers Boothe and Billy Bob Thornton. Directed by Oliver Stone. Written by John Ridley. Produced by Dan Halsted and Clayton Townsend. A TriStar release. Drama. Rated R for strong violence, sexuality and language. Running time: 123 min. Opens 10/3 wide.

In his latest film, Oliver Stone takes a "U-Turn" from his controversial histories of "Nixon" and "JFK" to the suspense of film noir. As vultures fly overhead, Bobby (Sean Penn) is driving through the Arizona desert to pay off a gambling debt in Las Vegas when his car breaks down and he is forced to stop in a rundown desert town. He's agitated because the gangsters to whom he owes the money have already disfigured his hand and are threatening



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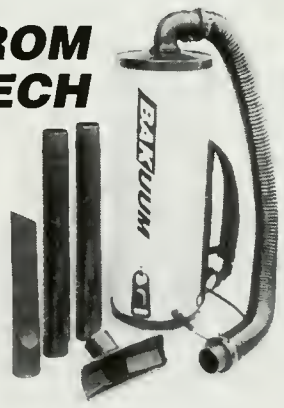
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more violence if they are not paid on time. In the seemingly quiet town, Bobby unexpectedly loses his money and becomes enmeshed in manipulation, murder and violence as his departing is delayed.

The entire cast gives vivid performances, especially Billy Bob Thornton ("Sling Blade") as a seedy and devious mechanic who threatens not to repair Bobby's car without suitable payment. Penn effectively conveys Bobby's increasing desperation, while Jennifer Lopez ("Selena") does fine work as Grace, a sultry femme fatale with a much older, wealthy husband (Nick Nolte). Both husband and wife offer to pay Bobby to kill the other. Even as he becomes attracted to Grace, Bobby is so anxious to get out of town that he might be forced to consider taking up one of the offers to pay for his damaged car. Bobby is regularly beaten up by a young bully ("Inventing the Abbotts'" Joaquin Phoenix) whose flirtatious girlfriend ("William Shakespeare's Romeo & Juliet's" Claire Danes) sees Bobby as her way to get out of town. Powers Boothe ("Sudden Death") portrays a sheriff unable to keep his town in control.

Even small parts are colorful, including Jon Voight as a blind Indian and Julie Hagerty as a "waitress named Flo." The script is based on screenwriter John Ridley's book "Stray Dogs," but what propels the familiar plot (reminiscent of "Red Rock West") is Stone's trademark intensity. As in previous efforts like "Natural Born Killers," Stone combines different types of film stock, often giving "U-Turn" a gritty look with heightened colors and blazing sunlight; the look of the film and the expressionistic camera angles reflect the raw passions of the characters. "U-Turn" is fast-paced throughout, with unexpected bursts of twisted humor among the bloody closeups of beatings, shootings and mutilation.—*Ed Scheid*

CAPITAINE CONAN ★★★★

Starring Philippe Torreton, Samuel Le Bihan and Bernard Le Coq. Directed by Bertrand Tavernier. Written by Bertrand Tavernier and Jean Cosmos. Produced by Alain Sarde and Fredric Bourboulon. A Kino release. Drama. French-language; English subtitles. Unrated. Running time: 130 min.

French director Bertrand Tavernier's latest film, "Capitaine Conan," an epic tour-de-force set in the Balkans at the close of the First World War, hits with such intelligence, dramatic skill and brute cinematic force that it literally leaves moviegoers stunned as the lights come back up. An adaptation of Roger Vercel's semi-autobiographical 1939 novel, this is one of the most engrossing, morally complex and psychologically insightful war films in recent memory—reducing Hollywood claptrap like "G.I. Jane" to the level of a Three Stooges short.

The grasp of Tavernier, who won the 1996 best director Cesar, is masterful, plunging the viewer deep into the chilling ambiguities and Byzantine complexities of a secret war that continued long after Armistice Day. The movie deftly shuttles among the bureaucratic farce, military courtsmanship, violent thrill of the front, and cutting politics of the officers mess. The battle scenes are as visceral as those in "Glory" but work in a completely different, handheld way that bows to the neo-realist European cinema of the '40s.

Philippe Torreton (winner of the 1996 Cesar for best actor) stars as Conan, the leader of a band of guerrillas who ruthlessly fight behind enemy lines and who are useful to the high command only to a point. Samuel Le Bihan gives an understated performance as Lt. Norbert, an educated teacher who makes for an unlikely recipient of Conan's respect but who can go only so far in agreeing with his friend's methods. Although much of the theme and incident has been portrayed in countless war films, "Capitaine Conan" avoids cinematic and sentimental cliche. It is a finely wrought film—as hard, precise and heartbreaking as its title character.—*Alex Albanese*

MONTREAL

The market was quiet, and not too many films in competition excited the crowds. Yet the 21st Montreal World Film Festival still had its share of standouts, including best-picture winner Majid Majidi's "The Children of Heaven," an Iranian entrant that was quickly snapped up by Miramax for North American distribution. In addition to receiving the Grand Prix of the Americas, "The Children of Heaven" also won the Air Canada People's Choice Award for most popular film, a rare confluence of public and jury opinion. And, if that wasn't enough, "The Children of Heaven" also garnered a special mention from the Fipresci jury.

*Other big winners were John Duigan's "Lawn Dogs," a U.K. effort that brought a best actor award for Sam Rockwell; Bill Bennett's Australian drama "Kiss or Kill," which saw Frances O'Conner pick up best actress and also garnered a best artistic contribution award (shared with Juraj Jakubisko's Czech film "An Ambiguous Report About the End of the World." Carlos Saura's "Pajarico" from Spain and Juni Ichikawa's Japanese film "Tokyo Lullaby" shared the best director nod.—**Shlomo Schwartzberg, Canadian Correspondent***

AMERICAN PERFEKT ★★★1/2

Starring Fairuza Balk, Robert Forster, Amanda Plummer, Paul Sorvino, David Thewlis, Geoffrey Lewis, Chris Sarandon and Joanna Gleason. Directed and written by Paul Chart. Produced by Irvin Kershner. A New Image production; no stateside distributor set. Thriller. Rated R for grisly violence, strong sexuality/nudity and language. Running time: 100 min.

The wedded team of filmmaker Paul Chart and actress Amanda Plummer ("Drunks") does not allow "American Perfekt" to languish in the hipper-than-hip modern film-noir genre that has seized Hollywood by the throat in recent years. Cleverly conceived, the project benefits from the British writer/director's unerring instinct for nimble plot twists and dialogue, as well as from his wife's singular acting skills.

Set in a remorseless California desert landscape, the film unfolds with what are at first baffling snippets of action. The jittery, frazzled Sandra (Plummer) might or might not have been run off the road by Santini ("Seven Years in Tibet's" David Thewlis), a slimy charlatan with a suitcase full of double-faced Kennedy half-dollars. Her savior in this dilemma is a handsome criminal psychiatrist named Jake (Robert Forster) with a penchant for flipping a coin to make all his decisions. "Worrying's my specialty," Sandra tells him. "That's what I do." Turns out there is more to worry about than she ever imagined, of course, as violence tightens its grip on events that hurtle toward surprising conclusions. These bizarre losers meet up in several locations en route to Pear Blossom, a misnomer for the barren-looking place where Sandra is to meet her sister Alice ("The Craft's" Fairuza Balk) for a joint trip home to Utah.

More than anything else, "American Perfekt" is reminiscent of John Dahl's "Red Rock West," a droll 1993 picture populated with similar denizens of a nightmarish hinterland. A documentarian from London, Chart gives his first fiction feature even higher stakes. The one really glaring problem in all this tightly wrapped suspense is Forster's performance, which is too creepy to fool seasoned moviegoers able to spot a psycho long before the spilling of blood. Yet, although Jake should be far more seductive and sympathetic, such mistakes do not significantly diminish the punch of this smart little thriller.—*Susan Green*

ANOTHER 9 1/2 WEEKS 1/2

Starring Mickey Rourke, Angie Everhart and Steven Berkoff. Directed by Anne Goursaud. Written by Michael Davis. Produced by Staffan Ahrenberg and Yannick Bernard. A Cinevisions production; no stateside distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 101 min.

Did someone advise Angie Everhart ("Bordello of Blood") that making a movie with Mickey Rourke might speed her transition from supermodel to starlet? Time for a new agent, perhaps. Adrian Lyne's slick 1986 spectacle of erotic obsession took place, as the title implied, over a period of 9 1/2 weeks. This idiotic sequel might cover only a few days but plays like 9 1/2 years.

There is less sadomasochism onscreen than in the act of actually sitting through the film, directed by Anne Goursaud ("Lilly") with little concern for making sense with logic or dialogue. Whereas its predecessor was set in Manhattan, "Another 9 1/2 Weeks" has moved to Paris—surely a good idea, in that the French apparently perceive Rourke as some kind of god. God dwells in shadow during much of the action: When Rourke steps into the light, his face has odd bulges like one of sci-fi's shape-shifting

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creatures. The soft-core bondage is so dull that viewers can afford to spend a good deal of time pondering, "What's with this guy?"

The half-baked plot sends John (Rourke as the wealthy Wall Street broker) abroad, trying to find Elizabeth (played by Kim Basinger 11 years ago) at an art auction. Instead, he meets and mates with her friend Lea (Everhart), a fashion designer with an appetite for kinky sex. The only stumbling block to their mutual fulfillment is John's decision to swear off cruelty, despite the fact that the opening scene has him using a straight razor to caress the breast of a prostitute. So much for New Year's resolutions. The decadence that "Another 9 1/2 Weeks" strives to achieve is best captured at a party, where the grim guests, all same-sex pairings, watch a naked woman tortured with hot candle wax.—*Susan Green*

THE ASSISTANT ★★★1/2

Starring Armin Mueller-Stahl, Joan Plowright, Gil Bellows and Kate Greenhouse. Directed and written by Daniel Petrie. Produced by Paul Brown, Jon Slan and Daniel Petrie. A HandMade/Paragon/Miracle production; no stateside distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 106 min.

In the process of moving from novel to screen, "The Assistant" has lost some complexity by gaining the rosy glow of mass appeal. The 1957 Bernard Malamud novel about a young drifter's spiritual transformation exposed the darker side of Frank Alpine; writer/director Daniel Petrie's version, set in Depression-era New York but shot in Toronto with attention to period detail, swaps edginess for earnestness.

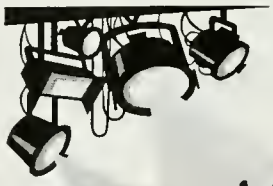
From start to finish, the movie's Frank ("The Shawshank Redemption's" Gil Bellows) remains an essentially nice Italian boy led astray by Ward Minogue (Jaimz Woolvet), a stock ne'er-do-well with violent anti-Semitic inclinations. Consequently, there's a less than compelling arc of change when Frank tries to make amends to an elderly Jewish couple (Armin Mueller-Stahl and Joan Plowright, in a third onscreen teaming after "Avalon" and "A Pyromaniac's Love Story") he'd victimized.

Although Petrie ("Resurrection," "Rocket Gibraltar") has had a three-decade flirtation with the idea of adapting Malamud's work, he fails to sharpen the moral dilemmas that are so provocative in the book. But he demonstrates a kinship with the late author's thesis about the purpose of Judaism: to be a "mensch"—a person of integrity and honor. Mueller-Stahl creates this attribute with graceful aplomb for his character, the decent proprietor of a grocery store who has lost his own son. Plowright gives an even more nuanced performance as his wife, a guarded woman fiercely protective of their daughter Helen (Kate Greenhouse). Helen's romance with Frank hasn't established much chemistry by the time it hits plot-driven obstacles, many of them stemming from his falsehoods. The abbreviated story also insists we take it on faith that, in seeking forgiveness,

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Frank finds transcendence by embracing religion. Nonetheless, the essence of Malamud's vision seems blessed by a *mitzvah* giving "The Assistant" emotional power beyond its parts' sum.—*Susan Green*

BAD MANNERS ★★

Starring Saul Rubinek, David Strathairn and Bonnie Bedelia. Directed by Jonathan Kaufer. Written by David Gilman. Produced by J. Todd Harris. No stateside distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 87 min.

Do we really need another spin on "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" Obviously, scripter David Gilman (who here adapts his play, "Ghost in the Machine") and helmer Jonathan Kaufer think so. But "Bad Manners" is plain bad, with portentous dialogue and paper-thin characterizations.

Bonnie Bedelia ("Needful Things") and David Strathairn ("Mother Night") play Nancy and Wes, an academic, conservative couple who host Nancy's old boyfriend, Matt (Saul Rubinek), a musicologist who has come to Boston to lecture at Harvard. Along for the ride is Kim (Caroleen Feeney), Matt's sexy girlfriend, who immediately stirs the sexual pot, with the predictable fireworks following.

Although the women manage to imbue their characters with some depth, Rubinek and Strathairn aren't so lucky. The former is a mere sap and the latter a stereotypical stuffed shirt, and both are constrained by Gilman's hopelessly contrived script and Kaufer's overemphatic direction. It's been 15 years since Kaufer's directorial debut, the charming romantic comedy "Soup for One," which also starred Rubinek. "Bad Manners" suggests he waited too long for a followup.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

A BROOKLYN STATE OF MIND ★

Starring Danny Aiello, Vincent Spano, Tony Danza, Abe Vigoda and Maria Grazia Cucinotta. Directed by Frank Rainone. Written by Frank Rainone and Frederick Stroppel. Produced by Peter R. Simpson. A Norstar production; no stateside distributor set. Drama. Rated R for strong language and some violence. Running time: 90 min.

With yet another Danny Aiello mobster role in tow, "A Brooklyn State of Mind" lumbers along, imitating every Italian thug movie ever made. Like Robert De Niro's "A Bronx Tale," this neighborhood saga sets its sights on one New York City borough. Co-writer/director Frank Rainone studied under Lina Wertmuller and worked for Federico Fellini before making his 1994 first feature, "Me and the Mob." But the only European sensibility he recreates comes care of Maria Grazia Cucinotta, reprising her voluptuous poses from "Il Postino" as an unconvincing documentary filmmaker with a hidden agenda and revealing costumes. Cast members don't seem embarrassed by the numbing material about a reluctant enforcer (Vincent Spano) for a local crime syndicate who moonlights as a jazz drummer. Abe Vigoda, playing his uncle, has a few interesting moments; Tony Danza's bartender does nothing memorable; and Aiello simply makes people offers they cannot refuse.—*Susan Green*

CALL OF THE WILD ★★★★

Narrated by Richard Dreyfuss. Starring Rutger Hauer, Bronwen Booth and Charles Powell. Directed by Peter Svatek. Written by Graham Ludlow. Produced by Pieter Kroonenburg and Julie Allan. A Greenlight production; no stateside distributor set. Adventure. Not yet rated. Running time: 90 min.

More a bout of terrific storytelling on screen than a conventional movie, "Call of the Wild" respects the literary brilliance of Jack London. Adapted by Graham Ludlow from the novelist's 1903 book, the Peter Svatek film chronicles the life of Buck, a handsome St. Bernard played by pooches named Vasko, Gessa and Gustave. Richard Dreyfuss' intermittent narration gives the engrossing fable a canine-like POV.

Abducted and transported to the Yukon during the Klondike Gold Rush, Buck endures much misery pulling sleds through the snow until rescued by John Thornton (Rutger Hauer, in his best performance since "Blade Runner"). The frozen-north vistas are stunning thanks to director of photography Sylvain Brault. Alan Reeves has composed the rare score that enhances rather than overwhelms the action. Also rare, if not entirely unique, is a disclaimer that comes before opening credits to point out that no animals were harmed. Buck's no Disney dog.—*Susan Green*

THE CHILDREN OF HEAVEN ★★★1/2

Starring Mohammad Amir Naji, Mir Farrokh Hashemian and Bahare Seddiqi. Directed and written by Majid Majidi. Produced by Seyed Sared Seyedzadeh. A Miramax release. Drama. Farsi-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 90 min.

Yet another fine film from Iran, "The Children of Heaven" deals with that country's favorite subject: children and their difficult, sometimes perilous path through an indifferent adult world. When a young man loses his sister's only—and recently mended—pair of shoes, the siblings have to share the boy's footwear, because they're scared to tell their father about the loss and can't afford to buy a replacement pair for the girl. Their plan soon becomes untenable, so it's up to the boy to find a way to get his sister a new pair of shoes.

From that unlikely premise, writer/director Majid Majidi fashions a fascinating film about the lower rungs of society, where what you wear on your feet says much about your status. And never has owning a pair of shoes seemed so important. As the camera lingers on each individual's shoes, Majidi sneaks in potent criticism of an Iranian society populated with beggars, angry storekeepers and teachers who favor some students over others. It's a provocative portrait of modern Iran but one that doesn't lose sight of its main characters: the youngsters who are more moral than the elders but are never unbearably or unbelievably nice.

"The Children of Heaven" bears some similarities to Jafar Panahi's "The White Balloon," which dealt with an Iranian girl's attempts to retrieve money she lost with which she was to purchase some goldfish for the holidays. Majidi may be a more stolid director than the imaginative Panahi, but his script probes deeper, obliquely attacking the capitalist basis of Islamic Iran.

Boasting Iranian cinema's traditional virtues of superb acting and smart writing, "The Children of Heaven" is evidence that what seems to be a thin skein, children on quests, is still capable of resulting in rich moviemaking. The well has not yet come up dry.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

COLIN FITZ ★★★★

Starring William H. Macy, Matt McGrath, Andy Fowle, Martha Plimpton, Julianne Phillips, Mary McCormack and John C. McGinley. Directed by Robert Bella. Written by Tom Morrissey. Produced by Robert Bella and Thomas J. Morgan. A Baby Shark production; no stateside distributor set. Comedy. Not yet rated. Running time: 86 min.

Robert Bella's assured first feature caps more than a decade of stage work with the Atlantic Theater Company. The New York troupe was founded by David Mamet and William H. Macy ("Fargo"), who shows up in "Colin Fitz" as the nincompoop boss of a private security firm that assigns two employees to guard a rock star's grave on the anniversary of his death.

They might as well be waiting for Godot. The boisterous Grady (Andy Fowle) and the sensitive Paul (Matt McGrath, an Atlantic regular) are a delightful odd couple arguing about the notion that Neil Young's "Keep on Rockin' in the Free World" precipitated the fall of communism. They also encounter a steady stream of eccentrics, including a fan (Martha Plimpton), the dead idol's widow (Julianne Phillips), and a drunken cemetery groundskeeper (John C. McGinley) who adds a magic realism to this wonderfully ironic tale.—*Susan Green*

DOGTOWN ★★

Starring Trevor St. John, Mary Stuart Masterson and Jon Favreau. Directed and written by George Hickenlooper. Produced by Donald Zuckerman, Michael Beugg and Bradford L. Schlei. No stateside distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 89 min.

A "Last Picture Show" wannabe, "Dogtown" brings little that is new to its saga of a young man returning to his small hometown and unearthing emotional ghosts from his youth. Philip Van Horn (Trevor St. John) tried to make it as an actor in Hollywood but succeeded only as an extra. To the residents of Cuba, Missouri, however, he's a star who's been on the same set as Jeff

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Bridges. On the basis of that perception, the troubled Van Horn is confident enough to set his sights on the popular girl ("Heaven's Prisoners'" Mary Stuart Masterson) he never got in high school, an action that brings him up against her white-trash boyfriend ("Swingers'" Jon Favreau). Badly acted for the most part—St. John is inexpressive to a fault, and Favreau overdoes the redneck bit—and flatly directed by George Hickenlooper ("The Low Life"), the film leaves little impression. Like Masterson's alcoholic character, it's mired in memories of the past, when the movies were better than "Dogtown."—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

EXPECTATIONS ★★

Starring Lena Endre, Hans Klinga and Gunnel Lindblom. Directed by Daniel Bergman. Written by Reidar Jonnson. Produced by Waldemar Gerendahl and Kerstin Bonnier. No stateside distributor set. Drama. Swedish-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Run time: 100 min.

Daniel Bergman's followup to his acclaimed "Sunday's Children," which won best first feature at the 1992 Montreal fest, is a banal series of vignettes of the lives of a diverse group of Swedes. The film, based on the short stories of scripter Reidar Jonnson, begins promisingly enough with footage of an American news reporter generalizing about the nature of Swedish women and feminism. But those expecting the film to either put the lie to or bolster the reporter's musings will be disappointed. Nothing that follows in the film has anything to do with that subject.

Instead, Bergman desultorily juggles his cast of characters, including a bickering couple whose daughter is caught in the middle of their marital strife, a married man and the divorced woman with whom he begins an affair, and a young man reluctantly returning to his hometown for a visit with his parents. But the connections among them are tenuous at best, and their plights are dull. At best, "Expectations" is nicely shot and acted.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

GEORGE B. ★

Starring David Morse, Nina Siemaszko, Grace Zabriskie and Brad Gregg. Directed and written by Eric Lea. Produced by Wade W. Danielson and Gloria Pryor. A Tango West production; no stateside distributor set. Comedy/drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 94 min.

Audiences are likely to ask an important question after spending time with "George B.": What's the point? Self-consciously quirky when not downright annoying, Eric Lea's debut feature falters badly in following the fortunes of a dim-witted rube ("The Crossing Guard's" David Morse) undermined by the manipulative young woman ("The Saint of Fort Washington's" Nina Siemaszko) he loves. Neither a low-budget "Forrest Gump" nor a contemporary "Of Mice and Men," the film has a narrative that doesn't bother with suggesting motivations for any of its characters.

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Interest quickly wanes while watching the incomprehensible activities of the film's many oddball loners living in a particularly ugly California town. Lea, whose credits include editing on TV's "Seinfeld" and "Ink," also wrote this clunker. Much of the casting is atrocious. John Franklin goes higher than over the top as George's nervous pal, and Siemaszko never moves beyond a flirtatious smile. Grace Zabriskie, playing her mother, is wildly neurotic for the sake of neuroses.—*Susan Green*

A GIRL CALLED ROSEMARIE ★★★★

Starring Nina Hoss, Heiner Lauterbach, Matthieu Carriere and Til Schweiger. Directed by Bernd Eichinger. Written by Bernd Eichinger and Uwe Wilhelm. Produced by Bernd Eichinger and Uschi Reich. A Constantin production; no stateside distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 132 min.

Imagine Marilyn Monroe, Michael Rooker and Kevin Spacey together in a film reminiscent of both Mike Newell's "Dance With a Stranger" and Rainer Werner Fassbinder's "Lola." Similarly about a postwar-era prostitute with dark passions and foolhardy ambitions, "A Girl Called Rosemarie" features three primary cast members (Nina Hoss, Til Schweiger and Heiner Lauterbach) who often resemble, respectively, those American stars.

First-time director Bernd Eichinger—producer and distributor of the likes of "Smilla's Sense of Snow," "Das Boot," "The Neverending Story" and "In the Name of the Rose"—presents a taut fictional account of a genuine unsolved crime from the 1950s. In doing so, it employs Alex Berner's precise editing and crisp, occasionally Expressionist images shot by cinematographer Gernot Roll to observe the exploits of a young woman (Hoss, a blonde bombshell with a bit of an overbite) who tries to sleep her way into Frankfurt's upper echelons. Obsession clouds Rosemarie's horizon when, having survived her willful teenage years spent in and out of reformatories, she leaves the perpetually impoverished Tony (Schweiger) for a wealthy businessman (Lauterbach) engaged to someone of his own social status. After agreeing to participate in a blackmail scheme devised by a mysterious Frenchman (the sinuous Matthieu Carriere, a dead ringer for David Clennon of TV's "thirtysomething" fame), her downward spiral is hastened as the proceedings escalate into the realm of film noir.

Rosemarie's stubborn self-centeredness, sometimes conveyed with ferocious intensity by Hoss, never fades, but it does make room for just a hint of vulnerability. As much a commentary on the bourgeois hypocrisy of Germany's industrial miracle as it is a romantic tragedy, Eichinger's maiden voyage at the helm traverses familiar territory with a fresh outlook. "A Girl Called Rosemarie" is bleakness in a dazzling facade.—*Susan Green*

THE GLAMOROUS WORLD OF THE ADLON HOTEL ★★★

Starring Felix Adlon and Eva Mattes. Directed and written by Percy Adlon. Produced by Eleonore Adlon. A Pelemele/Leora production; no stateside distributor set. Documentary/docudrama. Not yet rated. Running time: 76 min.

"Bagdad Cafe" became a cult favorite in 1987 but, three years later, writer/director Percy Adlon fashioned the horrendous "Salmonberries." In "The Glamorous World of the Adlon Hotel," he salvages his reputation with a curious unearthing of family secrets. Adlon, who has made more than 50 documentaries, uses historical records, archival photographs, cunning reenactments and talking heads to recall a state-of-the-art Berlin establishment that once attracted the rich and famous.

The hotel magnate's cross-dressing playboy son, Louis Adlon (Felix Adlon, an offspring of Percy), leaves his posh Hollywood exile when William Randolph Hearst sends him to postwar Germany as a correspondent. Shocked into temporary sobriety, the young man files nostalgic stories for the San Francisco Examiner.

Although he has an ingenious method of investigating his roots, the elder Adlon marginalizes several key developments. Key among them is the unexplained death of Louis, who resumes his decadent lifestyle after he has a brief fling with meaningful work.—*Susan Green*

GOLD IN THE STREETS ★★★1/2

Starring Ian Hart, Jared Harris and Jim Belushi. Directed by Elizabeth Gill. Written by Janet Pearson and Noel Pearson. Produced by Noel Pearson. A Ferndale production; no stateside distributor set. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 96 min.

Many fans of Ian Hart ("Land and Freedom," "Backbeat") would gladly pay big bucks to watch him read the phone book. The acclaimed British actor, who regularly outshines the Brad Pitts and Tom Cruises of the world, once again radiates from the screen in a film about homesick Irish immigrants in New York City. "Gold in the Streets" puts Hart alongside some fine fellow thespians, especially Jared Harris ("Hurricane Streets"), in a cast that includes James Belushi as a pub owner.

Hart, as the depressed Des, shares a flat with his industrious cousin Owen (Harris), the America-loving Paddy (Tom Hickey) and a naive newcomer named Liam (Karl Geary). Three colleens across the hall have also joined this community of sorrowful Emerald Isle emigres caught between cultures. With her first theatrical feature, Dublin-born Elizabeth Gill, once an apprentice to Martin Scorsese and assistant to Todd Haynes, makes an engaging directorial debut, although it's grace notes that outnumber missteps, one of which is the movie's tendency to drag from time to time.—*Susan Green*

THE JAMES GANG ★★

Starring John Hannah, Helen McCrory and Toni Collette. Directed by Mike Barker. Written by Stuart Hepburn. Produced by Andrew Eaton. No stateside distributor set. Comedy/drama. Rated R for language and brief sexuality. Running time: 98 min.

Part of the rejuvenated slate of Hand-Made Films, "The James Gang" resembles Handmade's quirky movies only on the surface. Actually, this film about a family of petty criminals whose capers become a British cause celebre is a soft concoction, redeemed only by the strong performances of newcomer McCrory as the highly competent James Gang matriarch, Bernadette, and of Jason Flemyng ("Alive and Kicking") as Spendlove Junior, a boy who narrates his family's adventures.

Director Mike Barker, who's making his feature film debut, is tonally confused. The whimsy of Bill Forsyth coexists uneasily with the grit of Ken Loach. Not surprisingly, "The James Gang" never jells, preferring instead to loosely zigzag from one mood to another. The film's cleverest conceit, that it's the women who run the show, including a determined female cop ("Cosi's" Toni Collette) who's after the gang, isn't utilized with any wit or imagination. And the copout happy ending is shameful.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

LEVEL 5 ★★★

Starring Catherine Belkhodja. Directed and written by Chris Marker. Produced by Anatole Dauman. No stateside distributor set. Drama. French-language; English subtitles. Running time: 90 min.

A Japanese woman, Laura, who lives in France, talks to the camera—and her dead lover—about her life, the World War II battle of Okinawa, and the nature of war and its current representation on the Internet.

Typically wide ranging as are all Chris Marker films ("Le Joli Mai," "Sans Soleil"), "Level 5" works on numerous levels. It's fiction, of course, because Laura is played by an actress. But it's also fact, as it analyzes cultural relations and racist attitudes between the Americans and Japanese during the war, including dramatic true-life testimony of atrocities committed by both sides. Laura also uses the 'Net to access video games based on the Okinawa battle, which shows how real events can be trivialized. But some of Laura's observations are trivial, too. Is Marker replicating triviality or actually being trivial himself?

"Level 5" poses conundrums like that throughout and, sometimes, that results in tedium; the Okinawa segues become increasingly tiresome. But the film is often hauntingly poetic, never more so than when Laura tells the story of a man she contacted on the Internet who said he was going to commit suicide the next day and of her desperate attempts to find out if his tale and intent were true. Marker's depiction of the computer as both a connecting and alienating device is layered and brilliant.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

FEST REVIEWS

THE OPIUM WAR ★★

Starring Shao Xin, Bao Gu'an, Williams Semon, Gao Yuan, Ema Graphis and Su Min. Directed by Xie Jin. Written by Zhu Sujin, Ni Zhen, Zong Fuxian and Mai Tianshu. Produced by Wu Baowen. An Opium War Film and TV Co. production; no stateside distributor set. Drama. Chinese-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 153 min.

Too much celluloid and dreadful performances betray "The Opium War," a tedious epic about British history in mid-19th century China that looks sumptuous, courtesy of cinematographer Hou Jong. When 74-year-old director Xie Jin's action-packed melodrama was screened before the return of Hong Kong to the People's Republic, it became the cinematic centerpiece of that festive reversal of fortune. Yet, apart from an exhausting length, the film's greatest sin is casting, particularly English-speaking roles.

Williams Semon offers archvillainy in his portrayal of a devious opium importer. Ema Graphis, as his daughter, will probably be best remembered for shrieking "Daddy!" upon seeing her papa in bed with a courtesan. The most illuminating issue—how the Brits forced opium on the Chinese—brings to mind contemporary allegations about the U.S. government's drug-pushing for financial and political gain. All sorts of other plot points go nowhere. Slowly.—*Susan Green*

POUR RIRE ★★★★★

Starring Jean-Pierre Leaud, Ornella Muti, Antoine Chappey and Tonie Marshall. Directed and written by Lucas Belvaux. Produced by Paulo Branco. A Gemini production; no distributor set. Comedy. French-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 100 min.

Although the title ("Just for a Laugh") suggests lighthearted fun, this snappy Parisian love triangle written and directed by Lucas Belvaux is tres, tres bittersweet. That becomes evident upon seeing the wonderfully hangdog face of Jean-Pierre Leaud, star of several Francois Truffaut pictures beginning with a childhood debut in "The 400 Blows" in 1959 and at least four by Jean-Luc Godard. It's a face—occasionally lined with age, incredibly boyish at other times and always reflecting melancholy eloquence—that almost eclipses the other talented actors on the screen.

Leaud is cast as Nicolas, who becomes something of a stalker after discovering that his fetching wife, Alice (Ornella Muti), is having an affair with a handsome sports journalist named Gaspard (Antoine Chappey). Another couple with romantic woes, Juliette and Michel (Tonie Marshall and Bernard Fau), serve as comic counterpoint, their problems further complicating the tense situation that Nicolas hopes to resolve. Alice, an attorney, is seen in court defending a man who has killed his adulterous spouse and her boyfriend. The entire City of Light appears to swirl around the movie's many broken-hearted souls.

"Pour Rire" is the second film made by Belvaux, previously a comic actor in work by Claude Chabrol and Jacques Rivette, among others. He finds just the right tone of sophisticated French je ne sais quois for this intricate web of prosperous professionals leading double lives, and every technical credit is sublime. With originality, Belvaux explores what commitment means in a world in which such things can be impossible to attain. He knows how to draw maximum laughter and tears from the human condition. Best of all, his black comedy presents a golden chance to watch Leaud's hilariously deadpan puss experience so much pleasure and pain.—*Susan Green*

PAJARICO ★★

Starring Alejandro Martinez, Paco Rabal and Juan Luis Galiardo. Directed and written by Carlos Saura. Produced by Javier Castro. No stateside distributor set. Drama. Spanish-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 105 min.

Spanish filmmaker Carlos Saura has fallen far since the filmic high of his superb, grippingly passionate "Carmen." His 30th film is a mundane coming-of-age film of a type seen many times before. Ten-year-old Manu (Alejandro Martinez) is sent to stay with his uncles and aunts in the country while his parents try to salvage their rocky marriage. Each week is spent with a different relative and, with each one, Manu becomes privy to a different aspect of their secret lives, including adultery, homosexuality and addiction. He also falls in love with a female cousin, who affects his future. Martinez is actually quite good as the somewhat naive Manu, but Saura fails to bring this young boy's adventures to life. Unlike classic films like "The 400 Blows" or "The Black Stallion," "Pajarico" lacks the indelible imagery that would make Manu's experiences special.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

SELF STORAGE ★★1/2

Starring Ron Leibman, Arye Gross and Joe Pantoliano. Directed by Tony Spiridakis. Written by Tony Spiridakis and Shem Bitterman. Produced by Randy Lippert. No stateside distributor set. Comedy. Not yet rated. Running time: 91 min.

Another behind-the-scenes comedy about making it in Hollywood, "Self Storage" is enlivened by some very clever jokes and a robust performance by Ron Leibman as a failed actor who might also be a serial killer. But the film is decidedly uneven.

Arye Gross ("Mother Night") and Tom Wood play a down-and-out producing/writing team who stumble across Leibman, whom they suspect of being the dreaded "Costume Killer." Instead of turning him in to the cops, they use him as the basis of their new script, which causes them all sorts of trouble.

At its best, "Self Storage" skewers pretentious moguls who boast of casting key "talent" in silly shows. But the film is also overdone, and except for Leibman and Joe Pantoliano ("Bound"), who is very funny as a twitchy "producer," doesn't offer its cast much to do. A second or third draft would have helped.—*Shlomo Schwartzberg*

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REVIEWS

SOUL FOOD ★1/2

Starring Vanessa L. Williams, Vivica A. Fox and Nia Long. Directed and written by George Tillman Jr. Produced by Tracey E. Edmonds and Robert Teitel. A Fox release. Drama. Rated R for some strong sexuality and language. Running time: 114 min.

Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds, one of the most successful music producers and songwriters of the decade, has made his first foray into producing for the bigscreen—and now has, unfortunately, a big, shiny dud to go alongside his shelves of Grammys.

With young writer/director George Tillman Jr. at the helm, "Soul Food" is the bland and passionless story of Mother Joe and her huge, extended Chicago family, which is always in conflict but manages to stay together under the sheer weight of her personality—not to mention her cooking: huge Sunday brunches complete with cornbread, greens, black-eyed peas, fresh fruit pies....

"Soul Food's" disjointed narrative, which attempts to tell about eight stories simultaneously, resembles a season's worth of television more than a movie. It implodes under the weight of every family and race cliche in the book, and it lacks the focus and originality that made such African-American films as "Boyz in the Hood" and "love jones" so appealing.—*Jon Alon Walz*

A THOUSAND ACRES ★★★1/2

Starring Jessica Lange, Michelle Pfeiffer, Jason Robards and Jennifer Jason Leigh. Directed by Jocelyn Moorhouse. Written by Laura Jones. Produced by Marc Abraham, Steve Golin, Lynn Arost, Kate Guinzburg and Sigurjon Sighvatsson. A Buena Vista release. Drama. Rated R for some strong sexual language. Running time: 106 min.

With its focus on letting go of the past to embrace the future, this adaptation of Jane Smiley's novel is thematically similar to director Jocelyn Moorhouse's last film, "How to Make an American Quilt." Both are chockful of characters with tragic histories who must release their anger and wistfulness if they are to move on. And some do with more success than others.

"A Thousand Acres" additionally addresses the role of greed in tying people to situations that ultimately make them more miserable than the material gain could possibly be worth. In this case, the prize in question is a thousand acres of fertile land, owned by third-generation superfarmer Larry Cook (Jason Robards), a man whose well-respected position in the community belies his cruelty toward his family.

Larry announces he will retire and split his beloved land among his three daughters, Ginny (Jessica Lange), Rose (Michelle Pfeiffer) and Caroline (Jennifer Jason Leigh). But he promptly shuts Caroline out of the deal when she inadvertently bruises the mercurial old man's feelings. And when Ginny, Rose and their husbands begin making plans as to how they will run the farm, the controlling Larry soon becomes resentful and bitter. He winds up teaming with Caroline to sue Ginny and Rose to get the farm back.

This heavy drama draws realistically complex characters and effectively shows how detrimental it can be to cling to the past and spend your time hating and blaming. Realism is maintained by resisting the urge to indulge in pat comeuppances and epiphanal revelations. Instead of sewing everything up neatly, the film presents a lot of unresolved emotional conflict and no easy answers as to what's right. How do you let go of a lifetime's worth of pain and anguish when the perpetrator doesn't even believe he's done anything wrong? "A Thousand Acres" offers much to ponder and excellent, well-rounded performances by Lange, Pfeiffer and Robards.—*Christine James*

THE GAME ★★1/2

Starring Michael Douglas, Sean Penn, James Rebhorn, Deborah Kara Unger and Armin Mueller-Stahl. Directed by David Fincher. Written by John Brancato and Michael Ferris. Produced by Steve Golin and Cean Chaffin. A Polygram release. Thriller. Rated R for language, and for some violence and sexuality. Running time: 128 min.

Making high-profile debuts this September, new major distributors DreamWorks ("The Peacemaker") and Polygram ("The Game") have both done themselves proud. Right from their openings, each film boasts an electricity to its genre exercise unusual for audience programmers. As mainstream entertainments, each must be considered a success. In the film-as-art category, however, it's "The Game" that pretends to have the reach, and it's here that the Propaganda production falls short.

Wealthy investment banker Nicholas Van Orton (Michael Douglas, in yet another someone's-out-to-get-me role) is not celebrating his 48th birthday. Although he's not a cruel man, he's estranged from virtually everyone in his life; so distant are his human contacts that most conversations he has are conducted by telephone. Into his memory, as he sits by himself in his San Francisco mansion, come recollections of the day of his father's 48th birthday—when the old man plunged from the home's high roof to his death before the boy's eyes. Into his life, at a lunch at a posh restaurant, returns youn-

PREVIOUSLY REVIEWED: *OCTOBER/NOVEMBER/DECEMBER FILMS*

In light of our continuing commitment to bring you reviews as early as possible, we now provide a reader guide to upcoming releases we've already critiqued. The alphabetical list below notes the issue of BOXOFFICE in which the review appeared, gives its star rating, and provides newly updated distributor and release date information.

"Bean" ★★★1/2: Gramercy, 11/7 wide; see Sept. 1997.
"Beaumarchais the Scoundrel" ★★★★: New Yorker, 10/24 NY; see Oct. 1997.
"Breaking Up" ★★★: Warner Bros., mid-Oct. ltd; see Sept. 1997.
"Deep Crimson" ★★★★: New Yorker, 10/8; see April 1997.
"FairyTale: A True Story" ★★★★: Paramount, 10/24; see Sept. 1997.
"Fast, Cheap & Out of Control" ★★★: Sony Classics, 10/3 NY/LA; see April 1997.
"Forgotten Silver" ★★★1/2: First Run, Oct. undated NY; see March 1997.
"Happy Together" ★★: Kino, Oct. 12 NY, Oct. 31 LA, 11/14 SF; see Sept. 1997.
"The House of Yes" ★★★1/2: Miramax, 10/10 NY/LA, exp 10/17 & 10/24; see April 1997.
"Hurricane Streets" ★★★: UA, 10/24 ltd; see April 1997.
"The Ice Storm" ★★1/2: Fox Searchlight, 10/17 exp; see July 1997.
"I Was a Jewish Sex Worker" ★★1/2: Greycat, 10/17 NY; see April 1997.
"Lilies" ★: Turbulent Arts, 10/10 SF, 10/17 NY, 10/24 LA; see April 1997.
"Love Always" ★1/2: Legacy, 10/17 ltd; see April 1997.
"Marian" ★: Turbulent Arts, 10/3 Chi; see April 1997.
"Ma Vie en Rose" ("My Life in Pink") ★★★★: Sony Classics, 12/24 NY/LA; see Aug. 1997.
"Nenette et Boni" ★★★: Strand, 10/3 NY, 10/10 LA; see April 1997.
"Nick and Jane" ★★: CFP, 10/10 ltd; see June 1996.
"Parallel Sons" ★★★: Greycat, Nov. undated; see May 1997.
"Shooting Porn" ★: Horwitz, 10/3 LA; see May 1997.
"Slaves to the Underground" ★1/2: First Look, 11/14 NY; see April 1997.
"The Sweet Hereafter" ★★★★: Fine Line, 12/24 NY/LA; see Aug. 1997.
"Timeless" ★★★: Phaedra, Oct. undated; see April 1996.
"The Twilight of the Golds" ★★: CFP/Avalanche, 10/24 ltd; see April 1997.
"Underground" ★★★★1/2: New Yorker, Dec. undated; see Sept. 1995.
"Washington Square" ★★★1/2: Buena Vista, 10/5 NY, exp 10/12 & 10/17; see Oct. 1997.
"Welcome to Sarajevo" ★★★1/2: Miramax, 11/14 NY/LA; see July 1997.
"Wide Awake" ★★★: Miramax, 10/17 NY/LA; see Sept. 1997.
"Year of the Horse" ★★1/2: October Films, 10/8 NY, 10/15 LA; see Oct. 1997.

ger brother Conrad (Sean Penn), long a failure at anything except getting into trouble. Conrad gives Nicholas a present: a gift certificate for something called The Game. As Nicholas tries to find out more about how you play this Game, the world that was his own begins to play him dangerously.

As with his "Seven," in "The Game" it's in his climax where director David Fincher fails. Both films build toward dynamic, even world-altering conclusions, but what's provided is just fizzle. In the end, "Seven" proved to be merely a hijacking of biblical precepts that made for script salability but only shallow execution. Fincher opens this film with truly affecting home-movie footage of the young Nicholas with his distant father. It's a well-done sequence that with surprisingly deep authenticity establishes the movie's question to be answered. But what "The Game" does in providing its surprises, however engaging, is to not just avoid but even trash the life-and-death importance of the emotional makeup of its lead. Once again, Fincher opts for artifice over art.—*Kim Williamson*

JULIAN PO ★★

Starring Christian Slater. Directed and written by Alan Wade. Produced by Jon Glascoe and Joseph Pierson. A Fine Line release. Drama. Rated PG-13 for thematic elements related to suicide, and for language and some sensuality. Run time: 83 min.

Nothing stirs up a cinematic small town like the arrival of a stranger. His very presence upsets the delicate balance of personalities and priorities that the local yokels have forged during years of isolation. In "Julian Po," a film set in one such crossroads of civilization, those citizens include a gruff mayor, a gun-mad sheriff and his good-cookin' wife, a kooky minister, an unstable landlord and his deaf/mute (or is she?) housekeeper, and the standard-issue wistful young maiden. They've all spent eons together without incident.

So when 30-year-old Julian Po (Christian Slater) rents a room in this village without visitors, he attracts loads of suspicion-laden attention—until Julian informs his new neighbors why he's there: to kill himself. In a flash, xenophobia turns to admiration for this man of conviction, someone who plans to put his gun where his mouth is. Julian, who moved into Nowheresville to be left alone, receives a personal call from everyone in town; they confess their darkest secrets, give him haircuts and corn muffins, request guidance, or simply bask in his notoriety. The idea behind this movie is that through Julian these poor sods can find their true selves.

But, as trite as it sounds, we never get to know Julian's visitors beyond their broadly drawn dramatic roles. Perhaps if the film concentrated on just a few characters, rather than an entire townful, there'd be sufficient room to explore the chosen with appropriate depth. As it stands, the audience watches a parade of personalities while wondering, "Who are these people, and who cares?" The same goes for Julian, a man we learn almost nothing about.—*Ian Hodder*

FIRE DOWN BELOW ★★1/2

Starring Steven Seagal, Marg Helgenberger and Harry Dean Stanton. Directed by Felix Enriquez Alcala. Written by Jeb Stuart and Philip Morton. Produced by Steven Seagal and Julius R. Nasso. A Warner Bros. release. Action. Rated R for violence and language. Running time: 99 minutes.

There are two ways to view Steven Seagal's latest fist fest, "Fire Down Below." First is as a by-the-numbers actioner that hits most of its marks, including a juicy justification of a plot (scummy corporate type stores his chemical waste in abandoned mines, sickening an Appalachian town's children), strong supporting characters ("Species'" Marg Helgenberger as the town outcast, Harry Dean Stanton as a sage bumpkin, and raisin-faced Kris Kristofferson doing his "Lone Star" villain, this time in pinstripes), and spectacular (if chaotic) scenes of destruction.

The Seagal/Nasso production even gets country authenticity thanks to appearances by Travis Tritt and Randy Travis, among others. The second way is even more fun: "Fire Down Below" as a God vs. the Devil scenario in which Seagal casts himself as the ultimate justice-doer—a pursed-lipped, pony-tailed, leather-blazered version of the Almighty. When Seagal's undercover EPA agent Jack Taggart first arrives in Jackson, Ky., in the guise of a church handyman, he tells the townsfolk that he's doing "God's work." From there on, references to heaven and hell fall like frogs during the Apocalypse. ("Fire down below," geddit?)

The God comparison was inevitable. Seagal's action heroes aren't like those of other franchisees like Bruce Willis or Mel Gibson, who thrill by being regular guys who triumph against the odds, getting bruised in the process. With Seagal, there's no question he's going to kick ass without even breaking a sweat. The tension comes not from knowing whether he'll win, but how quickly and by what means, whether it's against 10 hillbilly bruisers at once or two thigh-sized rattlers—the latter of which he just grabs in each hand as they strike.

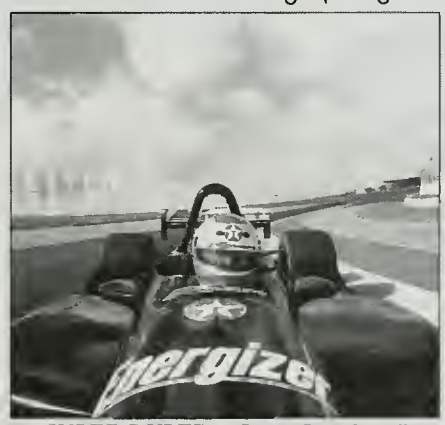
If only Eve had had that kind of coordination.—*Melissa Morrison*

SPECIAL FORMATS

SUPER SPEEDWAY ★★★

Featuring Mario Andretti and Michael Andretti. Narrated by Paul Newman. Directed by Stephen Low. Produced by Pietro L. Serapiglia. A Stephen Low Co. release. Documentary. Unrated. Running time: 48 min. Format: IMAX.

In the documentary-as-spectacle/thrill ride subgenre, the IMAX format really can't be beat. From fish to civilization, all subjects receive a visceral swoop-and-dive camera treatment at some point. But "Super Speedway" could just be the most perfect match of subject matter to aspect ratio since the debut of the eight-story screen. Indy race cars, in all their hard-turning, stomach-churning, 230 mph glory have now been captured on celluloid from a driver's-eye view. The result is a white-knuckle film that feels like it ages the viewer the four years it took to produce.



SUPER DUPER: *"Super Speedway" takes viewers right onto the racetrack.*

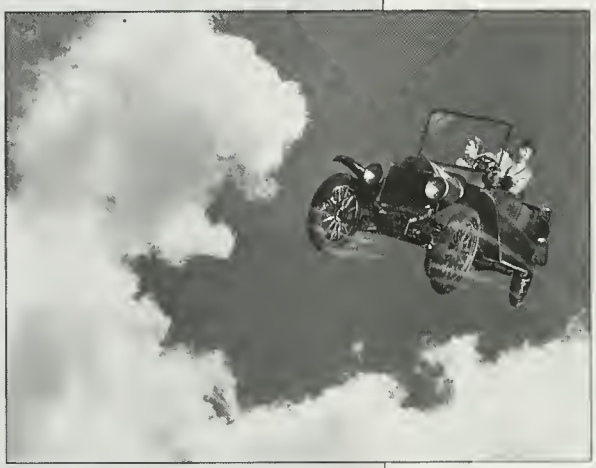
In an amazing technical and logistical accomplishment (attaching a big bulky camera to a light streamlined car and driving very fast on a racetrack full of competitors), "Super Speedway" follows the fortunes of racer Michael Andretti and his newly designed car through the 1996 race season while his father, legend Mario Andretti, reflects on his career and the history of the sport and a midwestern race car buff carefully restores an early '60s Indy roadster. Stock footage illustrates the evolution of racer design (along with fatal crashes of the end product) while time-lapse photography shows the computer-controlled design and fabrication of today's super machines.

Director Stephen Low does a good job of keeping things interesting, although traditional IMAX shortcomings—stilted dialogue passages and over-pretty staged reenactments—pop up here and there. Although the historical and personal asides are nice enough, it's the race footage that is the film's raison d'etre and its main selling point. Here, "Super Speedway" is right on the money. Camera car driver/operator Mario Andretti captures some truly jaw-dropping scenes, which are effectively combined with an amplified stereophonic roar of the engines. The film delivers what it promises: one hell of a thrill ride.—***Alex Albanese***

FLASHBACK: *FEB. 27, 1961*
What BOXOFFICE *said about...*

THE ABSENT-MINDED PROFESSOR

[In May 1961, Walt Disney released a live-action family marvel, "The Absent-Minded Professor," which proved similar in style, setting and success to its "The Shaggy Dog" of two years previous. On 11/26, Disney (as with last year's "101 Dalmatians") delves into its rich canon for a remake, this time called "Flubber" and with Robin Williams riding in the Fred MacMurray role. Here's what BOXOFFICE *said about the original.]*



Walt Disney follows up his 1959 blockbusting "The Shaggy Dog" with another modest-budget, black-and-white live-action comedy that bids fair to break records in 1961. All the popular ingredients are present: Fred MacMurray is again starred, this time as a zany scientist who invents a rubbery substance, which he names "flubber"; the script by Bill "Shaggy" Walsh, based on a Samuel Taylor story, is another fantasy in a small-town setting; and Robert Stevenson has directed in a broad, Mack Sennett-like fashion that will have audiences howling as MacMurray's flubber has people and an old flivver bouncing sky-high. With Tommy Kirk, Disney's teenage regular, and both Keenan and Ed Wynn (in a guest appearance in his old role of a befuddled fire chief) for extra marquee draw, this is ideal family fare to delight youngsters and adults alike. There's even a few puzzled-looking dogs and the "Shaggy Dog" cops, James Westerfield and Forrest Lewis, for added laughs—what more could exhibitors want? MacMurray is well cast as the professor, and Nancy Olson registers charm and exasperation nicely as his waiting-at-the-altar fiancee. Keenan Wynn as a loan shark and Kirk as his fumbling son couldn't be better.

EXPLOITIPS:

Although dogs are in the minority in this film, stress the similarity to "The Shaggy Dog" by playing up Fred MacMurray and Tommy Kirk, who starred in it. Kirk is also currently starred in "Swiss Family Robinson." Advertise for an old Model-T, such as is used in the film, and display it in the lobby to attract attention. Mention that Ed Wynn is seen in his familiar Fire Chief role.

CATCHLINES:

You'll be "Flubbergasted" at Fred MacMurray's New Adventures ... He Left His Fiancee Waiting at the Church But He Won Her Back With a "Flubber."

REVIEWS

KULL THE CONQUEROR ★★★

Starring Kevin Sorbo, Tia Carrere, Harvey Fierstein and Karina Lombard. Directed by John Nicolella. Written by Charles Edward Pogue. Produced by Raffaella De Laurentiis. A Universal release. Adventure. Rated PG-13 for fantasy action violence and sensuality. Running time: 96 min.

A fond and energetic return to the Italian muscle-hero epics of the 1960s, "Kull the Conqueror" is a guilty pleasure of rare quality. The spirit rather than the letter of Robert E. Howard's short stories (mainly the 1929 "By This Axe I Rule!") has been captured with a lively sense of old-fashioned mythical hokum in a script by Charles Edward Pogue ("Dragonheart"). Naturally, the plot has as many holes and absurd contrivances as Howard's tall tales, but the moviemakers' clear affection for its source keeps the film diverting in a corny way.

With irreverent dash and charm, Kevin Sorbo (best known from TV's "Hercules: The Legendary Journeys") admirably fills out the muscular title role—an ancient warrior and progenitor of Conan the Barbarian who's deposed as king of Valusia by a treacherous evil sorceress ("High School High's" Tia Carrere, who truly seems to enjoy being bad). So Kull sets off on an ocean voyage with his lady love ("Legend of the Fall's" Karina Lombard, who here proves enchanting) and a loyal fighting companion (a dignified Litefoot, last seen in "The Indian in the Cupboard") to find a supernatural power that will destroy the fiend and restore peace to his land.

Loaded with brawny action, mysterious locales, hair-breadth escapes and anachronistic tongue-in-cheek humor, this is one lusty adventure fantasy that does not rely on computer effects. Even the suggestions of nudity, sexuality and violence are handled with creative discretion. Colorful turns by Roy Brocksmith as an eccentric king's adviser and Harvey Fierstein ("Independence Day") as an old friend of Kull's who turns traitor further the film's myriad delights.

The brisk pace and imaginative visual atmosphere created by debut feature director John Nicolella (TV's "Nash Bridges"), aided by Benjamin Fernandez's witty production design and Rodney Charters' lavish Panavision photography, help the silly fun to stay on its feet. Only those without a sense of wonder or appreciation of legendary nonsense should avoid crossing into this kingdom.—*Dale Winogura*

EXCESS BAGGAGE ★★★

Starring Alicia Silverstone, Benicio Del Toro and Christopher Walken. Directed by Marco Brambilla. Written by Max D. Adams and Dick Clement & Ian La Frenais. Produced by Bill Borden and Carolyn Kessler. A Columbia release. Action/drama. Rated PG-13 for violence, drinking and sex-related dialogue. Running time: 101 min.

"Excess Baggage," the first film from the First Kiss production company of Alicia Silverstone (last seen in "Batman & Robin"), is packed with a clever premise and interesting characters played by fabulous actors, not to mention pleasantly quirky bits and an overall good feeling. So why—despite the great packing job—is the trip itself so oddly ill-focused, unfulfilling and ultimately nowhere-bound?

Silverstone stars as poor little rich girl Emily, who, in a desperately misguided attempt to win her shady businessman father's love, stages her own kidnapping. But her well-planned rescue and hoped-for tearful reconciliation with dear papa runs afoul when a bizarre, professional car thief, Vincent ("The Usual Suspects'" Benicio Del Toro), steals her car with a bound-and-gagged Emily hiding in the trunk. Of course, the two initially dislike each other, but the distinct trouble they both find themselves in leads them to, of course, bond.

Silverstone proves a savvy selector of very interesting material and she does good business here, finding and playing a teenage character who is both awkwardly bold and childishly capable, although her trademark pout is becoming quite tired. Del Toro is a wonder to behold as the hand-gesturing, simple-minded, in-way-over-his-head, well-meaning car thief. And any movie that casts the creative Christopher Walken ("Last Man Standing") as a caring, albeit gun-toting, father figure is worth three stars on that action alone.

Despite the cast's obvious charm, though, the script promises a film that never materializes. Payoffs for setups never appear and the movie stays on the surface, never delving deep enough into the heart of the matter to ever matter. The filmmakers have the right idea but the wrong execution. Director Marco Brambilla ("Demoli-

tion Man") lacks the point of view necessary to invest the film with those ever-important, but always difficult, emotional stakes. Still, culpability for this charming failure is difficult to lay, particularly on a film that clearly screams out to be a low-budget, independent effort and yet has a studio stamp all over it. Regardless, Silverstone should pack her bags again because, at the tender age of 20, she's responsible for the most frustrating and intriguing film to come out of Sony all year.—*Susan Lambert*

HOODLUM ★1/2

Starring Laurence Fishburne, Tim Roth, Andy Garcia, Vanessa Williams and Cicely Tyson. Directed by Bill Duke. Written by Chris Brancato. Produced by Frank Mancuso Jr. A UA release. Drama. Rated R for graphic gangster violence, strong language, a scene of sexuality and some nudity. Running time: 134 min.

Filmmakers love gangsters, and none with more affection than those legendary Depression-era dukes of debauchery Lucky Luciano, Dutch Schultz, Bugsy Siegel and Meyer Lansky. Unfortunately, such efforts as "Bugsy," "The Cotton Club," "Mobsters" and "Billy Bathgate" have so overexposed the characters and their milieu that separating truth from myth might well be a long-lost cause. All of that helps explain why the makers of "Hoodlum" chose to shift their focus onto Harlem's own Ellsworth "Bumpy" Johnson, a lesser-known, though no less instrumental, figure of the era. Laurence Fishburne's Johnson does indeed cut a compelling figure, but overlong and lackluster writing and uninspired direction relegate "Hoodlum" to the bottom rung of American gangster epics.

Essentially a flat-out gang warfare picture with Johnson and Schultz (Tim Roth) battling for control of the lucrative Harlem numbers racket, "Hoodlum" is an ambitious film that seeks to educate as much as entertain, weaving broad socio-political statements among intermittent gunplay. But the messages are as simplistic as the film's history is revisionist, painting Johnson as a hometown hero of the Robin Hood variety, despite proclamations by friends and associates to the contrary.

Despite the pitfalls of Chris Brancato's convention-laden script, most of the performers manage to extract relatively persuasive portrayals, with Chi McBride a noteworthy standout as Johnson's cousin Illinois Gordon. Roth's campy, slobbish take on Schultz, on the other hand, ranges from amusing to embarrassing, while Vanessa Williams is wasted in a pointless romantic subplot.

Having successfully dealt with similar material on "A Rage in Harlem," it's surprising that director Bill Duke fails to ignite even the flavor of the period. Instead, Duke's direction is frustratingly forced, relying on booming Elmer Bernstein crescendos and sweeping crane shots to inject emotion where there is none.

Even hoodlums deserve better.—*Wade Major*

STEEL ★★1/2

Starring Shaquille O'Neal, Annabeth Gish, Richard Roundtree and Judd Nelson. Directed and written by Kenneth Johnson. Produced by Quincy Jones, David Salzman and Joel Simon. A Warner Bros. release. Action. Rated PG-13 for some superhero action violence. Running time: 105 min.

With the help of a couple of friends, an ex-military metallurgist, John Henry Irons ("Kazaam's" Shaquille O'Neal), sets out to clean up his neighborhood and stop the sale of high-tech weapons to terrorists. Armed with a tricked-out sledgehammer and bulletproof armor, Irons is about to let the crime element know that Los Angeles is now under the protection of Steel.

This action-filled special effects-induced movie is loosely based on a character from a DC Comics Superman story. Steel is a combination of Robocop and Meteor Man. Child audiences are given a hero who blunders enough to show that he is human while appearing to be strong enough to get the job done with comic-book armaments. As the smoke clears, though, this film closely resembles an elaborate pilot for a possible TV series, meaning that's it's just the young ones, especially males, who'll enjoy this film.—*Dwayne E. Leslie*

Review Digest

Story-type key: (Ac) Action; (Ad) Adventure; (An) Animated; (C) Comedy; (D) Drama; (Doc) Documentary; (F) Fantasy; (Hor) Horror; (M) Musical; (My) Mystery; (R) Romance; (Sat) Satire; (SF) Science Fiction; (Sus) Suspense; (Th) Thriller; (W) Western.

TITLE/MPAA DISTRIBUTOR 5 Excellent 4 Very Good 3 Good 2 Fair 1 Poor	RUN TIME	GENRE	REVIEWED IN ISSUE	BOXOFFICE VARIETY	H. REPORTER	L.A. TIMES	N.Y. TIMES	USA TODAY	AVERAGE	TOTAL BOXOFFICE $*	
Air Bud **PG** (BV)	*98*	C	10-97	3	3	3	3	2	2	2.8	21 6
Air Force One **R** (Col)	*120*	Ac	9-97	3	3	4	4	2		3.2	163.2
Austin Powers **PG-13** (NL)	*89*	C	7-97	3	3	4	2	3	3	3.0	53.8
Batman & Robin **PG-13** (WB)	*124*	AcAd	8-97	2	3	3	2	2	3	2.5	107.2
Career Girls (Oct)	*91*	C D	8-97	5	3	4	3	3		3.6	2.1
Chasing Amy (Mir)	*105*	D	4-97	3	3	4	4	3	3	3.3	11.8
Con Air **R** (BV)	*115*	Ac	8-97	2	3	3	2	2	2	2.3	100.7
Conspiracy Theory **R** (WB)	*134*	Th	10-97	3	2	4	2	2	4	2.8	70.7
Contact **PG** (WB)	*150*	SF D	9-97	3	3	2	3	3	3	2.8	97.1
Cop Land **R** (Mir)		D	9-97	3	3	3		3	4	3.2	42.3
Different For Girls (Fir)	*97*	D	3-97	2		3		3		2.7	0.1
Disappearance of Garcia Lorca **R** (SC)	*108*	D	9-97	2		2	2			2.0	0.1
The End of Violence (MGM)	*123*	D	8-97	3	3		3	4	2	3.0	0.1
Event Horizon **R** (Par)	*96*	Hor	10-97	2	2	2	2	2	3	2.2	25.7
Excess Baggage **PG-13** (Col)	*101*	Ac D	11-97	3	2	2	2			2.3	12.5
Face/Off **R** (Par)	*139*	Ac	8-97	4	3	4	4	4		3.8	110.0
Fifth Element **PG-13** (Col)	*125*	SF	7-97	3	2	2	3	2	2	2.3	63.4
Fire Down Below **R** (WB)	*99*	Ac	11-97	3	3	3	3	3		3.0	11.3
The Full Monty (FS)	*90*	C	4-97	4	4	3	3	4		3.6	6.0
G.I. Jane **R** (BV)	*125*	D	9-97	3	4	2	2	3	2	2.7	38.9
The Game **R** (Pol)	*128*	Th	11-97	3	3	4		2	4	3.2	14.3
George of the Jungle **PG** (BV)		C	8-97	2	3	4	3	3		3.0	98.6
Gone Fishin' **PG** (BV)	*94*	C	8-97	1	1	1	2			1.3	19.7
Good Burger **PG** (Par)	*95*	C	9-97	3	4	3	3	3		3.2	22.3
Hercules **G** (BV)		Ani	8-97	3	4	4	4	4	4	3.8	93.0
Hoodlum **R** (UA)	*134*	D	11-97	2	3	3				2.7	19.8
How to Be A Player **R** (Gra)		C	9-97	2	1	2	2	1		1.6	13.4
In the Company of Men (All)	*93*	D	4-97	2			2	4		2.7	2.2
Kiss Me Guido **R** (Par)	*90*	C	9-97	3		3	3	3		3.0	1.7
Kull the Conqueror **PG-13** (Uni)	*96*	Adv	11-97	3	3	2	3	2		2.6	5.8
Leave It to Beaver **G** (Uni)	*87*	C	10-97	3	2		2	2		2.2	9.6
Liar Liar **PG-13** (Uni)	*86*	C	5-97	3	4	4	3	3	3	3.3	180.9
Lost World· Jurassic Park **PG-13** (Uni)	*129*	Adv	7-97	4	3	3	3	2	3	3.0	228.5
Masterminds **PG-13** (Tri)	*105*	Ac C	10-97	3	3	2		2	2	2.4	1.9
Men In Black **PG-13** (Col)	*96*	SFAc	8-97	3	4	3	4	4		3.6	239.4
Mimic **R** (Mir)		Hor	8-97	3	2			2	2	2.2	23.4
Money Talks **R** (NL)	*92*	Ac C	10-97	2	3	2	3	2	2	2.3	34.2
Mrs. Brown **PG** (Mir)	*103*	D	8-97	4	4		4	4	4	4.0	5.5
My Best Friend's Wedding **PG-13** (TS)	*107*	RC	8-97	3	3	4	3	3	3	3.2	121.1
Nothing To Lose **R** (BV)	*98*	C	9-97	3	3	3	2	2	3	2.7	42.9
Picture Perfect **PG-13** (Fox)	*102*	R C	9-97	2	2	2	3	2	3	2.3	30.3
Shall We Dance? **PG** (Mir)	*122*	C	5-97	3		4	3	3		3.2	6.5
She's So Lovely **R** (Mir)	*100*	D	8-97	2	3		2		2	2.2	6.4
A Smile Like Yours **R** (Par)	*93*	R C	9-97	2	1	2	3	2		2.0	3.2
Spawn **PG-13** (NL)	*95*	SFAc	9-97	3	2	2		1	2	2.0	52.9
Steel **PG-13** (WB)	*105*	Ac	11-97	3	2			2		2.3	1.7
Sunday (CFP)	*92*	D	7-97	4			3	3		3.3	0.2
Thrill Ride **G** (SC)	*38*	IMAX	9-97	2	2	2	3	3		2.4	0.7
Ulee's Gold (Ori)	*113*	D	4-97	4	4		4	4	4	4.0	8.4

** Total boxoffice, in millions, as of Sept. 16, 1997.*

NATIONAL NEWS

NEWS CORP. GETS NEW REGENCY

In September, News Corp.'s Fox Filmed Entertainment acquired an estimated $200 million stake in Arnon Milchan's New Regency Prods., which has been under Warner Bros.' wing for the last six years. When talks between New Regency and Warner Bros. broke down last July over Time Warner refusing to take a larger equity stake in Milchan's expanded entertainment company, New Regency went looking for a new home. New Regency is just the latest of significant production companies recently acquired by Fox, who also brought over producer Arnold Kopelson from Warner Bros.

New Regency has produced 31 films over the past five years, including "L.A. Confidential," "Devil's Advocate" and "Goodbye, Lover." Other Warner Bros./New Regency productions include "A Time to Kill," "The Client," "Free Willy" and "Natural Born Killers." There are still approximately 10 projects coming down the pipeline that the production company and Warner Bros. will co-own along with any sequels to previous films. New Regency will officially relocate to the Fox lot on June 1, 1998. Under the new agreement, Fox Filmed Entertainment will distribute all New Regency product worldwide, including theatrical, video, licensing, merchandising and domestic television, although international television is excluded.

New Regency president and CEO David Matalon can now turn his attention to filling the void left when chairman and CEO Michael Nathanson left this past February to become president of MGM Pictures. Matalon has said he would not bring in a new CEO but that the company would instead hire a president of production.

UNIVERSAL SHARES THE COST

Universal Pictures looks like it's about to make good on its announcement this May that it hoped to co-finance future pictures. In what would be the first such arrangement for a formalized package of pictures, the studio is in deep negotiations on a co-financing deal with Gary Levinsohn and Mark Gordon's Mutual Film Co. The deal reportedly involves five pictures valued at a total of $350 million. Insiders say the deal could include upcoming films "Age of Aquarius" from filmmaker Phil Alden Robinson to star Harrison Ford; the sci-fic thriller "Virus"; and "Black Dog," an action film for Kevin Sorbo.

Universal has had success with co-financing deals on single pictures, such as "12 Monkeys," "The Relic" and "Hard Rain."

Mutual, which used to be known as Cloud Nine Entertainment, has four overseas partners: England's BBC, Japan's Toho-Towa/Maubeni, Germany's TeleMunchen and France's UGC. As part of the agreement, the partners would acquire the foreign rights for their own territories.

VOGEL TAKES ON HOLLYWOOD

David Vogel, who has presided over Walt Disney Pictures for the past four years, has added the title of president of the revived Hollywood Pictures. Under the new arrangement, Vogel and the Walt Disney staff will produce up to four adult-targeted films per year for distribution under the Hollywood Pictures banner, while still producing six family films under the Disney label each year.

Walt Disney Studios in 1996 said it was closing Hollywood Pictures as a development and production entity. The banner was kept open to distribute Simpson/Bruckheimer and Scott Free films. Hollywood Pictures will now also be used to distribute films produced by Walt Disney Pictures that aren't appropriate for release under that nameplate.

To begin production shortly and fall under this new arrangement is "A Small Miracle" (based on John Irving's novel, "A Prayer for Owen Meany"), from writer/director Mark Steven Johnson (writer for "Grumpy Old Men") and producers Roger Birnbaum, Laurence Mark and John Baldecchi. Vogel also signed his first exclusive deal for Hollywood Pictures with Johnson and producer Gary Foster ("Tin Cup") and their production company, Horseshoe Bay.

EAST VS. WEST: THE WGA WAR

After a bitter debate, the Writers Guild of America West voted to ratify a new film and television contract in mid-September. Late that month, the 2,435-member East Coast unit shouted "cut," with a resounding 490 votes against the pact and only 99 in favor.

The three-year pact had won approval by only 375 votes from the WGA's much-larger West Coast unit. In one of the highest turnouts in history, 34 percent of the WGA West's 7,913 members cast ballots, with 1,530 in favor of ratification and 1,155 opposed. The final combined tally thus stands at 1,645 con and 1,629 pro. TV/film producers and the WGA have seven months to reach an agreement (the guild's current contract expires May 2, 1998), but some members believe that a strike is not only possible but likely.

Detractors of the new contract say the agreement does not address important foreign and cable residuals and the possessory credit issue and threatens to decimate the guild's health fund. Daniel Petrie Jr., who has been voted in as guild president and is a fierce advocate of the new contract, claims the provisions of the pact are strong enough; he is one voice forecasting a strike. Writer Petrie ("Beverly Hills Cop") has said his first goal is to reunify the guild, which has been sorely split over the contract issue. His goal might be difficult to achieve: The president of the WGA East and five former presidents have all come out against the contract.

Many guild members are unhappy with WGA West executive director and chief negotiator Brian Walton. WGA West board member Larry Gelbart and former WGA West president Frank Pierson said Walton sold out the writers on the terms and then misused his power to mail postcards, using guild funds, that told members to ratify the contract. But former WGA West president George Kirgo defends Walton, who has served as executive director for 12 years, a term that includes the 1988 writers' strike.

THE LION'S LOST FIVE YEARS

In preparation for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Inc.'s long-anticipated initial public offering, the corporation filed a $250 million stock offering prospectus with the Securities and Exchange Commission that showed the studio has lost $1.7 billion over the past five years. MGM has not shown an operating profit since 1988, the filing says, and the studio doesn't expect to show one "for at least several years."

The French government agency, Consortium de Realisation (CDR), sold the studio last year to Kirk Kerkorian, Australia's Seven Network and MGM management led by chairman Frank Mancuso. Despite the perception that Kerkorian and Seven were equal partners on the deal, the prospectus shows Kerkorian holds control over MGM. Kerkorian, who first purchased MGM in 1969, proceeded to sell off many assets and then sold the studio to Italian financier Giancarlo Parretti in 1990, holds 68 percent of the MGM stock in the aftermath of the reacquisition. But, according to the filing, Kerkorian, Seven and Mancuso have a joint voting arrangement that restricts Kerkorian's ability to act alone. The filing did not reveal how many shares will be sold and at what price, but MGM hopes to raise a net amount of $232 million from the offering and use that money to repay existing debt, which stands at more than $800 million.

The prospectus outlines MGM's future production plans and financial strategy. It plans to produce and distribute 10-12 pictures per year and release an additional four to six specialty films through Goldwyn, which was acquired with Orion Pictures in July. Additionally, the filing says MGM, unlike many other studios, does not plan to sign many first-look deals with producers and will make fewer large-budget event pictures than other major studios. MGM also does not plan to pre-sell foreign rights to most of its movies.

The filing showed annual losses ranging from $241 million in 1992 to $345 million in 1993. In 1996, despite such successes as "Leaving Las Vegas," "The Birdcage" and "Goldeneye," MGM posted a $90.5 million loss. In the first half of this year, MGM released only three new features domestically, compared with 12 films released in the same period for 1996. MGM's underwriters, Merrill Lynch and J.P. Morgan, plan to take the offering to the market in late October. Some Wall Street insiders say the brand name alone will sell, but others say investors are likely to be wary, due to the financial profile.

MO' MIRAMAX SHUFFLE

Miramax Films co-chairmen Harvey and Bob Weinstein have promoted Cary Granat to president of Dimension Films, the genre banner started up four years ago. Granat, who was previously head of production for Dimension, will continue to report to Bob Weinstein and oversee all films released under the Dimension label.

Granat is currently overseeing such upcoming Dimension projects as "Senseless," a comedy directed by Penelope Spheeris, and both a prequel and sequel to "From Dusk Till Dawn." Dimension also bought the sequel and remake rights to "Rambo" and "Total Recall." Before joining Miramax, Granat served as director of development at Universal Pictures.

TOTAL THEATER DESIGN

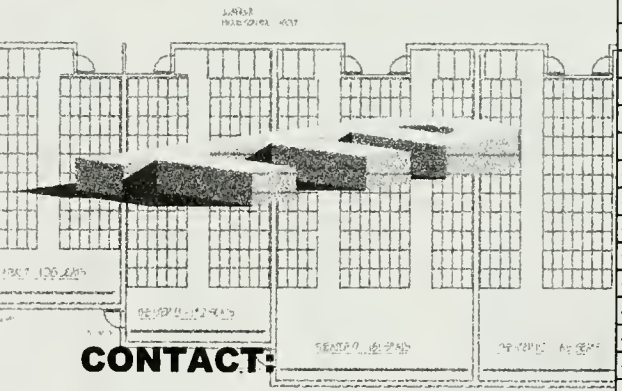
ARCHITECTS and ENGINEERS

EVERYTHING FROM THE GROUND UP

a FULL SERVICE organization for the design & construction of motion picture theaters

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- Smooth flowing traffic patterns
- High quality acoustic separations
- Sales producing concession areas
- Stadium seating design alternatives
- All other features designed for maximum PROFIT potential



PROJECT TYPES

- Additions
- Alterations
- Renovations
- New buildings
- Historic preservation
- Handicap accessibility
- Multi-screen conversions
- Infill buildings (malls etc.)

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SERVICES

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✓	Soils and materials testing
✓	Federal ADA guidelines analyses
✓	Preliminary design studies
✓	Architectural design
✓	Architectural construction documents
✓	Structural design and engineering
✓	HVAC design and engineering
✓	Electric design and engineering
✓	Plumbing design and engineering
✓	Fire protection design & engineering
✓	Interior design
✓	Projection systems
✓	Sound systems
✓	Screens and masking
✓	Seating design
✓	Concession stands and eqiupment
✓	Computerized ticket sales
✓	Administration of bidding
✓	Contractor negotiations
✓	Project administration
✓	Construction management
✓	Management seminars

LICENSED THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES



EXHIBITION BRIEFINGS

AMC SELLS 17 MEGAPLEXES, LEASES THEM BACK

In a strategy to generate income to pay off debt and build more theatres, AMC Entertainment Inc. is selling 17 of its largest megaplexes for a total of $384 million, and then leasing them back. The buyer is Entertainment Properties Trust, a publicly traded real estate trust currently being formed. The trust will lease the theatres back to AMC immediately after the purchase, so operations will remain the same, without interruption. Among the theatres involved in the sale are the Grand 24 in Dallas and the Ontario Mills 30-plex, both of which grabbed headlines for being the largest of their size in North America at the time of their openings.

GO WESTWOOD, YOUNG MANN

Mann Theatres, which operates all the theatres in L.A.'s trendy Westwood Village, is close to closing a deal with Regent Properties to build a multiplex in the Beverly Hills-based developer's planned retail center to be located in the northwest end of Westwood Village. Regent and Mann recently teamed on the Glendale Marketplace in Glendale, Calif., due to open in March 1998, in which Mann will have a four-plex. Mann is also in talks to build a multiplex in developer Ira Smedra's proposed Westwood Village complex, to the consternation of local residents, who cite parking and overcrowding concerns as the reasons for their opposition to the project. A Westwood Village mandate restricts the total number of movie theatre seats to 6,030; Mann will be closing some of its other theatres in the area to comply with this regulation.

DICKINSON REACHES SUMMIT

The Lee's Summit City Council has approved plans for Dickinson Theatres to build a 16-screen theatre and entertainment center in Lee's Summit, Mo., according to Wood Dickinson, president and CEO of Dickinson Operating Co. The 52,000-square-foot center will feature a centrally located computerized boxoffice and a variety of auditorium sizes ranging from 120 to 450 seats, for a total of 3,000 seats. All auditoriums will have Dickinson's RockerStadium seating, as well as DTS, Dolby SR-D and Sony SDDS digital stereo systems and Lucasfilm's THX sound system.

IMAX ANNOUNCES 20-PICTURE PRODUCTION SLATE

Toronto-based Imax Corp., provider of large-format film technology and titles, has announced a staggering slate of 20 films the company will be producing over the next several years. In addition to the high-profile projects the company has recently embarked upon, such as the "Mission to Mir" NASA documentary and the collaboration with Paramount on a 3-D "Star Trek" short, coming up for Imax will be such films as "The Imax Nutcracker," "Africa's Elephant Kingdom," "T. Rex: Back to the Cretaceous," "Extreme" (about extreme sports), and "Island of the Sharks." Some of Imax's most successful titles have been the Val Kilmer starrer "Wings of Courage" and "Across the Sea of Time," which explores the fourth dimension in the third dimension. Please see **Boxoffice**'s feature story, "The Big Time," on page 54 for an in-depth look at Imax.

SHOWMANDISER PROMOTION OF THE MONTH



For "shear" creativity, you can't top Michigan's Star Gratiot Theatre promotions manager Bill McDaniel. Also featured in our September Showmandiser, McDaniel is back in our pages for his razor-sharp promotion of "G.I. Jane" that generated a lot of buzz. Buzz cuts, that is. McDaniel offered six-month VIP passes to any woman who would volunteer to have her head shaved a la "Jane" star Demi Moore in the Star Gratiot's lobby on the night of the movie's opening. Five bold women soon became five bald women as they dared to doff their hair, with the proceedings aired live on local FM dance station WDRQ. The event became a "media circus," says McDaniel, with "wall-to-wall people gawking at the shavees," as well as all four TV networks in the Detroit area in attendance to tape the event for their 10 and 11 o'clock news. As a showman, it's obvious that Bill McDaniel is simply a cut above the rest.

REGAL BUYS 78 R/C SCREENS

Continuing the rapid expansion of its theatrical kingdom, Regal Cinemas has announced the signing of a definitive asset purchase agreement with R/C Theatres for the purchase of 10 theatres with 78 screens in Virginia. "The concentration of these theatres in Virginia complements our 1995 acquisition of 76 screens in the state from Neighborhood Entertainment Inc.," said Regal president and CEO Mike Campbell. Among the chains Regal has most recently acquired are Cobb Theatres, Magic Cinemas and Krikorian Premiere Theatres. Regal, one of the country's fastest-growing theatre chains, currently has 2,082 screens in operation at 235 locations, ranking it as the third-largest theatre circuit in North America.

PMG TEAMS WITH APPLAUSE

In-theatre promotional product distributor Promotional Management Group (PMG) has entered into an agreement with toy merchandiser Applause Inc. Under the joint venture, the two companies will provide theatres with movie-themed toy premiums that will be exclusive to the exhibition market. PMG's current product line includes movie graphic collectible drinking cups, popcorn bags, popcorn tubs and kids' trays.

MEET USL IN SAN LUIS...

USL, Inc. (formerly Ultra*Stereo Labs) is relocating its corporate headquarters to San Luis Obispo, Calif. The new locale includes larger manufacturing and warehousing facilities and an enhanced R&D lab. USL engineers sound equipment for the motion picture industry, and was the recipient of the International Theatre Equipment Association's Manufacturer of the Year Award in 1991 and 1996.

ON THE MOVE

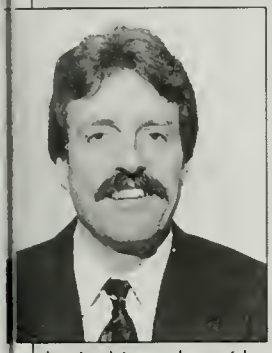
Hoyts Cinemas Ltd. announces the promotion of **Harold Blank,** formerly senior VP, real estate, to managing director of the new Hoyts Latin America office...The **THX division** of **Lucasfilm Ltd.** has promoted **Pascal Sijen** to technical services supervisor for the THX Theatre Program...**Alan Davy** has been appointed to the post of senior VP and head film buyer at **Mann Theatres**. He was previously VP of film at the company...Mann's senior VP of film and marketing **Denise Gurin** is moving to **Regal Cinemas,** where she'll take the title of VP of film and head film buyer...**Dolby Laboratories** has hired **Bobby Pinkston** as vice president, exhibitor relations. Pinkston was previously VP, projection and sound with UATC...**Mark Mayfield** has moved from director of cinema marketing for JBL to director of cinema products for **Eastern Acoustic Works** (EAW).

SHOWMINDER CALENDAR

Remember to save the following dates: **CineAsia,** Dec. 3-5, Singapore International Convention and Exhibition Centre. Call 212-246-6460...**ShoWest,** March 9-12, 1998, Bally's, Las Vegas, Nev. Call 310-657-7724 ...**ShowCanada,** May 10-14, Victoria, B.C. Call 416-969-7057...**Cinema Expo,** June 15-19, 1998, Amsterdam. Call 212-246-6460 ...**Australian Movie Convention,** Aug. 18-22, Gold Coast. Call 011-617-33-56-5671...**NAC Expo,** Sept. 15-18, Orlando. Call 312-236-3858.

Q&A: THE LOEW-DOWN ON LOEWS

With their five-year contract set to expire Dec. 1, Loews co-chairs Jim and Barrie Lawson Loeks have decided not to renew the agreement, opting instead to focus their attentions on the circuit they founded, the Michigan-based Loeks-Star. Loeks-Star, which currently has 118 screens, all in Michigan, is owned and operated by the Loeks in a joint venture with Loews parent Sony, though the circuit retains its separate identity. Expansion plans for Loeks-Star call for nearly doubling the circuit's size, requiring the Loeks' full-time energies to be devoted to its development. Loews president Travis Reid lauds the contributions of the Loeks and tells BOXOFFICE of Loews' plans to expand upon the innovations they implemented during their tenure.



BOXOFFICE: How will your responsibilities change now that the Loeks have stepped down as co-chairs?

TRAVIS REID: I probably won't know until we've done it for a while exactly how different it is. Theatre design has always been something that Jim and Barrie, particularly Jim, have been really strong in. There's some basic things about [the theatres Jim designed] that lend themselves toward efficient operation in customer service. For instance, most of the buildings have entrances front and back, of basically equal size. That's just a small, basic thing that right off the bat gets the customer into your building easier. And then Jim's adaptation of [the previous prototype] design when we went to the stadium seating and the larger screen counts, the bigger buildings, has been greatly successful for us in our newer theatres. That's one area that I'll really be needing to step up my own involvement. We've worked very much as a team, but everybody had their strengths. And we're trying to fill the gaps.

BOXOFFICE: What were the Loeks' other innovations?

REID: The two major areas that changed under the Loeks are the physical buildings that we were constructing—they've gotten much larger, much more state-of-the-art, much more operation- and customer-friendly—and then the customer service programs that were installed. And we're absolutely committed to retaining those, and we'll hopefully continue to find innovative ways to even expand upon them.

BOXOFFICE: Are there some new innovations that you have in mind to improve the theatregoing experience?

REID: We are all working together right now on a new prototype theatre. And within that prototype we want to continue to expand our food services. Perhaps form some strategic alliances with other compatible businesses—restaurants, game companies, book stores, other retail tenants that we think add to a theatre environment.

BOXOFFICE: What is the status of the merger with Cineplex?

REID: I can only tell you that it's still in negotiations. *[The deal was subsequently announced Sept. 30; see our next issue for coverage—Ed.]*

BOXOFFICE: Can you talk about some of the challenges that would come with running the world's largest theatre circuit?

REID: We'd have a lot more territory to become conversant with, a lot more buildings to evaluate and make sure that we feel that we're managing them properly, keeping them as up to date as we can. More territory to be aggressive regarding our expansion. I think there are a lot of challenges to blend the two philosophies as efficiently as we can and keep what each company is doing best and blend it.

BOXOFFICE: Where is exhibition headed in the future?

REID: We're into the era where you need to differentiate yourself. And the best forms of differentiation in most markets are to make sure that you've got the largest number of screens possible to be able to accommodate a wide variety of both product type and showtimes. Premium presentation—you need to provide stadium seating, very large screens, the best sound available, and extraordinary customer service.

BOXOFFICE: What is most exciting to you about exhibition?

REID: It's the rapid growth curve that we're all in. The fact that we've discovered the exponential attendance that you get from these megacomplexes has really changed the expansion plan to where you can look at a market differently. A market that two years ago you would have considered to be fully built out now looks like an opportunity, if it's really filled with less-than-superior facilities. The most exciting thing right now is the expansion opportunities.—***Christine James***



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EUROVIEWS

European News Notes *by Melissa Morrison*

PIRATES OF THE VOLGA

MOSCOW—The Russian government appears to be succeeding in reining in piracy. And Hollywood, whose products are the prime targets for unauthorized use in Russia, seems satisfied with the success. Major studios sent representatives to the Moscow Film Festival in July, ending a six-year boycott prompted by an unofficial television broadcast of "Die Hard 2."

Meanwhile, Hollywood's crusader in Washington, Motion Picture Association head Jack Valenti, put his stamp of approval on Russian efforts after visiting with Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin during the festival. The meeting was followed by Chernomyrdin's announcement of the establishment of a Foreign Ministry department aimed specifically at diminishing piracy of films, videos and television programs. The new department will accelerate Russia's strategy to combat piracy, such as the strengthening of copyright laws.

Following the collapse of communism in 1989, Western products flooded a market that didn't have the legal and economic mechanisms in place to regulate it. The thirst for previously forbidden films and the country's massive size (300 million people) quickly made Russia a hotbed of piracy. Video pirates were estimated to control 99 percent of the market, and it was not uncommon for a video release to follow a theatrical release by mere days, causing legitimate boxoffice to suffer. New laws as well as the establishment last autumn of Moscow's first multiplex, the Kodak Kino Mir, are credited with cutting into pirates' share and improving admissions.

TAX CUTS FOR LOW BUDGETS

LONDON—Already experiencing a high, the British film industry was further boosted by the new Labour government's announcement of tax incentives for filmmakers and the creation of a culture task force. The tax incentives, which were announced in July, are estimated to be worth a total of $50 million annually. They will allow films with budgets less than $25 million to take a 100 percent write-off on their production and acquisition costs. The films must also meet requirements set under the 1985 Films Act, which define what constitutes a "British" movie. As a result, the break is expected to encourage more films by British filmmakers to be shot on British soil rather than abroad. The industry had long sought the changes, which are modeled on the tax laws of other European countries. The changes come as U.K. production is exceptionally strong, with 53 films made in the first half of the year, an eight percent increase over the same period last year, as well as vigorous activity by American productions filming in Britain.

The government also introduced a task force of eight members from creative industries, including fashion, publishing and music. The film sector is represented by Sir David Puttnam, filmmaker and former Hollywood studio head; and Richard Branson, the man behind the Virgin Group, owner of Virgin cinemas and a partner in the Film Co., one of the country's innovative new studio franchises. The panel will discuss ways to improve the financial prospects of the country's entertainment and leisure industries.

ANTONIA'S WHINE

AMSTERDAM—Shamed by the dismal local boxoffice for 1996 Oscar winner "Antonia's Line," a home-grown film, the Dutch government is initiating a series of supports for the local film industry. Among them is an 18 percent increase in annual funding for production to $16.8 million; the establishment of a new cultural bureau that will coordinate private funds with needy projects; and tax breaks for private investors through the creation of new mutual funds. "Antonio's Line," despite the international attention it got when it won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Film, was seen by only 120,000 people in the Netherlands.

Ironically, the Dutch cultural representative to the European Union was among those who rejected plans for a subsidy fund for film production that would have allotted $67.7 million to pan-European productions. The Dutch rep joined the German and Swedish representatives in saying that such a fund would not make a significant difference. The project was intended to be a counterpart to the European Union's MEDIA program—intended to promote European filmmaking—which funds training for film-industry personnel and such elements as a film's distribution and screening. MEDIA's latest project is a just-announced $4 million in loans to 135 independent production companies.

KIELBASA AND A COKE, PLEASE

POZNAN, POLAND—As the multiplex boom continues to reverberate across Eastern Europe, United Cinemas International has announced it will invest $100 million to build 10 multiplexes across Poland by 1999, beginning with a high-tech eight-screener in Poznan. It will be the country's first large multiplex (eight screens or more), although the four-screen Kino Femina opened in Warsaw in July 1996 to encouraging boxoffice. The Poznan site will be built on 54,000 square feet and will feature up-to-the-minute sound and visual technology, parking, stadium seating and wheelchair accessibility.

UCI, a joint venture between Universal and Paramount, will collaborate with the Polish media group ITI in the building spree, which UCI Vice President Ray Smith expects will dramatically up admissions in Poland from 24 million in 1995 to 60 million by the year 2000. "Poland is a prime growth market and is still massively underdeveloped," he said, citing the nation's average of one screen per 50,000 people. "With a population of 38 million, the possibilities for UCI in Poland are vast. The experience we gain in Poland will prove invaluable to UCI, as we move into other Eastern European countries over the coming years."

Other sites targeted for cinemas include Warsaw, Gdansk and Krakow. UCI's Polish venture follows the company's announced plans to open 20 sites in Germany over the next 16 months, as well as a total of 35 sites in Brazil and Japan.

Next door in the Czech Republic, the company that built that country's first multiplex announced plans for three more. The Bonton media group's eight-screen Galaxie cinema (See BOXOFFICE story, July 1996) on the outskirts of Prague in spring 1996 is credited with one-third of Prague's current admissions. Bonton is planning a second multiplex in the Czech capital, as well as two regional ones.

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PACIFIC OVERTURES

WRAP-UP FROM DOWN UNDER *by Susan Lambert*

GOLD COAST—The 1997 Australian Movie Convention, which ran August 12-16, was by all accounts considered a great success. Organized by the Motion Picture Exhibitors Association of Queensland (MPEAQ), this year's AMC saw a record number of attendees—800—and trade booths—85—making it the largest industry gathering in Australia. Highlights of the convention included screenings of 20th Century Fox International's "The Full Monty" and United International Pictures' (UIP) presentation of "The Peacemaker," the Hoyts-sponsored awards night, Columbia/TriStar International's "My Best Friend's Wedding" wedding-style luncheon reception, and the final evening's party, "Night at the Big Top," sponsored by Coca-Cola.

Eight films screened over the course of the convention, including a still-being-completed "The Borrowers" (Polygram Filmed Entertainment International), "Mimic" (REP Distribution), "Ulee's Gold" (New Vision), Columbia/TriStar's "My Best Friend's Wedding," Roadshow Films' "Air Force One" and Dendy Films' "Doing Time for Patsy Cline." Fox screened an eight-minute trailer for "Titanic" that left many exhibitors excited about the upcoming film. The buzz also seemed good for an extended sequence from UIP's next James Bond film, "Tomorrow Never Dies."



"WEDDING" PARTY: *Directors P.J. Hogan ("My Best Friend's Wedding") and Jocelyn Moorhouse ("A Thousand Acres") at Columbia/TriStar's lunch reception.*

At the awards night, Ronin Films' "Shine" took home the Australian Film of the Year Award and the movie's star, Geoffrey Rush, was named Australian Star of the Year. Australian Boxoffice Achievement Awards were handed out for films that broke the AUS$10 million (US$7.5 million) mark. Fox's "Independence Day," which took in almost AUS$30 million ($22.2 million), also won the gold award for highest-grossing film. In accepting the honor, Fox International president Jim Gianopolus promised that, if "The Full Monty" crossed the AUS$10 million mark by next year's show, he'd accept the award while performing the "full monty."

Boxoffice Achievement Awards also went to UIP for "The Nutty Professor," "The First Wives Club," "Liar Liar" and "The Lost World: Jurassic Park"; Buena Vista International (BVI) for "The Rock," "Ransom" and "101 Dalmatians"; Roadshow for Miramax's "The English Patient"; Polygram for "Bean"; Warner Bros. International for "Space Jam" and "Batman and Robin"; and Columbia/TriStar for "Jerry Maguire."

Kodak won the National Film and Sound Archive's Ken G. Hall Award for its contribution to the preservation of Australian film.

Greater Union's theatre at Canberra captured first place in the marketing awards for its promotion of Roadshow's "The Castle." Second place also went to a Greater Union theatre, this at Brisbane, for its "Paradise Road" campaign. And third place went to Valhalla Theatre in Sydney for "Rats in the Ranks."

The show's main seminar—"Is Hollywood Paying Lip Service to International Distribution?"—prompted lively discussion among the keynote speakers, who included Anthony Marcoly, BVI's vice president of distribution; Scott Neeson, Fox executive vice president of international marketing; and Polygram president Stewart Till.

The London-based Till said the major studios remain preoccupied with the domestic market. "Their brains say, 'Look international,'" Till said, "but their heads and 70 years of experience say, 'Just worry about the U.S. and let the rest of the world worry about itself.'" Fox's Neeson, in stressing how important international boxoffice is to the bottom line in Hollywood, said, "International is helping to pay the bills. For that, Hollywood will always pay attention."

Exhibitors expressed complaints about American films being first released in the United States and the lack of subsequent star support for overseas releases. But Neeson said he believes there is a valuable "downflow" of international publicity based on the domestic openings, and BVI's Marcoly noted it was often difficult to persuade major stars to support offshore releases because of their hectic and changing schedules. Marcoly also said that BVI sees "great potential for local co-productions." As evidence, he mentioned the company's first German co-production, "Knockin' on Heaven's Door," and "Ashes From Paradise," an Argentinean co-production. Polygram's Till warned that it was bad business to see the American trend of wider releases and skyrocketing marketing costs being played out on an international front. "If we cut costs by 50 percent," Till said, "that doesn't mean fewer customers would come to the cinemas. But it would certainly improve profitability."

Another forum—entitled "Are Australian Films Becoming More Commercial?"—discussed the growing commercial potential and history of the Australian film industry. Panelist Kim Williams, chief executive of Fox Studios Australia, called the current expanding production market "the most exciting commercial period of Australian cinema." Well-known Australian film critic Peter Thompson moderated the event, which also included P.J. Hogan, Aussie director of "My Best Friend's Wedding"; Tim White, chief executive of Sydney-based Fox/Icon Productions; Chris Kennedy, director of "Doing Time for Patsy Cline"; and Andrew Mackie, director and head of marketing for the Globe Film Co. Hogan and Fox/Icon's White discussed the release of Hogan's "Muriel's Wedding" on the heels of fellow Aussie Stephan Elliott's "The Adventures of Priscilla: Queen of the Desert," a double success that indicated Down Under audiences would be willing and able to support more than one Australian film at a time. Said White, "This is an industry that does have a commercial history and does have a long-established relationship—in that special way—between filmmaker and audience."

Fox Australia's Williams noted that the industry was beginning to develop a body of performers who have real star positioning offering "the kinds of promotional possibilities that are sorely needed for the industry." He mentioned Miranda Otto, Cate Blanchard, Russell Crowe, Geoffrey Rush and Toni Collette as the type of rising stars who give exhibitors of Australian films prominent selling points. Williams added that the industry was starting

DO YOU HAVE AN EXHIBITION-RELATED NEWS ITEM ABOUT THE ASIA-PACIFIC MARKET? E-MAIL SUSAN LAMBERT IN CARE OF boxoffice@earthlink.net

to see international companies (like Fox Studios) moving into the Australian marketplace that are dedicated to "developing a body of original Australian work for production in Australia intended for international audiences."

At the Thursday "independent" day, specialized film distributors announced the formation of the Australian Independent Distributors Association (AIDA). Richard Becker, managing director of the Becker Group, which owns REP and recently bought Dendy's arthouse distribution and theatre circuit, said the independent distributors had joined forces in order to have a stronger voice in the industry. By the end of the convention, 15 companies had joined the new trade group, including REP, Dendy, New Vision, Potential Films, Ronin, the Australian Film Institute, Reid and Puskar, Sharmill, Globe, Total Film and Television, the Other Film Co. and Palace Films. Some of the issues the association hopes to address will concern censorship, rental terms and classification fees. In January 1996, the Office of Film and Literature Classification upped the per-film fee to AUS$500 (US$373) from AUS$245 (US$182), and insiders say the fee will rise again near the end of 1997 due to a government edict that says the office must fully recover its costs by year-end 1999. Independent distributors claim that another hike will keep many smaller films from being distributed in Australia. Before the AMC began, some independent exhibitors and distributors questioned the convention's ability to accommodate the independents, but by the end of the convention—which included the independents' half-day—many of those distributor indies appeared to be won over. In fact, the only complaints regarding this year's convention concerned what many saw as limited time for the trade show. MPEAQ head Richard Parton noted that the trade show was open an amount of time that equaled last year's (under six hours), but he acknowledged that



POWER PLAYERS: *MPEAQ president Richard Parton with Bob Wallis of Wallis Theatres at the 1997 Australian Movie Convention.*

the growth in the number of booths made it difficult for delegates to see everything. "I suppose it's the price you pay for getting bigger," he said. "It's difficult. But we try to accommodate everybody." Parton added, "We're aware of [the problem] and we'll address it, and I'm sure we'll come up with the answers."

Parton felt this year's convention was "terrific," noting that the distributors had been especially cooperative. "UIP made the effort to get 'The Peacemaker,' which hadn't been shown even to the American critics," Parton said. "And the effort that Polygram made to get a print of 'The Borrowers' is providing us the type of film that people like to see [at the convention]. They want to see a film that's two or three months away, rather than one that's one or two weeks away."

Parton also said the media response made this year's convention really stand out. "We proved we can launch the media coverage of a film from here as Columbia did with 'My Best Friend's Wedding.' I think we've gotten to the stage where we can get those people—the executives as well as our own Australian directors—here to support their films and give them the media release [they deserve]."

And it wasn't only film product being successfully showcased at the AMC. Said Jim Murray, international business development manager of Digital Theater Systems, "There is no other conference quite like the MPEAQ's Australian Movie Convention. I find it valuable, not only in developing the local markets but also in the international markets." Murray noted that business was brisk at the trade show. "DTS has received substantial orders," Murray said, "and we are working toward Australian films being produced in the DTS format." Murray added that, given the excitement and growth in the Australian industry, "next year's convention can only be bigger and better."

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BOXOFFICE

	August	September	October	NOVEMBER (Current)
Buena Vista (818) 567-5000 (212) 593-8900	**Air Bud**, 8/1, Com, 97 min, Dolby SR & SR-D, Flat. Kevin Zegers, Michael Jeter, Bill Cobbs. Dir: Charles Martin Smith. **G.I. Jane** (formerly In Pursuit of Honor, Navy Cross), 8/22, Act, R, 120 min, Dolby SR & SR-D, SDDS, Anamorphic. Demi Moore, Viggo Mortensen, Anne Bancroft, Jason Beghe, Daniel Von Bargen. Dir: Ridley Scott.	**A Thousand Acres**, 9/19, Dra, R, 103 min, Dolby SR & SR-D, Flat. Jessica Lange, Michelle Pfeiffer, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Jason Robards, Keith Carradine, Colin Firth, Kevin Anderson. Dir: Jocelyn Moorhouse.	**An American Werewolf in Paris**, 10/3, Hor, ~100 min. Julie Delpy. Dir: Anthony Waller. **Rocket Man** (formerly Space Cadet), 10/10, Com, PG, 94 min, Flat, Dolby SR & SR-D, DTS. Harland Williams, Beau Bridges. Dir: Stuart Gillard. **Playing God**, 10/17, Dra, R, 94 min, Dolby SR & SR-D, Flat. David Duchovny. Dir: Andy Wilson. **Washington Square**, Dra. Jennifer Jason Leigh, Albert Finney. Dir: Agnieszka Holland	**The Little Mermaid** (1989 reissue), 11/14, A G, 89 min. Voices: Jodi Benson, Pat Carroll, Samuel E. Wright. Buddy Hackett. Dirs: Joh Musker, Ron Clements. **Flubber** (formerly The Absent Minded Profe sor), 11/26, Com, PG, Flat. Robin Williams, Raymond J. Barry, Ted Levine, Marcia Gay Harden, Wil Wheaton. Dir: Les Mayfield.
Columbia (310) 244-4000 (212) 833-8500	**Excess Baggage**, 8/29, Act/Adv, PG-13, 90 min, SDDS, Flat. Alicia Silverstone, Benicio del Toro, Christopher Walken, Jack Thompson, Nicholas Turturro. Dir: Marco Brambilla.		**I Know What You Did Last Summer**, 10/17, Dra, SDDS, Anamorphic. Jamie Lee Curtis, Sara Michelle Gellar, Jennifer Love Hewitt, Freddie Prinze Jr. Dir: Jim Gillespie. **Gattaca** (formerly The Eighth Day), 10/24, SF, PG-13, 108 min, SDDS, Anamorphic. Ethan Hawke, Uma Thurman, Jude Law, Alan Arkin, Loren Dean, Gore Vidal, Ernest Borgnine. Dir: Andrew Niccol.	
MGM/UA (310) 449-3000 (212) 708-0300	**Paperback Romance**, 8/1ltd, Rom/Com, R, 93 min, Flat. Gia Carides, Anthony LaPaglia. Dir: Ben Lewin. (Goldwyn Division) **Hoodlum** (formerly Hoods), 8/27, Dra, R, 142 min, DTS, Flat. Laurence Fishburne, Tim Roth, Andy Garcia, Vanessa Williams. Dir: Bill Duke.	**The End of Violence**, 9/12 ltd, Dra, R, 121 min, DTS. Gabriel Byrne, Bill Pullman, Andie MacDowell, Traci Lind. Dir: Wim Wenders. **The Locusts**, 9/26 ltd, Dra, R, Dolby SR-D, Anamorphic. Kate Capshaw, Jeremy Davies, Vince Vaughn, Ashley Judd. Dir: John Patrick Kelly	**Gang Related** (formerly Criminal Intent), 10/8, Dra. James Belushi, Tupac Shakur, Lela Rochon. Dir: Jim Kouf. **Napoleon**, 10/10 ltd, Fam, G, 82 min. Voices: Adam Wylie. Dir: Mario Andreacchio. **Red Corner**, 10/31, Dra/Thr, R, DTS. Richard Gere, Bai Ling, Byron Mann. Dir: Jon Avnet.	**Deceiver** (formerly Liar), 11/21 ltd, Dra/Th R. Tim Roth, Chris Penn, Michael Rooker, Renee Zellweger, Rosanna Arquette, Ellen Burstyn. Dirs: Jonas and Joshua Pate. **Bent**, 11/26 ltd, Dra. Luthaire Bluteau, Clive Owens, Brian Webber. Dir: Sean Mathias.
Miramax (212) 941-3800 (213) 951-4200	**Love Serenade** (Australia), 8/1 NY/LA, 8/8 exp, Com/Dra, R, 101 min. Miranda Otto. Dir: Shirley Barrett. **CopLand**, 8/15 wide, Dra, R, 107 min. Sylvester Stallone, Robert De Niro. Dir: James Mangold. **Mimic**, 8/22 wide, SF/Thr, R, 85 min, Dolby SR-D, SDDS. Mira Sorvino. Dir: Guillermo del Toro. **She's So Lovely**, 8/29, Dra, R, 112 min. Sean Penn, Robin Wright, John Travolta. Dir: Nick Cassavetes.	**Mouth to Mouth** (Spain), 9/5 NY/LA, Com, R, 111 min, Dolby SR-D, Anamorphic. Javier Bardem, Aitana Sanchez-Gijon. Dir: Manuel Gomez Pereira	**The House of Yes**, 10/10 NY/LA, 10/17 & 10/24 exp, Dra/Com, ~90 min. Parker Posey, Josh Hamilton. Dir: Mark Waters **Wide Awake**, 10/17, Dra, PG, Flat. Dana Delany, Denis Leary, Rosie O'Donnell. Dir: M. Night Shyamalan. **Phantoms**, 10/24 wide, Hor. Peter O'Toole, Joanna Going, Rose McGowan. Dir: Joe Chappelle.	**The Wings of the Dove**, 11/7 NY/LA, exp 11/14 , 11/21 & 11/26, Dra. Helena Bonhar Carter, Linus Roache, Terence Stamp, Alis Elliott. Dir: Ian Softley. **Welcome to Sarajevo** (formerly Sarajevo), 11/14 NY/LA, Dra, Anamorphic. Stephen Dillane, Woody Harrelson, Marisa Tomei. Dir: Michael Winterbottom.
New Line (310) 854-5811 (212) 649-4900	**Spawn**, 8/1, SF, R, 87 min, Dolby SR, DTS, SDDS, Flat. Michael Jai White, John Leguizamo, D.B. Sweeney, Martin Sheen. Dir: Mark Dippe. **love jones** (reissue), 8/8, Rom/Com, 113 min. Larenz Tate. Dir: Theodore Witcher. **Money Talks**, 8/22, Act/Com, R, 92 min, Dolby SR, DTS, SDDS, Anamorphic. Charlie Sheen, Chris Tucker, Heather Locklear. Dir: Brett Ratner.		**Most Wanted** (formerly America's Most Wanted), 10/10, Act/Com, R. Keenen Ivory Wayans, Jon Voight, Paul Sorvino. Dir: David Hogan. **Boogie Nights**, 10/12 ltd, 10/17 exp, 11/7 wide, Com/Dra, R, Dolby SR & SR-D, SDDS, Anamorphic. Mark Wahlberg, Julianne Moore, Burt Reynolds. Dir: Paul Thomas Anderson.	**One Night Stand** (formerly One Night), 11/1 ltd, Dra, 103 min. Wesley Snipes, Nastassja Kinski, Robert Downey, Jr., Ming-Na Wen, Kyle MacLachlan. Dir: Mike Figgis **Mortal Kombat II: Annihilation**, 11/21, Act Robin Shou, Talisa Soto, Brian Thompson, Sandra Hess. Dir: John R. Leonetti.
Paramount (213) 956-5000 (212) 373-7000	**Event Horizon**, 8/15, SF/Thr, R, 97 min, Dolby SR-D, DTS, Anamorphic. Laurence Fishburne, Sam Neill, Kathleen Quinlan. Dir: Paul Anderson. **A Smile Like Yours**, 8/22, Rom/Com, R, 99 min, Dolby SR-D, DTS, Anamorphic. Greg Kinnear, Lauren Holly, Jay Thomas. Dir: Keith Samples.	**In and Out**, 9/19, Com, PG-13, 90 min, SR-D, DTS. Flat. Kevin Kline, Tom Selleck, Joan Cusack, Debbie Reynolds, Wilford Brimley, Greg Jbara. Dir: Frank Oz.	**Kiss the Girls**, 10/3, Thr, R, 117 min, DTS, Anamorphic. Morgan Freeman, Ashley Judd, Alex McArthur, Cary Elwes. Dir: Gary Fleder. **FairyTale: A True Story** (formerly Illumination), 10/24, Dra, PG, 98 min. Peter O'Toole, Harvey Keitel, Phoebe Nicholls. Dir: Charles Sturridge. **Switchback** (formerly Going West in America), 10/31, Thr, R, 118 min, Anamorphic. Dennis Quaid, Danny Glover, Jared Leto. Dir: Jeb Stuart	**The Rainmaker**, 11/21, Dra. Matt Damon, Da Danes, Mary Kay Place, Teresa Wright. Dir: Francis Coppola.
TriStar (310) 244-4000 (212) 833-8500			**U-Turn** (formerly Stray Dogs), 10/3, Flat. Sean Penn, Billy Bob Thornton, Jennifer Lopez, Nick Nolte, Powers Boothe. Dir: Oliver Stone. **Seven Years in Tibet**, 10/8, Dra, Anamorphic. Brad Pitt. Dir: Jean-Jacques Annaud. **Swept From the Sea** (formerly To Love and Be Loved, Forever), 10/24 ltd , Dra. Vincent Perez, Rachel Weisz. Dir: Beeban Kidron.	**Starship Troopers**, 11/7, SF, SDDS. Casper Dien, Dina Meyer, Neil Patrick Harris, Denise Richards, Jake Busey. Dir: Paul Verhoeven.
20th Century Fox (310) 369-1000 (212) 556-2400	**Picture Perfect**, 8/1, Rom/Com, PG-13, 105 min, Dolby SR & SR-D, Flat. Jennifer Aniston, Kevin Bacon, Olympia Dukakis, Jay Mohr, Illeana Douglas. Dir: Glenn Gordon Caron.	**The Edge** (formerly The Wild, Bookworm), 9/26, Act/Thr, R, 118 min, Dolby SR & SR-D, Anamorphic. Anthony Hopkins, Alec Baldwin, Elle Macpherson, L.Q. Jones, Harold Perrineau. Dir: Lee Tamahori. **Soul Food**, 9/26, Dra, R, 115 min, Dolby SR & SR-D, Flat. Vanessa Williams, Mehki Phifer, Nia Long. Dir: George Tillman Jr.	**A Life Less Ordinary**, 10/24, Dra, R, Dolby SR & SR-D, SDDS, DTS, Flat. Cameron Diaz, Holly Hunter, Ewan McGregor. Dir: Danny Boyle.	**Anastasia**, 11/21, Ani, G, Dolby SR & SR-D, Anamorphic. Voices: Meg Ryan, John Cusac Dirs: Don Bluth, Gary Goldman. **Alien Resurrection**, 11/26, SF, R, 115 min, Dolby SR & SR-D, SDDS, DTS, Anamorphic. Sigourney Weaver, Winona Ryder, Brad Dour Dan Hedaya, Dominique Pinon, Ron Perlman. Dir: Jean-Pierre Jeunet.
Universal (818) 777-1000 (212) 759-7500	**Leave It to Beaver**, 8/22, Com, PG, ~88 min, DTS, Flat. Janine Turner, Christopher McDonald, Cameron Finley, Erik Von Detten. Dir: Andy Cadiff **Kull the Conqueror**, 8/29, Adv, PG-13, ~90 min, DTS, Anamorphic. Kevin Sorbo, Tia Carrere. Dir: John Nicolella			**The Jackal**, 11/14, Thr, Anamorphic. Bruce Willis, Richard Gere, Sidney Poitier, Di Venora, Mathilda May. Dir: Michael Caton-Jo
Warner Bros. (818) 954-6000 (212) 484-8000	**Conspiracy Theory**, 8/8, Thr, R, 135 min, DTS, Anamorphic. Mel Gibson, Julia Roberts, Patrick Stewart. Dir: Richard Donner **Free Willy 3: The Rescue**, 8/8, Fam/Adv, PG, 89 min, DTS, Flat. Jason James Richter, August Schellenberg, Annie Corley. Dir: Sam Pillsbury. **Steel**, 8/15, Act/Adv, PG-13, 105 min, Dolby SR-D, DTS, SDDS, Flat. Shaquille O'Neal.	**Fire Down Below**, 9/5, Act, R, Dolby SR-D, DTS, SDDS, Flat. Steven Seagal, Marg Helgenberger. Dir: Felix Enriquez Alcala. **L.A. Confidential**, 9/19, Dra, R, 138 min, Dolby SR-D, DTS, SDDS, Anamorphic. Kevin Spacey, Kim Basinger, James Cromwell, Danny DeVito, Russell Crowe. Dir: Curtis Hanson.	**Breaking Up**, 10/17 ltd, R, 89 min, DTS. Russell Crowe, Salma Hayek. Dir: Robert Greenwald. **The Devil's Advocate**, 10/17, Dra, Anamorphic. Al Pacino, Keanu Reeves, Charlize Theron. Dir: Taylor Hackford.	**Mad City**, 11/7, Dra, PG-13, Anamorphic. Jo Travolta, Dustin Hoffman, Mia Kirshner. Di Constantin Costa-Gavras. **The Man Who Knew Too Little** (formerly Watch That Man), 11/14, Com/Thr. Bill Mur Joanne Whalley. Peter Gallagher. Dir: Jon Am **Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil**, 11 Kevin Spacey, John Cusack, Jack Thompst Jude Law. Dir: Clint Eastwood.

FEATURE CHART — NOVEMBER 1997

December	January '98	Forthcoming	
Anaconda 12/19, Com/Live Act. Leslie Nielsen, Kelly Lynch, Nick Chinlund, Ernie Hudson, John McDowell. Dir: Stanley Tong. **Dorse Whisperer**, 12/25, Dra. Robert Redford, Kristin Scott Thomas, Sam Neill, Dianne Wiest, Scarlett Johansson. Dir: Robert Redford. **Fun**, 12/25 ltd, Dra. Tenzin Thutob Tsarong, Lhakpa Tethong, Kunga J. Tenzin. Dir: Martin Scorsese.		**Deep Rising**, 2/13, Act/Thr. Treat Williams, Famke Janssen, Wes Studi. Dir: Stephen Sommers. **Meet the Deedles**, 2/13. Dennis Hopper, Paul Walker. Dir: Steve Boyum. **Eaters of the Dead**, 3/6. Antonio Banderas. Dir: John McTiernan. **6 Days 7 Nights**, May, Rom/Com. Harrison Ford, Anne Heche. Dir: Ivan Reitman. **Armageddon** Bruce Willis. Dir: Michael Bay. **A Civil Action** John Travolta. **Holy Man** Eddie Murphy. **Ishmael**, Dra. Dir: Jon Turteltaub. **Mighty Joe Young**, Adv. Charlize Theron, Bill Paxton, Regina King. Dir: Ron Underwood. **Mulan**, Ani. Voice. Ming Na-Wen. Dirs: Barry Cook, Tony Bancroft.	**Buena Vista** (818) 567-5000 (212) 593-8900
	Spice Girls Movie Richard E. Grant, Spice Girls. Dir: Robert Spiers.	**The Replacement Killers**, 2/6, Act. Chow Yun-Fat, Mira Sorvino, Michael Rooker, Clifton Gonzales-Gonzales, Jurgen Prochnow. Dir: Antoine Fugua. **Shut Up and Dance**, 2/98. Vanessa Williams, Kris Kristofferson. Dir: Randa Haines. **Gloria**, Summer '98, Dra. Sharon Stone. **Les Miserables**, Dec. '98, Liam Neeson, Uma Thurman, Geoffrey Rush. Dir: Bille August. **My Giant**, Billy Crystal, Gheorghe Muresan. Dir: Michael Lehmann. **Palmetto** Woody Harrelson, Elisabeth Shue, Michael Rapaport. Dir: Volker Schlondorff. **Sour Grapes** Steven Weber, Craig Bierko, Karen Sillas. Dir: Larry David. **Wild Things** Kevin Bacon, Matt Dillon. Dir: John McNaughton. **Zero Effect**, Bill Pullman, Ben Stiller, Ryan O'Neal. Dir: Jake Kasdan.	**Columbia** (310) 244-4000 (212) 833-8500
Tomorrow Never Dies (aka Bond 18), 12/19, Adv, DTS. Pierce Brosnan, Michelle Yeoh, Stephan Pryce, Ten Hatcher, Desmond Llewlyn, Judi Dench. Dir: Roger Spottiswoode	**Welcome to Woop Woop**. Com. Johnathon Schaech, Rod Taylor, Noah Taylor, Paul Mercurio. Dir: Stephan Elliott **Hurricane Streets** Dra, R, ~89 min. Brendan Sexton III. Dir: Morgan J. Freeman.	**Music From Another Room**, 2/6, Rom/Com. Brenda Blethyn, Jude Law. Dir: Charlie Peters **The Man in the Iron Mask**, 2/20, Adv. Leonardo DiCaprio, John Malkovich, Gabriel Byrne, Gerard Depardieu, Jeremy Irons. Dir: Randall Wallace. **Best Men** (aka Independence), Dra. Drew Barrymore, Luke Wilson, Dean Cain. Dir: Tamra Davis. **Dirty Work** Com. Norm MacDonald, Chevy Chase, Don Rickles, Jack Warden. Dir: Bob Saget. **I Love You... Don't Touch Me**. Rom/Com. Dir: Julie Davis. **Mod Squad** Dir: Scott Silver **One Man's Hero** Tom Berenger, Daniela Romo. Dir: Lance Hool. **Storefront Hitchcock**, Doc. Dir. Jonathan Demme.	**MGM/UA** (310) 449-3000 (212) 708-0300
Ceaseless, 12/12 wide, Com. Marlon Wayans. Penelope Spheeris. **The Mighty**, 12/19 wide, 1/16 wide, Dra. Sharon Stone, Gena Rowlands. Dir: Peter Chelsom. **Good Will Hunting**, 12/25 NY/LA, 1/9 wide, R. Matt Damon, Ben Affleck, Robin Williams. Dir: Gus Van Sant. **Jackie Brown**, 12/25 wide. Pam Grier, Samuel L. Jackson. Dir: Quentin Tarantino.	**Scream 2**, 1/9 wide, Hor. Neve Campbell, David Arquette, Courteney Cox, Sarah Michelle Gellar, Jamie Kennedy, Laurie Metcalf, Liev Schreiber. Dir: Wes Craven. **Four Days in September**, 1/23 NY/LA.	**B. Monkey**, 2/6, Dra. Asia Argento, Jared Harris, Rupert Everett. Dir: Michael Radford. **Little City**, 2/20. Annabella Sciorra. **I-95**, 2/27. Malik Yoba. Dir: Millicent Shelton. **Sonatine**, 3/6 NY/LA. Dra. Dir/Star: Takeshi Kitano. **Spanish Fly**, 3/13. **Sliding Doors** Gwyneth Paltrow. **Artemisia**, 3/20 NY/LA. Michel Serrault, Miki Manojlovic. Dir: Agnes Merlet. **A Price Below Rubies**, 3/27, Dra. Renee Zellweger. Dir: Boaz Yakin. **Talk of Angels**, May/Jun '98, Dra, PG-13, 97 min. Polly Walker, Vincent Perez. Dir: Nick Hamm. **Firelight**, Sophie Marceau. Dir: William Nicholson. **Nirvana**, 4/98 wide. Christopher Lambert. **Heaven**, 5/98. Martin Donovan. **Velvet Goldmine**, 6/98. Ewan McGregor. **Doberman**, 7/98. Tcheky Karyo. **My Life So Far**, 9/98. Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio.	**Miramax** (212) 941-3800 (213) 951-4200
	Dark City (formerly Dark Empire). 1/30, Thr, Dolby SR & SR-D, SDDS. William Hurt, Rufus Sewell, Kiefer Sutherland, Jennifer Connelly. Dir: Alex Proyas.	**The Wedding Singer**, 2/13, Com. Adam Sandler, Drew Barrymore. Dir: Frank Coraci. **Wag the Dog**, 2/20. Dustin Hoffman, Robert De Niro, Woody Harrelson. Dir: Barry Levinson. **Blade**, 2/27. Wesley Snipes, Stephen Dorff, Kris Kristofferson. Dir: Stephen Norrington. **No More Mr. Nice Guy** (tent. title), 3/13 wide, Act/Adv. Jackie Chan. **Lost in Space** 4/3. William Hurt, Gary Oldman. Dir: Stephen Hopkins. **Players Club** 4/3. Ice Cube, Jamie Fox. Dir: Ice Cube. **American History X**, 5/15. Edward Norton, Edward Furlong. Dir: Tony Kaye. **Rush Hour**, Com, 8/98. Jackie Chan, Chris Tucker. **Looking for Eve**, 9/98. Dir: Hugh Wilson. **Pleasantville**, 9/98, Com. Tobey Maguire. Dir: Gary Ross. **Frequency**, 10/98. **The Astronaut's Wife**, 10/98. **The Kiss** 11/98. Danny DeVito, Holly Hunter. Dir: Richard LaGravenese. **Woo**, Rom/Com. Jada Pinkett	**New Line** (310) 854-5811 (212) 649-4900
Titanic, 12/19. Rom/Adv, Dolby SR & SR-D, Leonardo DiCaprio, Kate Winslet, Bill Paxton, Kathy Bates, Suzy Amis. Dir: James Cameron.	**Hard Rain** (formerly The Flood). 1/16, Act. Christian Slater, Morgan Freeman, Minnie Driver, Randy Quaid. Dir: Mikael Salomon. **Untitled Robert Benton** (formerly The Magic Hour), 1/30 ltd, Dra. Paul Newman, Susan Sarandon, Gene Hackman. Dir: Robert Benton.	**The Truman Show**, 2/13, Dra, Flat. Jim Carrey, Ed Harris, Laura Linney. Dir: Peter Weir **The Real Blonde**, 2/27. Matthew Modine. Dir: Tom DiCillo. **Dead Man on Campus**, 3/13, Com. Tom Everett Scott. Dir: Alan Cohn. **Grease** (reissue), 3/27. John Travolta, Olivia Newton-John. Dir: Randal Kleiser. **The Odd Couple II: Travelin' Light**, 4/10, Com. Jack Lemmon, Walter Matthau. Dir: Howard Deutch. **Deep Impact**, 5/8, Act/Thr. Tea Leoni, Elijah Wood, Vanessa Redgrave, Robert Duvall. Dir: Mimi Leder. **Snake Eyes**, Thr. Nicolas Cage. Dir: Brian De Palma.	**Paramount** (213) 956-5000 (212) 373-7000
As Good As it Gets (formerly Old Friends), 12/26, Dra. Jack Nicholson, Helen Hunt, Greg Kinnear. Dir: James Brooks.	**Desperate Measures**, 1/16, Act. Michael Keaton, Andy Garcia, Brian Cox, Marcia Gay Harden. Dir: Barbet Schroeder.	**Homegrown**, 2/98, Dra. Billy Bob Thornton, Kelly Lynch, Hank Azaria. Dir: Stephen Gyllenhall. **The Mask of Zorro**, 3/98, Act/Adv. Antonio Banderas, Anthony Hopkins. Dir: Martin Campbell. **Godzilla** 5/20, Hank Azaria, Matthew Broderick, Jean Reno. Dir: Roland Emmerich. **Apt Pupil**, Dra. Ian McKellen, Brad Renfro, Kevin Pollak, Joe Morton. Dir: Bryan Singer. **Hush** (formerly Bloodline/Kitronen), Thr. Jessica Lange, Gwyneth Paltrow, Johnathan Schaech. Dir: Jonathan Darby **Stepmom** Julia Roberts, Susan Sarandon. Dir: Chris Columbus. **Stinkers**, Com. B.D. Wong, Bronson Pinchot, Jennifer Coolidge. Dir: Barnet Kellman	**TriStar** (310) 244-4000 (212) 833-8500
Home Alone 3, 12/19, Com, ~110 min, Dolby SR-D, Flat. Alex D. Linz, Dlek Krupa, Rya Kihlstedt. Dir: Raja Gosnell **Great Expectations** 12/31ltd, 1/16 exp, Dra, 106 min, Dolby SR & SR-D, Anamorphic. Robert De Niro, Gwyneth Paltrow, Ethan Hawke, Anne Bancroft. Dir: Alfonso Cuaron.	**Firestorm**. Act/Adv, R. Howie Long, Scott Glenn, Suzy Amis, William Forsythe. Dir: Dean Semler.	**A Cool, Dry Place**, Dra. Vince Vaughn, Monica Potter, Joey Lauren Adams. Dir: John N. Smith **Doctor Dolittle**, Com. Eddie Murphy, voices: Chris Rock, Norm MacDonald. Dir: Betty Thomas. **Hope Floats**, Com. Sandra Bullock, Gena Rowlands, Harry Connick, Jr. Dir: Forest Whitaker **How Stella Got Her Groove Back**, Dra. Angela Bassett. Dir: Kevin Rodney Sullivan. **The Newton Boys**. Matthew McConaughey, Skeet Ulrich, Ethan Hawke. Dir: Richard Linklater **The Object of My Attection**, Dra. Jennifer Aniston, Paul Rudd, Tim Daly, Alan Alda. Dir: Nicholas Hytner. **The Thin Red Line**, Act/Dra. Sean Penn, Ben Chaplin, George Clooney. Dir: Terrence Malick. **Untitled Bulworth** Warren Beatty, Oliver Platt, Halle Berry, Paul Sorvino. Dir: Warren Beatty **The X-Files Movie** David Duchovny, Gillian Anderson, Martin Landau. Dir: Rob Bowman.	**20th Century Fox** (310) 369-1000 (212) 556-2400
The Richer Dr Poorer, 12/25, Rom/Com. Tim Allen, Kirstie Alley. Dir: Bryan Spicer **The Boxer**, 12/26 ltd, 1/9/98 wide, Dra. Daniel Day-Lewis, Emily Watson. Dir: Jim Sheridan	**Half-Baked**, 1/16, Com. Dave Chappelle, Jim Brewer. Dir: Tamara Davis.	**Blues Brothers 2000**. Com. Dan Aykroyd, John Goodman. Dir: John Landis. **Meet Joe Black**, Rom/Dra. Brad Pitt, Anthony Hopkins, Claire Forlani. Dir: Martin Brest. **Mercury Rising**. Bruce Willis, Alec Baldwin. Dir: Harold Becker. **Out of Sight**. George Clooney, Jennifer Lopez, Ving Rhames, Danny DeVito. Dir: Steven Soderbergh **Primary Colors**, Dra. John Travolta, Emma Thompson, Billy Bob Thornton. Dir: Mike Nichols. **Reach the Rock**, Dra/Com. Alessandro Nivola, William Sadler, Bruce Norris. Dir: Bill Ryan. **Simple Simon**, Thr. Bruce Willis. Dir: Harold Becker. **Virus**, Thr. Jamie Lee Curtis, Donald Sutherland, William Baldwin, Cliff Curtis. Dir: John Bruno.	**Universal** (818) 777-1000 (212) 759-7500
Rocketman, 12/25, SF. Kevin Costner, Olivia d'Abo, Jens, Larenz Tate. Dir: Kevin Costner.	**Fallen**, 1/16, Dra. Denzel Washington, John Goodman, Donald Sutherland. Dir: Gregory Hoblit. **Courtesan** (formerly Venice), 1/23, Dra, R, 112 min. Catherine McCormack, Moira Kelly, Rufus Sewell. Dir: Marshall Herskovitz. **Incognito**, 1/30, Thr, R, Anamorphic. Jason Patric, Irene Jacob, Rod Steiger. Dir: John Badham. **Goodbye, Lover**. Patricia Arquette, Ellen DeGeneres, Dermot Mulroney. Dir: Roland Joffe.	**Sphere**, 2/13, SF. Dustin Hoffman, Sharon Stone, Samuel L. Jackson. Dir: Barry Levinson. **City of Angels**, Dra. Meg Ryan, Nicolas Cage. Dir: Brad Silberling. **Edwards and Hunt**, Com. Chris Farley, Matthew Perry, Eugene Levy, Lisa B. Dir: Christopher Guest. **Enter the Dragon** (reissue), Act. Bruce Lee. Dir: Robert Clouse. **Eyes Wide Shut**. Tom Cruise, Nicole Kidman. Dir: Stanley Kubrick. **Home Fries**, Com. Drew Barrymore, Gary Busey, Luke Wilson. Dir: Dean Parisot. **U.S. Marshals**, Act. Tommy Lee Jones, Wesley Snipes. Dir: Stuart Baird. **Without Limits** (formerly Pre), Dra. Billy Crudup, Donald Sutherland, Monica Potter. Dir: Robert Towne.	**Warner Bros.** (818) 954-6000 (212) 484-8000

BOXOFFICE Independent Feature Chart NOVEMBER 1997

OCTOBER

Avalanche/CFP Division
212-265-9119

Nick and Jane, Rom/Com. Dana Wheeler-Nicholson, James McCaffrey. Dir: Richard Mauro. 10/10
I Love You, I Love You Not, Dra. Claire Danes, Jeanne Moreau. Dir: Billy Hopkins. 10/24

Banner
213-848-7500

Telling Lies in America, Dra. Kevin Bacon, Brad Renfro. Dir: Guy Ferland. Oct ltd, mid-Nov. exp

Castle Hill
212-888-0080

Eye of God, Dra, 84 min. Martha Plimpton, Nick Stahl. Dir: Tim Blake. 10/17

CFP
212-995-9662

The Twilight of the Golds, Dra. Jennifer Beals, Brendan Fraser. Dir: Ross Marks. 10/24

Filmopolis
310-914-1776

Son of Gascogne *(France)*, Com. Jean-Claude Dreyfus. Dir: Pascal Aubier. 10/24

Fine Line
212-649-4800

Gummo, Dra. Chloe Sevigny, Max Perlich. Dir: Harmony Korine. 10/17 NY/LA/Tor

First Run
212-243-0600

Forgotten Silver. Mock Doc, 54 min. Dirs: Peter Jackson, Costa Botes. w/15 min short, **Signing Off**.

Gramercy
310-385-4400

Matchmaker *(formerly The Strangest Places)*, Com. Janeane Garofalo, David O'Hara. Dir: Mark Joffe. 10/3

Greycat
702-737-0670

I Was a Jewish Sex Worker, Doc, 74 min. Dir: Phillip B. Roth. 10/17 NY
David Searching, Com/Dra, 103 min. Anthony Rapp. Dir: Leslie Smith. LA/SF
A Gun for Jennifer, Thr.

Kino
212-629-6880

Happy Together, Rom/Dra, 94 min. Leslie Cheung, Tony Leung. Dir: Wong Kar-Wai. 10/12 NY, 10/31 LA, 11/14 exp

Kit Parker
800-538-5838

Nueba Yol II, Com/Dra, 95 min. Luisito Marti. Dir: Angel Muniz.

Legacy
213-467-3700

Love Always, Dra/Com. Marisa Ryan, Moon Zappa. Dir: Jude Pauline Eberhard. 10/17 ltd (tent.)
Grizzly Mountain, Adv. Dan Haggerty.

Live
818-778-3174

Critical Care, Dra/Thr. James Spader, Albert Brooks, Kyra Sedgwick. Dir: Sidney Lumet.

Island Digital Media (formerly Manga)
415-275-5405

Dancehall Queen *(Jamaica)*, Dra. Dirs: Don Letts, Rick Elgood. 10/24 Miami
Tokyo Fist, Act, 84 min. Dir/Star: Shinya Tsukamoto.

New Yorker
212-247-6110

Deep Crimson, Dra, 114 min. Daniel Gimenez, Marisa Paredes. Dir: Arturo Ripstein. 10/8
Beaumarchais *(France)*, Com, 100 min. Fabrice Luchini. Dir: Edouardo Molinaro. 10/24 NY

October
212-539-4000

Year of the Horse, Doc, 108 min. Neil Young. Dir: Jim Jarmusch. 10/8 NY, 10/15 LA

Phaedra
310-478-3308

Timeless, Dra, 90 min. Peter Byrne, Melissa Duge. Dir: Chris Hart.

Seventh Art
213-845-1455

Things I Never Told You, Rom/Com, 91 min. Lili Taylor, Andrew McCarthy. Dir: Isabel Coixet.

Showcase Entertainment
818-715-7005

Cries of Silence, Dra/Thr. Karen Black, Kathleen York. Dir: Avery Crounse. 10/3 LA

Sony Classics
212-833-8851

Fast, Cheap & Out of Control, Doc, 82 min. Dir: Errol Morris. 10/3 NY/LA

Strand
310-395-5002

Nenette et Boni *(France)*, Dra. Gregoire Colin, Alice Houri. Dir: Claire Denis. 10/3 NY, 10/10 LA

Trimark
310-314-3040

Chairman of the Board, Com. Carrot Top, Courtney Thorne-Smith. 10/24
Eve's Bayou, Dra. Samuel L. Jackson, Lynn Whitfield. Dir: Kasi Lemmons. 10/24 NY, LA, 11/7 exp

Turbulent Arts
415-552-1952

Marian *(Czech Republic)*, Dra. Dir: Peter Vaclev. 10/3 Chi
Lilies, Dra. Brent Carver, Marcel Sabourin. Dir: John Greyson. 10/10 SF, 10/17 NY, 10/24 LA

NOVEMBER

Artistic License
212-265-9119

Other Voices, Other Rooms, Dra. Dir: David Rocksavage. 11/7 NY

Capitol Entertainment
301-564-9700

Autumn Sun *(Argentina)*, Rom/Dra, 103 min. Norma Aleandro, Federico Luppi. Dir: Eduardo Mignogna.

Castle Hill
A Further Gesture, Dra, ~96 min. Stephen Rea. 11/14 ltd

CFP
Sick: The Life and Death of Bob Flanagan, Supermasochist, Doc. Dir: Kirby Dick. 11/8 NY/LA

Fine Line
The Sweet Hereafter, Dra. Ian Holm. Dir: Atom Egoyan. 11/21 NY, 11/26 LA

First Look
310-855-1199

Slaves to the Underground, Dra. Molly Gross, Marisa Ryan. Dir: Kristine Petersen. 11/14 NY (tent.)

First Run
Didn't Do It for Love, Doc, 80 min. Dir: Monika Treut.

Fox Searchlight
310-369-4402

Oscar and Lucinda, Dra, R, ~131 min. Ralph Fiennes, Cate Blanchett. Dir: Gillian Armstrong. 11/21 ltd

Gramercy
Bean, Com, 87 min. Rowan Atkinson. Dir: Mel Smith. 11/7

Greycat
Parallel Sons, Rom/Dra, 93 min. Dir: John G. Young.

International Pictures
212-925-0404

The Knowledge of Healing, Doc. Tanzin Gyatso (Dalai Lama). Dir: Franz Reichley. 11/5 NY

Northern Arts
413-268-9301

Hugo Pool, Com, 93 min. Robert Downey Jr., Sean Penn. Dir: Robert Downey Sr. 11/7 NY/LA
Midaq Alley *(Mexico)*, Dra. Salma Hayek. Dir: Jorge Fons.
Withnail and I *(U.K., 1987)*, Com, 105 min. Richard E. Grant. Dir: Bruce Robinson.

October
Kiss or Kill *(Australia)*, Dra/Thr, 96 min. Matt Day, Frances O'Conner, Chris Haywood. Dir: Bill Bennett.

Phaedra
Bollywood Cinema Series *(India)*. Collection of five films.

Sony Classics
The Tango Lesson, Dra. Dir: Sally Potter. 11/14 NY/LA

Spats Films
213-469-6660

Ill Gotten Gains, Dra. Djimon Hounsou, Akosua Busia. Dir: Joel Marsden. 11/14 LA/NY/Chi/SF

Strand
Full Speed *(aka Toute Vitesse) (France)*, Dra, 85 min. Elodie Bouchez. Dir: Gael Morel.
The Mouse, Dra. John Savage, Angelica Torn. Dir: Dan Adams.

Turbulent Arts
Never Met Picasso, Dra. Dir: Stephen Kijak. 11/28

DECEMBER

Artificial Eye
212-255-1922

The Mother and the Whore *(France, 1973)*, Dra, 210 min. Jean-Pierre Leaud. Dir: Jean Eustache. 12/12 NY

Dreamworks SKG
818-733-7000

Amistad *(formerly Mutiny)*, Dra. Matthew McConaughey, Morgan Freeman, Nigel Hawthorne. Dir: Steven Spielberg. 12/12 ltd, 12/25 exp
Mousehunt, Com/Ani. Voices: Nathan Lane, Lee Evans. Dir: Gore Verbinski. 12/25

Fine Line
Deconstructing Harry, Com. Star/Dir: Woody Allen. 12/12 NY/LA/Tor, 12/24 exp, 2/6 wide
The Winter Guest, Dra. Emma Thompson, Phyllida Law. Dir: Alan Rickman. 12/19 NY/LA/Tor

First Run
O Amor Natural, Doc, 76 min. Dir: Heddy Honigmann. 12/31

Fox Searchlight
Cousin Bette, Dra. Jessica Lange, Elisabeth Shue, Bob Hoskins. Dir: Des McAnuff.

Gramercy
The Big Lebowski. Jeff Bridges, John Goodman. Dirs: Joel & Ethan Coen. 12/25 NY/LA, 1/16 exp

New Yorker
Underground, Dra, ~128 min. Miki Manojlovic, Lazar Ristouski. Dir: Emir Kusturica.

BOXOFFICE Independent Feature Chart NOVEMBER 1997

Sony Classics
Ma Vie en Rose, Com, 89 min. Michele Laroque, Jean-Philippe Ecoffey. Dir: Alain Berliner. 12/25 NY/LA

Strand
Office Killer, Hor. Carol Kane, Molly Ringwald. Dir: Cindy Sherman. 12/3 NY, 12/5 LA, 12/12 SF

Zeitgeist
212-274-1989
Will It Snow for Christmas? Dominique Reymond, Daniel Duval. Dir: Sandrine Veysset. 12/17 NY

JANUARY '98

First Run
Arguing the World, Doc, 107 min. Dir: Joseph Dorman.

Fox Searchlight
Hard Men *(U.K.)*, Dra. Vincent Regan, Ross Boatman. Dir: J.K. Amalou.

Gramercy
Tempting Fate *(formerly Shakespeare's Sister)*, Dra. Kenneth Branagh, Madeleine Stowe, William Hurt. Dir: Leslie Linka Glatter. 1/30

Kino
Fallen Angels, Thr. Leon Lai, Karen Mong, Michele Reis. Dir: Wong Kar-Wai.

Live
The Real, Dra. LL Cool J, Snoop Doggy Dog, Bokeem Woodbine. Dir: Darin Scott. 1/6 (tent.)
Suicide Kings *(formerly Boys Night Out)*, Dra/Thr, 107 min. Christopher Walken, Henry Thomas. Dir: Peter O'Fallow.

Island Digital Media
General Chaos: Uncensored Animation, Ani. Various dirs.

October
Still Breathing, Rom, 109 min. Brendan Fraser, Joanna Going, Ann Magnuson. Dir: James F. Robinson.

Phaedra
Gonin *(Japan)*, Act, 104 min. Takeshi Kitano. Dir: Takashi Ishii.

Sony Classics
Afterglow, Rom/Dra. Nick Nolte, Julie Christie. Dir: Alan Rudolph.

Strand
La Sentinelle *(France)*, Thr, 144 min. Emmanuel Salinger. Dir: Arnaud Desplechin.

Trimark
The Blackout. Matthew Modine, Dennis Hopper. Dir: Abel Ferrara.
Star Kid *(formerly Warrior of Waverly Street)*, SF. Joseph Mazzello. Dir: Manny Coto.

FEBRUARY '98

CFP
Love and Death on Long Island, Dra. John Hurt, Jason Priestley. Dir: Richard Kwietniowski. 2/27/98
Junk Mail, Com. Robert Skjaerstad. Dir: Pal Sletaune.

First Look
Mrs. Dalloway, Dra, 97 min. Vanessa Redgrave, Rupert Graves. Dir: Marleen Gorris.

Fox Searchlight
Polish Wedding, Dra. Claire Danes, Gabriel Byrne, Lena Olin. Dir: Theresa Connelly.

International Film Circuit
212-691-0770
Mother and Son *(Germany/Russia)*, Dra, 73 min. Dir: Alexander Sokurov. 2/4

Live
Tarzan & Jane. Casper Van Dien. Dir: Carl Schenkel. 2/27 (tent.)

Polygram
310-385-4000
The Borrowers, Fam. John Goodman. Dir: Peter Hewitt.
The Gingerbread Man, Thr. Kenneth Branagh, Embeth Davidtz. Dir: Robert Altman.

Sony Classics
Nil by Mouth. Kathy Burke, Edna Dore. Dir: Gary Oldman.

Strand
The Mummy. Alison Elliot. Dir: Michael Almereyda. 2/13
Ayn Rand: A Sense of Life, Doc. Dir: Michael Paxton.
Nights of Cabiria *(Italy, 1957 reissue)*, Dra. Dir: Federico Fellini.

MARCH '98

Fox Searchlight
Slums of Beverly Hills. Alan Arkin, Marisa Tomei. Dir: Tamara Jenkins

Sony Classics
A Friend of the Deceased *(Ukraine)*, Dra/Thr. Alexandre Lazarev. Dir: Vyacheslav Krishtofovich.
Men With Guns, Dra. Frederico Luppi. Dir: John Sayles.

APRIL '98

Fox Searchlight
Ship of Fools *(aka Shooting Fish)*, Dra/Com. Tony Shalhoub. Dir/Star: Stanley Tucci.

Polygram
Barney's Great Adventures, Fam. Trevor Morgan, Diana Rice. Dir: Steve Gomer.

Live
The Substitute 2. Treat Williams, B.D. Wong. Dir: Steven Pearl.

FORTHCOMING

Artificial Eye
Beyond the Clouds, Dra. Dir: Michelangelo Antonioni.
A Summer's Tale, Rom/Com. Dir: Eric Rohmer.

Artistic License
Color of a Brisk and Leaping Day, Dra. Dir: Christopher Munch. '97

Cinema Village
212-431-5119
Cartoon Noir, Ani, 85 min. '97

Dove
310-786-1600
Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, Com/SF. Douglas Adams.

Dreamworks SKG
Paulie: A Parrot's Tale. Tony Shalhoub, Gena Rowlands. Dir: John Roberts. 3/20
Saving Private Ryan, Dra. Tom Hanks, Ed Burns, Tom Sizemore. Dir: Steven Spielberg. 6/12
Blue Vision. Annette Bening. Dir: Neil Jordan. Fall '98
The Prince of Egypt, Ani. Voices: Val Kilmer, Steve Martin. Dirs: Brenda Chapman, Steve Hickner, Simon Wells. Nov '98
Antz, Ani. Voices: Woody Allen, Danny Glover, Sylvester Stallone. Dirs: Eric Darnell, Larry Guterman, Tim Johnson. '99
El Dorado: City of Gold, Ani. Voices: Kevin Kline, Kenneth Branagh, Rosie Perez. Dir: Will Finn. '99

Fine Line
Passion in the Desert. Dir: Lavinia Currier. May '98
Pecker. Edward Furlong. Dir: John Waters. Aug '98
The Legend of the Pianist on the Ocean, Dra. Tim Roth. Dir: Giuseppe Tornatore. Sep '98
Didier *(France)*. D/S: Alain Chabat.
Esmeralda Comes By Night *(Mexico)*, Com. Maria Rojo. Dir: Jamie Humberto Hermosillo.
Girl Talk, Dra/Com. Troy Beyer, Randi Ingerman. Dir: Troy Beyer.
Red Violin. Samuel L. Jackson. Dir: Francois Girard.
When I Close My Eyes *(Japan) (formerly Letters of Love, Love Letter)*, Dra. Dir: Shunji Iwai. '98

First Look
The Other Side of Sunday *(Norway)*, Dra, 104 min. Dir: Berit Nesheim.
This Is the Sea, Dra. Richard Harris, Gabriel Byrne, John Lynch.

Gramercy
Body Count, Act. Ving Rhames, Forest Whitaker, David Caruso. Dir: Robert Patton Spruill.
Clay Pigeons. Janeane Garofalo, Vince Vaughn. Dir: David Dobkin.
Elizabeth I, Dra. Geoffrey Rush, Cate Blanchett. Dir: Shekhar Kapur.
The Hi-Lo Country. Woody Harrelson. Dir: Stephen Frears.
I Want You, Rom/Dra. Rachel Weisz, Alessandro Nivola. Dir: Michael Winterbottom.
Land Girls, Dra. Gwyneth Paltrow, Rachael Weisz. Dir: David Leland.
Photographing Fairies.
Plunkett and MacLeane. Robert Carlyle, Liv Tyler. Dir: Jake Scott.
What Rats Won't Do *(U.K.)*, Rom/Com. Natascha McElhone, James Frain. Dir: Alaistair Reid.

Gurney
212-838-2929
Follow the Bitch, Com.

Legacy
The Leading Man. Jon Bon Jovi. Dir: John Duigan. '97

Live
The Second Arrival, SF. Patrick Muldoon, Jane Sibbett. Dir: Kevin Tenny.
The Breakup. Bridget Fonda.
Joyride. Benecio Del Toro.

October
Condo Painting, Doc. Dir: John McNaughton. '98
Hearts and Minds, Thr, R, 105 min. Dir: Ralph Ziman. '98
The Naked Man, Com. Michael Rapaport, Rachael Leigh Cook. Dir: J. Todd Anderson.
The Apostle, Dra. Robert Duvall, Miranda Richardson, Farrah Fawcett. Dir: Robert Duvall.
Three Seasons, Dra. Harvey Keitel. Dir: Tony Bui. '98
24/7. Bob Hoskins. Dir: Shane Meadows.
Untitled Todd Solondz. '98

Polygram
What Dreams May Come. Robin Williams, Annabella Sciorra, Cuba Gooding Jr.

Shooting Gallery
212-431-6759
illtown, Dra. Michael Rapaport, Lili Taylor. Early '98

Shadow
207-872-5111
La Petite Apocalypse *(France)*, Com/Dra, 110 min. Pierre Arditi. Dir: Constantin Costa-Gavras.

Trimark
Bombshell. Henry Thomas, Frank Whaley. Dir: Paul Wayne.

Triumph
310-244-8059
Baby Geniuses. Kathleen Turner, Kim Cattrall. Dir: Bob Clark.

Zeitgeist
Murders and Murders. Yvonne Rainers.

HOME RELEASE CHART

BOXOFFICE

NOVEMBER 1997

HOME VIDEO RELEASE	TITLE	BOXOFFICE (MILLIONS)	SCREENS	THEATRICAL RELEASE	THEATRICAL/VIDEO DISTRIBUTOR
October 7	Anaconda	$65.5	2,456	April 11	Columbia/Col. TriStar
October 7	That Old Feeling	$16.1	1,599	April 4	MCA/Universal
October 9	My Best Friend's Wedding	$120.3+	2,134	June 20	Warner Bros.
October 14	Breakdown	$50.1	2,348	May 2	Paramount
October 14	Double Team	$11.3	2,203	April 4	Columbia/Col. TriStar
October 14	Grosse Pointe Blank	$28.1	1,242	April 11	Hollywood/Buena Vista
October 14	Night Falls On Manhattan	$9.8	758	May 16	Paramount
October 21	Austin Powers	$53.8+	2,187	May 2	New Line
October 21	Batman & Robin	$107.0+	5,348	June 20	Warner Bros.
October 21	The 6th Man	$14.8	2,319	March 28	Touchstone/Buena Vista
October 21	Wild America	$7.3	1,812	July 2	Warner Bros.
October 28	Addicted to Love	$34.5	2,021	May 23	Warner Bros.
October 28	The Fifth Element	$63.3+	2,500	May 9	Columbia/Col. Tristar
October 28	Jingle All the Way	$60.6	2,404	November 22	Fox
November 4	The Lost World: Jurassic Park	$227.3	3,565	May 23	MCA/Universal
November 4	Romy and Michele's...	$29.2	1,607	April 25	Hollywood/Buena Vista
November 11	Gone Fishing	$19.4	1,846	May 30	Touchstone/Buena Vista
November 18	Rhyme and Reason	$1.6	280	March 5	Miramax/Buena Vista
November 25	Men In Black	$237.3+	3,102	July 2	Columbia/Col. TriStar
November	Sprung	$7.6	780	May 14	Trimark/Vidmark
December 1	Hercules	$91.4+	2,930	June 15	Walt Disney/Buena Vista
December 9	Con Air	$100.3+	2,941	June 6	Touchstone/Buena Vista
December	Brassed Off	$2.6	231	May 23	Buena Vista/Miramax
December	Buddy	$9.8	2,113	June 6	Columbia/Col. TriStar
December	Chasing Amy	$11.6	553	April 4	Miramax/Buena Vista
December	Contact	$96.2+	2,314	July 11	Warner Bros.
December	Face/Off	$109.7+	2,851	June 27	Paramount
December	Out to Sea	$26.6	1,736	July 2	Fox
December	A Simple Wish	$7.9	1,699	July 11	MCA/Universal
December	Speed II: Cruise Control	$47.8	2,625	June 13	Fox
December	Eight Heads In A Duffle Bag	$3.6	1,533	April 18	Orion
December	Til There Was You	$3.5	753	May 30	Paramount
December	Trial and Error	$13.6	2,298	May 30	New Line
December	Wings of Courage	$12.8	11	April 21	Sony Classics
January	George of the Jungle	$96.7+	2,616	July 16	Walt Disney/Buena Vista
January	Good Burger	$22.2+	1,893	July 25	Paramount

Compiled by BOXOFFICE MAGAZINE. Numbers for ***Boxoffice Gross*** represent total domestic boxoffice grosses to the nearest $100,000; + signs indicate that films remain in theatrical release. Number of ***Screens*** indicates the maximum number of screens in widest, simultaneous release. Entries in the ***Theatrical/Video Distributor*** column list two names when the video releasing company is different from (or releases through a subsidiary different from) the theatrical distributor. Exact day-and-date specific entries for ***Home Video Release*** are confirmed; in all other

Boxoffice Magazine presents



MovieFone's Moviegoer Activity Report

For the Month of August 1997

MovieFone® (777-FILM®) and its sister service, MovieLink® Online, are now the single largest source of movie showtime information in the country, providing information to over 12 million moviegoers each month. The following information represents the most requested theatres and exhibitors on MovieFone.

Top 10 Exhibitors & Theatres

Most Requested Exhibitors

Rank	Exhibitor	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
1	United Artists	921,007	1
2	AMC	767,198	2
3	Cineplex Odeon	719,156	3
4	Sony	652,106	4
5	General Cinema	420,959	5
6	Century	274,046	6
7	Cinemark	216,528	7
8	National Amusements	181,299	10
9	Regal	180,967	8
10	Act III	153,810	12

Most Requested Theatres

Rank	Market	Theatre	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
1	NY	Sony Lincoln Square	56,879	1
2	LA	AMC Century 14	43,695	8
3	PH	UA Riverview Plaza	43,380	6
4	PH	UA Cheltenham	40,063	5
5	PH	UA 69th Street	38,120	11
6	MI	Regal Palace 18	32,147	9
7	BO	Sony Assembly Square	31,472	7
8	BO	Sony Copley Place	29,731	33
9	NY	Sony Orpheum	28,258	2
10	SF	AMC Kabuki 8	27,858	93

Most Requested Theatres Per Screen

Total Requests	Rank	Theatre (# screens)	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
New York	1	Sony Astor (1)	8,885	1
1,395,777	2	CO Coronet 1 & 2 (2)	15,876	7
	3	CO Beekman (1)	7,195	75
Los Angeles	1	Mann National (1)	4,580	3
690,663	2	GCC Avco (3)	12,928	5
	3	Landmk Nu-Wilshire (2)	6,861	61
Dallas	1	AMC Highland Pk. (4)	8,022	1
586,472	2	AMC Forum (6)	10,579	2
	3	Granada Movie Grill (1)	1,704	22
San Francisco	1	UA Coronet (1)	8,371	3
410,410	2	Century Presidio (1)	5,774	2
	3	Blm Royal (1)	4,530	8
Philadelphia	1	UA Sameric (4)	21,319	1
410,406	2	UA Cheltenham (8)	40,063	3
	3	Cinemagic 3 at Penn (3)	13,306	2
Miami	1	AMC Kendall T&C (10)	25,904	7
408,790	2	Blockbuster Imax (1)	1,923	1
	3	UA Movies at the Falls (12)	22,881	5
Boston	1	Sony Cheri (4)	27,388	1
277,752	2	FEI Somerville (1)	41,357	4
	3	NA Circle Cinema (7)	21,261	3
Phoenix	1	Century Glendale 9 D-I (9)	20,420	2
261,703	2	UA Christown Mall (6)	12,258	4
	3	Hark Cine Capri (1)	1,999	1
Chicago	1	Village North (1)	2,329	6
237,391	2	CO Biograph (3)	6,246	10
	3	Sony Webster Place (8)	14,341	1
Toronto	1	Famous Uptown (3)	9,194	1
221,900	2	Famous Eglinton (1)	2,329	3
	3	CO Erin Mills (5)	2,311	4
Houston	1	CO River Oaks Plaza (12)	14,733	1
200,246	2	GCC West Oaks Central (6)	5,448	9
	3	Sony Southpoint (5)	4,464	10
San Diego	1	Mann Valley Circle (1)	1,239	4
136,916	2	Mann Cinema (1)	1,180	2
	3	The Vogue Theatre (1)	750	21

Total Requests	Rank	Theatre (# screens)	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
Kansas City	1	63rd St. D-I (2)	2,637	14
132,269	2	Dksn Glenwood (4)	4,526	1
	3	Dksn Westglen (12)	12,802	4
Seattle	1	CO Cinerama (1)	1,226	1
118,881	2	Act III Crossroads (8)	8,714	7
	3	Act III Mountlake (9)	9,503	6
Atlanta	1	AMC Galleria (8)	4,774	8
113,926	2	Lef Garden Hills (1)	517	51
	3	Kings Cobb Center (6)	2,877	16
Denver	1	Cinderella Twin D-I (2)	1,829	16
113,823	2	AMC Buckingham (6)	5,158	4
	3	AMC Tiffany Plaza (6)	3,207	12
Nashville	1	Carmike Springfield (1)	1,450	1
98,056	2	Carmike Hickory (8)	9,046	3
	3	Carmike Bell Forge (10)	9,914	8
Minneapolis	1	GCC Shelard Park (5)	3,247	4
91,145	2	CO Skyway (6)	3,583	10
	3	UA Pavilion at Crossroads (7)	4,134	6
Cleveland	1	Regal Severance Movies (8)	8,176	2
84,696	2	General Southgate (3)	2,914	5
	3	GCC Ridge Park Sq. (8)	6,517	3
San Antonio	1	Act III Galaxy (14)	12,376	7
76,432	2	Act III Bandera (6)	5,065	3
	3	Act III Rolling Oaks (6)	4,677	2
Las Vegas	1	UA Showcase (8)	7,742	3
72,200	2	Gold Coast Twin (2)	1,521	7
	3	Century Las Vegas 6 D-I (6)	4,415	1
Washington, DC	1	CO Cinema (1)	1,345	1
67,324	2	CO Uptown (1)	1,210	2
	3	CO Embassy (1)	725	3
Sacramento	1	Century Century (21)	2,483	1
60,190	2	Century Sacramento 6 D-I (6)	5,021	5
	3	Century 49'er D-I (6)	5,007	2
Detroit	1	Star Taylor (10)	3,920	6
49,908	2	AMC Southland (4)	1,321	2
	3	AMC Eastland (2)	636	4

Top 3 Actively* Requested Theatres:

1. CO Worldwide New York, NY
2. Sony Lincoln Sq. New York, NY
3. Famous Coliseum 10 Toronto, Canada

**Caller specifically requested theatre*

Key to Exhibitors

AMC	AMC Theatres, Inc.	Cobb	Cobb Theatres	Hark	Harkins Theatres	MJR	MJR Theatre Service		
Act III	Act III Theatres	Dksn	Dickinson Theatres	Landmk	Landmark Theatre Corp.	NA	National Amusements		
Blm	Blumenfeld Theatres	Famous	Famous Players	Laemmle	Laemmle Theatres	Pacific	Pacific Theatres		
Carmike	Carmike Cinemas, Inc	Fei	Fei Theatres	Lef	Lefont Theatres	Regal	Regal Cinemas		
Century	Century Theatres	Kings	Kings Cinema	Mann	Mann Theatres	Sony	Sony Theatres		
CityCin	City Cinemas	GCC	General Cinema Theatres	Mann MN	Mann Minneapolis	Star	Loews-Star Theatres		
CO	Cineplex Odeon Corp	General	General Theatres	Met	Metropolitan Theatres Corp	UA	United Artists Theatre Circuit		

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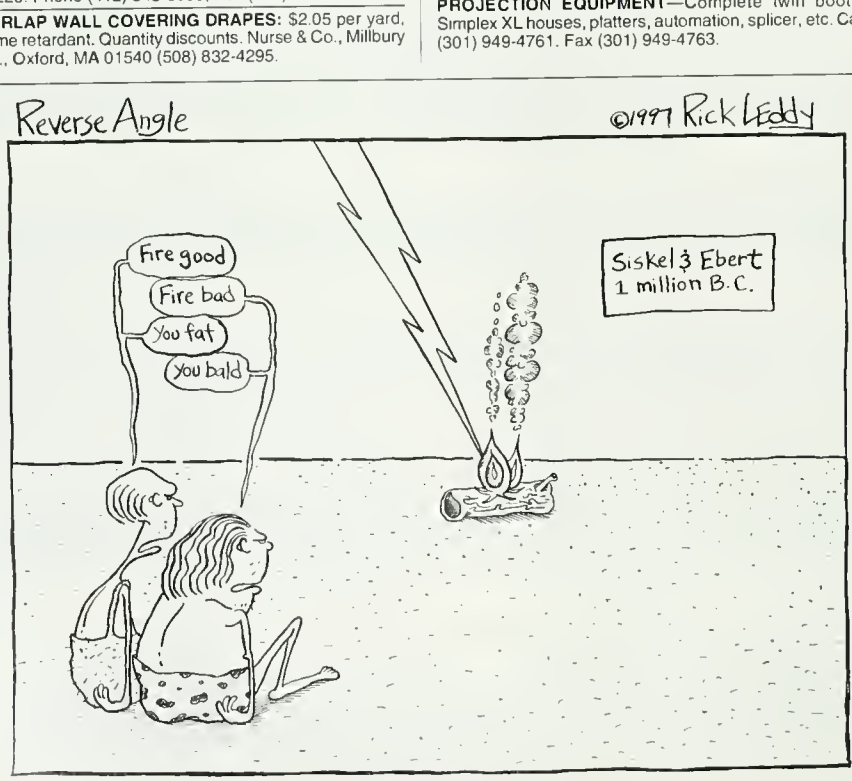
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The Big Picture

It's tempting to view the current boom in the production of science fiction films as almost wholly driven by baby boom nostalgia for old movie formats, coupled with the impact of computer technology on movie imagery. By coincidence, this very issue of **BOXOFFICE** reflects that duality. On page 18, we report on "Starship Troopers," a film about a futuristic war between human space soldiers and a vast army of insect-like aliens that would have been impossible to mount believably without the ever-evolving pictorial capabilities of Computer Graphics Imaging (CGI). On page 70, meanwhile, you'll find an article by the legendary Sam Arkoff, founder with the late Jim Nicholson of American International Pictures, whose low-budget science fiction films of the '50s and '60s are demonstrable influences on everything from "Independence Day" to "Event Horizon" to "Men In Black."



In a sense, though, it's still surprising that we're coming to the close of a moviegoing year in which a cheeky sci-fi throwback will almost surely be the top-grossing film. Pundits with a sociological bent have long contended that the science fiction cycle of the '50s was driven by subterranean currents in the post-WWII American psyche—the A-bomb made manifest as the giant radioactive critters of "Them," "The Deadly Mantis" and "The Amazing Colossal Man;" fear of a Russian invasion transmuted into the alien attacks of "Earth vs. The Flying Saucers," "Invaders From Mars" or "War of the Worlds."

Though limiting, such observations are valid enough. Which raises an interesting question: In an era when America is the world's sole superpower, when fears of nuclear attack are stifled by the lack of a worthy global adversary, why are millions of moviegoers being drawn to films which are ultimately trading on genre formulas created and popularized in response to the peculiar social predicament of the Cold War?

Spectacle surely plays a part in our new sci-fi boom; the CGI technologies driving these films are nothing if not capable of spectacular effects. Some believe millennial anxiety is another influence on our contemporary angst about the world of the future, and perhaps there's truth in that as well. The year 2000 does, after all, have a terrifyingly round, anything-can-happen sort of *gravitas* about it. During the *first* millennium of the Roman calendar, it has been said, so many of Europe's farmers and laborers became convinced a Biblical apocalypse was just around the corner that there was a marked negative effect on Europe's economy as workers didn't bother with planting crops or shoeing horses that they wouldn't need anyhow come the end of the world. Still, it's hard to believe all that many people of today (other than conspiracy buffs and the religiously obsessed) are currently thinking too hard about numerological symbolism as they go about their daily lives.

The answer to the riddle posed by our revived interest in sci-fi may lie somewhat closer to the eternal verities of the science fiction form, as opposed to the metaphoric filigree the Cold War era hung on it. The great theme of science fiction is, after all, man and his relationship to technology—to the things we create that may ultimately prove too powerful for us to control. In that sense, the myth of Icarus, whose wings melted because he flew too close to the sun, is a work of science fiction—despite the fact that it dates from a time when the nearest thing to a Cold War was between Athens and Sparta. Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein" is surely science fiction—arguably the "Ur" myth underlying the entire genre. Yet "Frankenstein" was written in 1818—a century and more before Yalta, Potsdam, Sputnik and the Berlin Wall.

What usually gets forgotten about '50s America is that there was a lot more than just geopolitical tension going on. Across all sectors of society, a transforming technological paradigm shift was under way, with the TV, the satellite, the rocket booster, the guided missile, the freeway, the commercial jet plane and a thousand other "space age" wonders staggering to life simultaneously. Any one of these creations would have had a major effect on the citizenry. In combination, their impact was almost immeasurable.

For with new convenience came massive social dislocation. The superhighway allowed city dwellers to move to the suburbs, where the solitude of a 40 minute commute, plus isolation from the easy interaction of the urban neighborhood enclaves that had nurtured generations, were the price of increased security and material comfort. The hydrogen bomb and the guided missile made Americans feel safe from any enemy—until the enemy got them too, and there was suddenly nowhere on the entire planet to hide. TV entertained

cheaply, but it also cut deeply into hours traditionally spent on "quality time" among family members. By the mid-'50s, the dysfunctional family was edging toward becoming an American norm, juvenile delinquency was a growing social problem, and divorce rates were starting to climb.

More than Stalin, the bomb, and the horrors of creeping, TV broadcast-induced American conformity, technology itself can therefore be said to have haunted the sci-fi screens of the '50s, just as it more subtly haunts our own sci-fi renaissance today. For once again, we live in a time of rapid technological change, as "www" prefixes and ".com" suffixes and the Microsoft Corporation intrude further each day into those subliminal spaces in our collective unconscious where we try to define ourselves and our place in the world. That enticing, fetishized monstrosity, the personal computer, and its endlessly replicating offshoot, the World Wide Web, give us ever more intricate excuses to boot up, jack in, and cut ourselves off from simpler forms of human contact like speech and touch—simpler forms which are the very things the



psychologists and sociologists say we already lack most in our overly compartmentalized world, and which we need now more than ever before.

Think of it: the personal computer has become almost as common as the television, the radio, the VCR. Statistics show that high school students have suddenly found a new interest in math—not out of a love for the complex wonders of Euclid and the square root of pi but because they fear for their professional futures if the PC revolution, with its emphasis on hard data, should leave them behind. Simulated realities—a sci-fi pipedream as recently as three years ago—are becoming as commonplace as the closest theatre lobby, the latest press release from GameWorks or DisneyQuest. And so the struggle of the Men In Black, the futuristic Starship Trooper, may in fact be as much a metaphoric struggle to humanize unfathomable technologies through pluck or humor as it is a struggle against weird extraterrestrial forces. The alien beings who gather in the dark spaces outside the framelines of our movie screens waiting to rush in and destroy us or bend us to their will may at least in part be emissaries of the unknowable, potentially dehumanizing effects of an enemy whose language and customs are rooted not in Latin, Greek and Old Middle English but in Fortran, Basic and DOS.

That the computers themselves are largely the technological authors of the images that speak to our unease about them is an irony of potentially historic proportions. Or maybe not an irony, but a throughline from the Cold War genre formulas which live again in our moviehouses. For one distinctive aspect of the science fiction movies that '50s and '60s filmmakers like Jack Arnold, Roger Corman, Sam Arkoff and a hundred journeyman screenwriters and directors bequeathed to us was a relentless sense of paranoia about what's going on just outside of our field of vision, and the scale of the enemy's victory. The invaders are here, their movies so often seem to say, but they have come to us unannounced; the battle may be already lost before we realize it has even begun. Our foe hasn't shown his face yet, or else he looks like something familiar, even desirable. We may meet the enemy, only to find that he is us.

—Ray Greene

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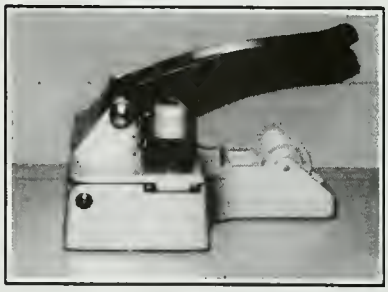
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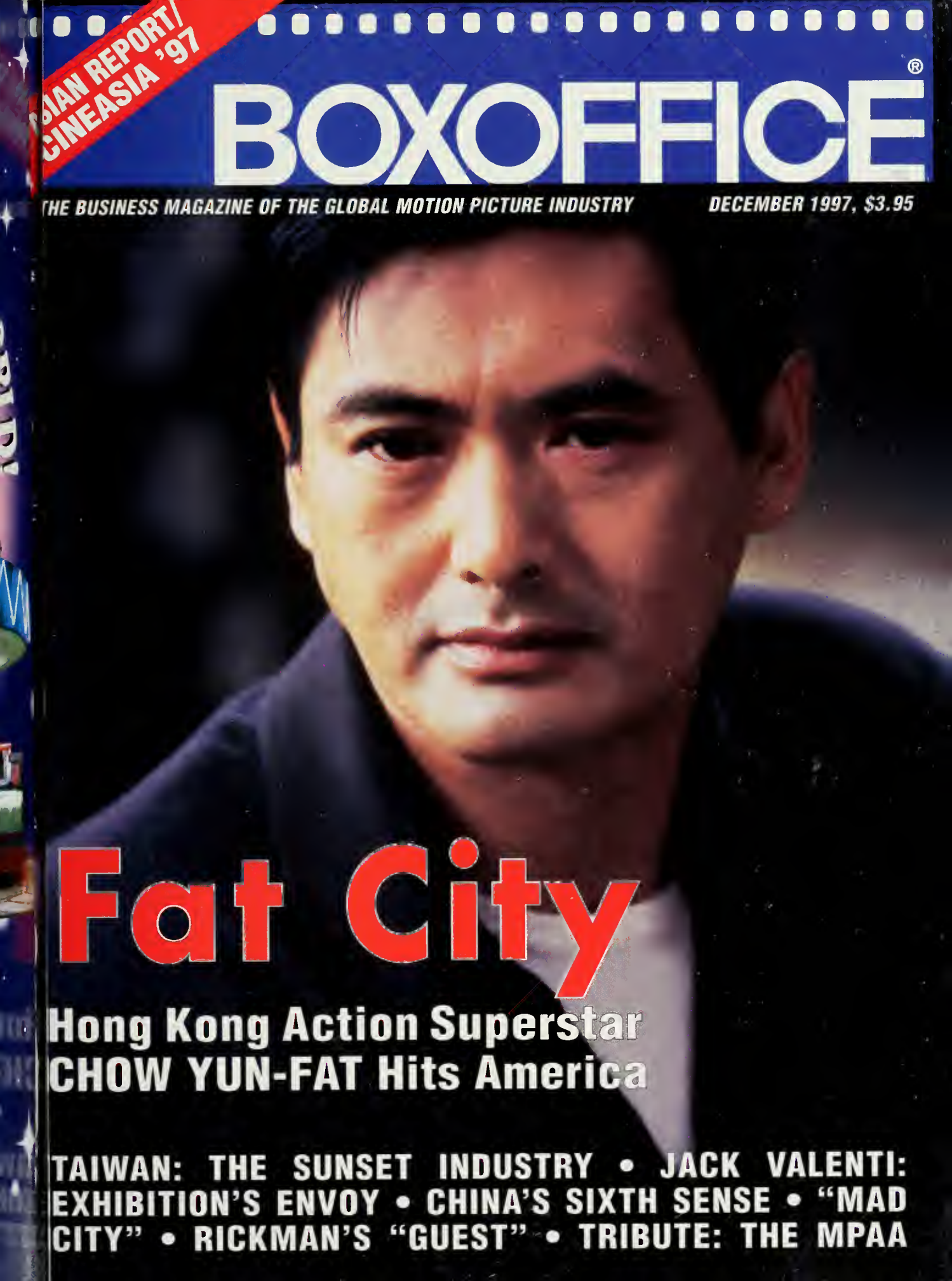
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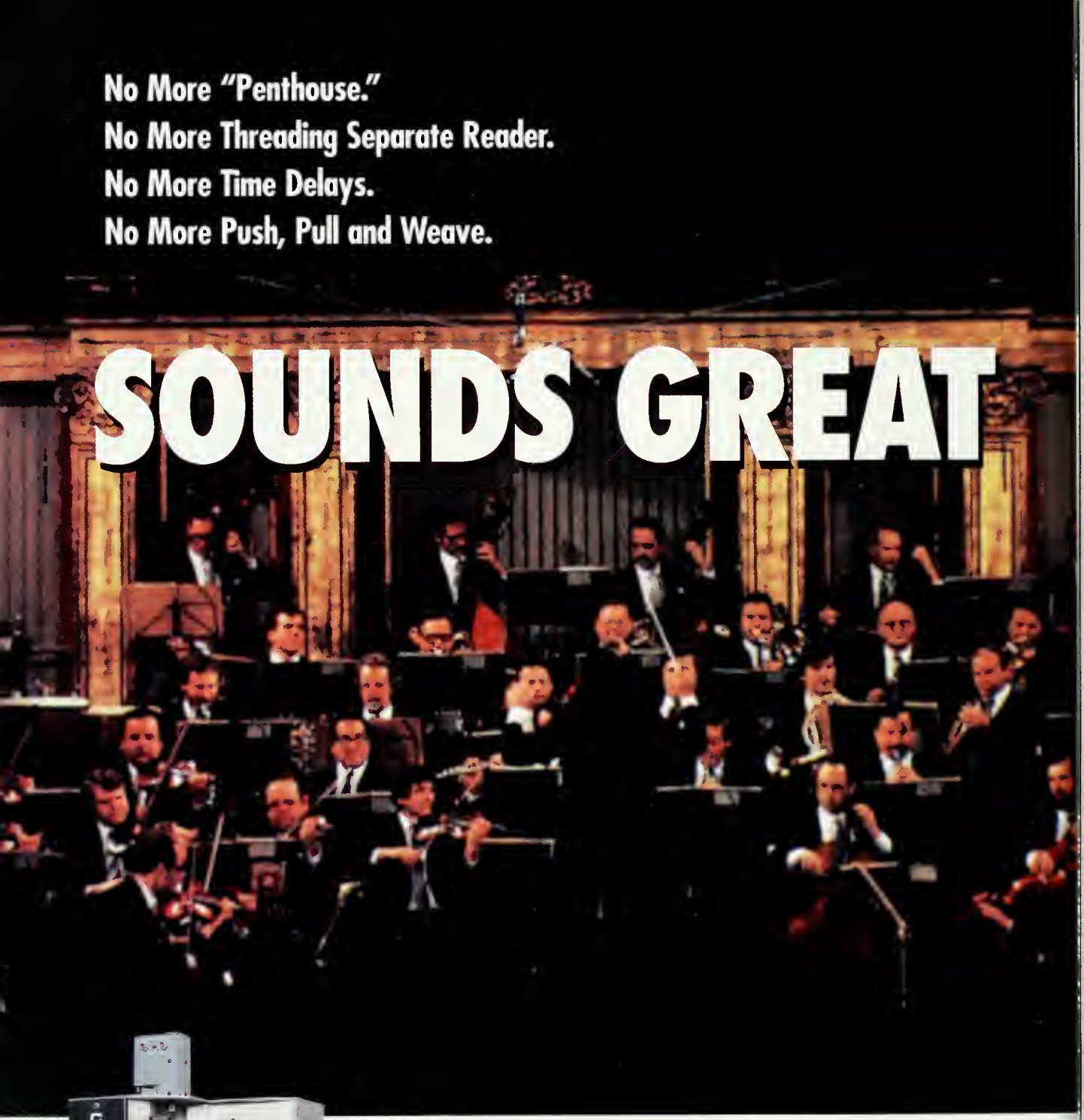


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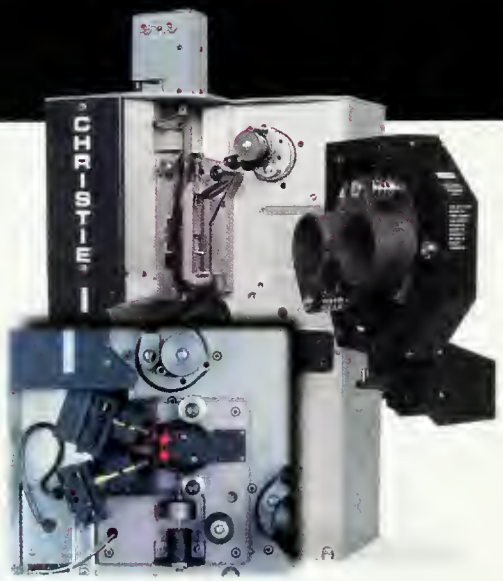
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Hail and Farewell...

In order to be a writer, you have to believe in symmetry. Not necessarily that the world functions according to some grand organizing principle; there are as many fine writers whose work seeks to disprove that concept as there are those who choose to support it. But to write almost anything, you have to believe that conclusions can be drawn from the grand human chaos of living, that decipherable meanings are out there, waiting to be unearthed, and that things of both shadow and substance can be set down and communicated to others in some combination of hieroglyphs and type. The very act of setting pen to paper is, in its own way, ultimately an act of faith.

Here at **BOXOFFICE**, we have arrived at a moment of carefully scripted symmetry—a moment involving not just the people who work here, but every one of you who read the information, opinions and verbal daydreams we provide. This issue marks the end of our 1997 production calendar, but it is also a bittersweet ending of another sort: my final issue as **BOXOFFICE MAGAZINE**'s Editor-in-Chief.

Conflicted as my own emotions are about leaving this wonderful organization and the even more wonderful people with whom I've shared the greatest creative adventure of my life so far, it has been dawning on me for some time that other endeavors might be calling to me. It may have occurred to those of you who have lived through my four years as Editor-in-Chief that this magazine was in the hands of a fairly restless soul. My time at the helm has been one of incremental but quite dramatic change in the look, layout, format and content of this publication—changes that were not the work of a single individual, but of an entire staff that was willing to give its all to make **BOXOFFICE** what, for good or ill, was my view of the very best it could be.

My vision of **BOXOFFICE** reached fruition about 18 months ago, when, thanks to the heroic efforts of Managing Editor Kim Williamson and Senior Editor Christine James, **BOXOFFICE** began what for me was an unprecedented and still uninterrupted run of great issues—issues against which even an inveterate nitpicker like Ray Greene found it hard to lodge a single complaint. Once upon a time, I had a vision of where I'd like to see **BOXOFFICE** go to. Beginning last year, we arrived at my version of that destination, and so my primary efforts since then have been directed more at consolidating that achievement than at finding new aesthetic mountains to climb.

I understand enough about the very talented people I work with to know that their personal inclinations might easily have steered them toward destinations that are different and perhaps even superior to the one I chose to go to. Running **BOXOFFICE** has been an amazing learning experience for me on almost every front, and one of the things I've learned about myself is that consolidating gains—which is a necessary aspect of any executive position—does not seem to hold my interest in the very long run. I would appear to be less fascinated by the view from my idea of the summit than I was by the original climb.

Put those two perceptions together and another perception slowly becomes born: that my creative energies, which have been so bound up in **BOXOFFICE** all these years, have come to a moment of transition, and that the most intriguing and inventive possibility left to me might be to know when to stand aside.

There could be no better hands to pass **BOXOFFICE** into than those of Kim and Christine, who came to us as excellent journalists, and then blossomed before my eyes into two of the finest writers and editors I have ever had the honor to know. I've worked hard during my time at **BOXOFFICE**, but that said, it's easy to overvalue the contributions of the man who comes first on the masthead. While I'm proud of so many of the things it was granted to me to do here, hiring Kim and Christine onto the **BOXOFFICE** staff was to me the most significant contribution I made during my **BOXOFFICE** career.

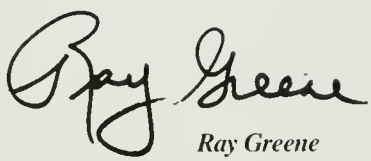
Two other members of our full-time staff were co-workers I inherited from my predecessor: our National Advertising Director, Bob Vale, and his assistant, Linda Andrade. The Linda I will always remember was not only an amazingly competent worker able to solve a million crises with style, humor and aplomb, but a sort of unofficial muse to the rest of us—a source of constant encouragement and inspiration, a collaborator, a co-conspirator, a comrade in arms.

Bob Vale, on the other hand, is the other half of the most sustained professional collaboration I have ever enjoyed—my mentor, when necessary; my adversary, where appropriate; and, underlying everything else, my dear and very close friend. Of the million precious memories I will take away with me, it occurs to me as I write this that the sound of Bob's booming laughter as he joked and jibed his way through a thousand thousand sales calls may be the most precious one of all.

Four more people helped make my time at **BOXOFFICE** memorable: Morrie Schlozman, our gentlemanly and still-vital connection to this magazine's glorious past; Gwen Campbell, ad consultant extraordinaire; Dan Johnson, that pleasant, laughing voice on the phone, holding the fort at our home office. And no farewell would be complete without acknowledging the enormous support of our publisher Bob Dietmeier, who was unstinting in his acknowledgement of the things that went right, and unwavering in his willingness to let us attempt things a less generous publisher might have balked at. The security of his commitment to this magazine and those who work for it was the connective thread of my time in the Big Chair. For that, Mr. D., and for your faith in me, you will always have my deepest thanks.

My byline will continue to appear in **BOXOFFICE** from time to time, but an era, such as it was, has herewith come to a close. And so I take my seat in the bleachers with the rest of you, rejoining you on the other side of that mysterious frontier that separates the reader from the read. December is upon us. A moment of closure, but also of new possibilities. And while I may be personally moving toward other journeys, and am excited by all the prospects that movement represents, I leave **BOXOFFICE** with a heart almost too full for expression: I go forward, but with a fond, amazed, and permanent backward glance.

It has been a privilege serving all of you,



Ray Greene

BOXOFFICE
DECEMBER, 1997 VOL. 133 NO. 12 ASIAN REPORT/CINEASIA

UNQUOTE: *One doesn't discover new lands without consenting to lose sight of the shore for a very long time.*—**ANDRE GIDE**

DOUBLE FEATURE: ASIAN REPORT/CINEASIA

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66 THE BIG PICTURE: ASIAN OLIVIER
Why Chow Yun-Fat is a lot more than just a man who looks good with a gun. ***By Ray Greene***

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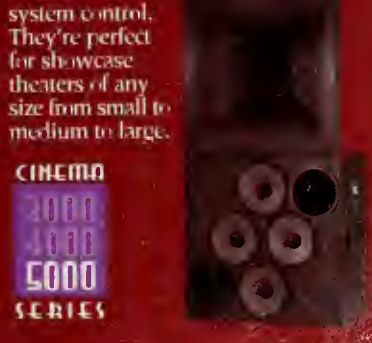
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Response No. 342

HOLLYWOOD UPDATES

Jodie Foster's Egg Pictures has announced a slate of 14 pictures in various stages of development. Currently in production is "The Baby Dance," based on a play by Jane Anderson about an infertile couple who consider buying a baby from a poor family. Anderson is writing the screenplay and directing; the film will star Stockard Channing, Laura Dern and Peter Reigert. Also in the works at Egg is the Richard Loncraine-helmed "Jonathan Wild," a crime drama set in the 17th century that's being scripted by Don Macpherson ("The Avengers"); "Waking the Dead," a romantic drama starring Billy Crudup ("Without Limits"); "Keely and Du," based on a play by Jane Martin with the adaptation being written by Emmy-winning writer Theresa Rebeck (TV's "NYPD Blue") for director Betty Thomas ("Private Parts"); and the Al Pacino starrer "Investigation," which is based on a Paul Schrader screenplay that's an adaptation of the 1970 Oscar-winning foreign language film "Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion." To date, Egg has produced two films: 1994's "Nell," in which Foster starred, and 1995's "Home for the Holidays," which she directed. Egg has a production deal with Polygram Filmed Entertainment; most of Egg's films will be distributed either through Gramercy or Polygram Films, the company's newly established wide-release distribution entity.

Writer/director **George Tillman** and producer **Bob Teitel** have entered a two-year, first-look production deal with **Fox 2000,** which released the duo's current hit "Soul Food," the comedy/drama that cooked up surprisingly hot boxoffice receipts of $11 million on its opening weekend. Tillman and Teitel will have an office on the Fox lot and will be developing projects for Tillman to write and helm and Teitel to produce. They may also become involved in producing other people's films.

"Scream" scribe **Kevin Williamson** has expanded his previously announced pact with **Miramax/Dimension** to a multi-million-dollar film and television production deal that extends into the next century. The first project under the arrangement will be "Killing Mrs. Tingle," about a girl who will do anything to be valedictorian of her class. Williamson wrote the script and will make his directorial debut on the comedic horror/thriller. Williamson's most recent scripting credit is the Columbia thriller "I Know What You Did Last Summer," and his much-anticipated follow-up to "Scream," whose title will be either "Scream 2" or "Scream Again," is due in theatres this month.

In a related item, Miramax recently announced that a staggering marketing budget of $15-20 million has been allotted to promote the sequel to last year's surprise blockbuster, which grossed $103 million domestically. That figure is more than double the amount spent to promote the original. Talks are underway with several fast-food chains, with Taco Bell emerging at press time as the most likely promotional partner.

"Scream 2" stars some of today's hippest talent, including Neve Campbell, Courteney Cox, David Arquette, Liev Schreiber, Sarah Michelle Gellar and Jerry O'Connell. The biggest mystery isn't who's the killer, but which of these hot young stars' characters will survive to headline "Scream 3," which Williamson is currently writing.

John Cusack, currently starring in Warner Bros.' "Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil," has signed a first-look deal with **Castle Rock Entertainment** to write, produce and star in films. The recent Buena Vista hit "Grosse Pointe Blank," which starred and was scripted by Cusack, was the first film from **New Crime Productions,** which Cusack runs with **Steven Pink** and **D.V. DeVincentis.** (The partners in Crime are currently working with Caravan on a sequel to "Grosse Pointe Blank," the black comedy about a hit man who questions his career choice and decides to attend his high school reunion to get a perspective on life. Cusack's character, Martin Q. Blank, may choose a job as a corporate downsizer—eliminating people the non-prosecutable way—in the follow-up film). New Crime's new deal with Castle Rock reunites Cusack with Castle Rock topper Rob Reiner, the director who gave Cusack his first starring role in 1985's "The Sure Thing."

Jane Campion, who won an Oscar for scripting "The Piano" (which she also directed), has inked a three-year, first-look pact with Polygram-based **Propaganda Films.** She'll write and produce projects for Propaganda through her production company, **Big Shell Films,** and one of her two next directorial efforts will be for Propaganda as well. Campion last helmed Gramercy's Nicole Kidman starrer "The Portrait of a Lady." Propaganda's recent features include Polygram's "The Game" and Buena Vista's "A Thousand Acres."

London-based **Heyday Films** has signed scripter **Darren Bailie** to a three-picture deal for **Warner Bros.** Heyday head David Heyman, a former production executive at Warner, has a first-look deal with his former employer, under which Heyman is charged with seeking emerging British talent for the studio. The deal with Bailie is the first under the pact; acquired was the as-yet-unproduced scribe's spy thriller set in London, as well as the rights to two other screenplays.

Mark Waters, writer/director of **Miramax's** black comedy "The House of Yes," has entered into a first-look deal with the studio. "Miramax has been extremely supportive with 'The House of Yes,' and I look forward to working on my next project with them," says Waters. That project will be "Strike," a modern-day version of Aristophanes' comedic anti-war themed play "Lysistrata" set in a small-town high school.

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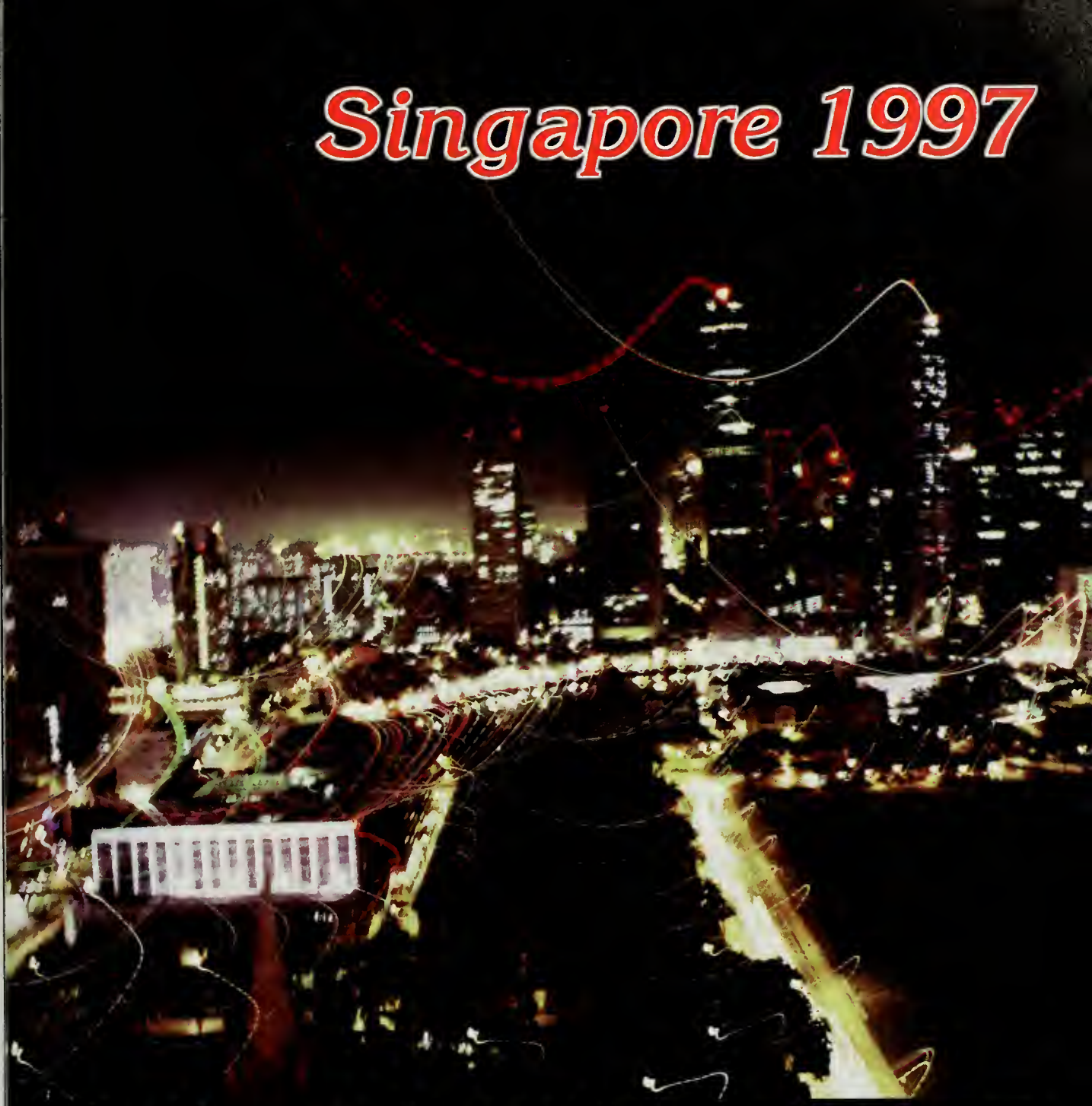
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Response No. 35

HOLLYWOOD REPORT



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"Bad" Girl



MATTHEW BRODERICK

Wins "Election"



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"THE RUNAWAY JURY" This adaptation by Gregory Poirier ("Rosewood") of John Grisham's novel, to be directed by Joel Schumacher ("A Time To Kill"), will star Ed Norton ("The People Vs. Larry Flynt") as a man who manipulates his fellow jurors to vote his way on a precedent-setting tobacco liability ruling. Gwyneth Paltrow ("Great Expectations") also stars. (Warner)

"PLUNKETT & MACLEANE" Jonny Lee Miller ("Trainspotting") and Robert Carlyle ("The Full Monty") star as highwaymen with hearts of gold in this comedy set in the 1700s. Liv Tyler ("That Thing You Do!") co-stars. Jake Scott, son of Ridley Scott, makes his directorial debut. (Distribution is to be set)

"THE OTHER SISTER" Diane Keaton ("The First Wives Club") will star in this drama as the mother of a mildly mentally-retarded teenaged daughter who falls in love with a similarly handicapped classmate. Garry Marshall (helmer of "Frankie and Johnny") directs, co-scripts and produces. (Buena Vista)

"I WOKE UP EARLY THE DAY I DIED" This film, based on a long-lost script by Ed Wood of "Plan 9 From Outer Space" fame, will star an eclectic ensemble cast including Billy Zane ("The Phantom"), Christina Ricci ("The Ice Storm"), Rosanna Arquette ("Deceiver"), Amanda Plummer ("Pulp Fiction"), Eartha Kitt ("Ernest Scared Stupid"), John Ritter ("Sling Blade") and Sandra Bernhard ("Unzipped"). (Distribution is to be set)

"IN DREAMS" Robert Downey Jr. will play a serial killer who kidnaps the daughter of a psychic woman. The mother then begins having dreams about the killer and must prove her visions are true if she is to save her child. Aidan Quinn and Annette Bening also star. (DreamWorks)

"EUGENE ONEGIN" Ralph Fiennes will star and his sister Martha will make her directorial debut in this adaptation of the classic Russian verse novel of the same name. Liv Tyler ("Inventing the Abbotts") also stars. (Distribution is to be set)

"VERY BAD THINGS" Christian Slater ("Julian Po") will play a groom whose life takes a drastic turn the day before his wedding, when bachelor party brouhaha results in the accidental death of a prostitute. Cameron Diaz ("My Best Friend's Wedding") plays the bride-to-be. In talks to join the cast are Jeanne Tripplehorn ("'Til There Was You"), Robert Patrick ("Terminator 2"), Jeremy Piven ("Grosse Pointe Blank") and Jon Favreau ("Swingers"). Peter Berg, a star of TV's "Chicago Hope," scripts and makes his directing debut. (Distribution is to be set)

"ONE TRUE THING" Renee Zellweger ("Jerry Maguire") and Meryl Streep ("Marvin's Room") will star in this story, based on Anna Quindlen's novel, of an on-the-rise journalist (Zellweger) who comes home to help her father care for her terminally ill mother (Streep). The daughter is later accused of giving her mother a lethal dose of morphine. (Universal)

"RONIN" A Ronin is a Japanese term for a master samurai. In this action drama, a group of former intelligence agents of different nationalities are recruited to carry out a dangerous mission. Robert De Niro ("CopLand") is in talks to star for director John Frankenheimer ("The Manchurian Candidate"). (UA)

"MADELEINE" Ludwig Bemelman's classic children's books about the adventures of a Parisian schoolgirl will be brought to the bigscreen by helmer Daisy von Scherler Mayer ("Party Girl"). Frances McDormand ("Fargo") will play the headmistress of Madeleine's school. Nigel Hawthorne ("The Madness of King George") is in talks to play Lord Covington. (TriStar)

"BROKEDOWN PALACE" Jonathan Kaplan ("Bad Girls") will direct this drama about two teenage girls ("The Rainmaker's" Claire Danes and "Cold Comfort Farm's" Kate Beckinsale) who take a trip to Thailand and are wrongfully sentenced to 33 years in prison for smuggling. (Fox)

"AMERICAN NEUROTIC" Hugh Grant ("Nine Months") plays a man who seeks the help of a psychiatrist to cure him of his inability to commit to one woman. When he finally meets the monogamy-inspiring woman of his dreams, he discovers with dismay she's his psychiatrist's daughter. (Columbia)

"ELECTION" This dark high school comedy will star Matthew Broderick ("Addicted to Love") as a teacher who hates the overachieving top candidate for school president ("Freeway's" Reese Witherspoon) and grooms another student to run against her. Alexander Payne ("Citizen Ruth") directs. (Paramount)

"THE INTERPRETER" Robin Williams and helmer Chris Columbus, who worked together on the 1993 hit "Mrs. Doubtfire," will reteam in this comedy in which Williams will play an underqualified interpreter who inadvertently incites mayhem by mistranslating international negotiations of global importance. (Fox)

"BOMBSHELL" Leonardo DiCaprio ("Titanic") is set to play Theodore Hall in this adaptation of Joseph Albright and Marcia Kunstel's book, which chronicles the events leading up to the Cold War. Hall was the genius teen biophysicist who was the youngest member of the team that developed the atomic bomb. He passed on highly classified information to the Soviet Union, purportedly because he felt the balance of power would decrease the likeliness of the weapon being used. (Distribution is to be set)

"MATRIX" Keanu Reeves ("Chain Reaction") and Lawrence Fishburne ("Event Horizon") will star in this thriller about a society enslaved by an alien race of computers that use humans as an energy source. An underground group of hackers strive to combat technology. Andy and Larry Wachowski ("Bound") will direct. (Warner)

"BABE IN METROPOLIS" James Cromwell ("Star Trek: First Contact") will reprise his Oscar-nominated role as Farmer Hoggett in this sequel, in which everyone's favorite pig tries to save the farm from foreclosure by travelling to the States to vie for the cash prize in an American sheepherding competition. George Miller returns to helm. (Universal)

ET CETERA: Patricia Arquette will be the point in a love triangle in the Woody Harrelson and Billy Crudup starrer **"HiLo Country"**...Danny DeVito is in talks to direct and star in Universal's action/comedy **"Mystery Men,"** about a group of second-rate superheroes with not-so-amazing powers...In the Fox comedy **"High Boys and Low Boys,"** Chris Rock plays a street-smart guy on the run from the mob. He tries to hide out by getting a job with an antique dealer (Rupert Everett) but he finds that the curio world is even more crooked than the mob.



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Response No. 100

FAT CITY

Asian Film's Reigning Top Gun CHOW YUN-FAT Blasts His Way into Hollywood With His English-Language "REPLACEMENT KILLERS"



by Shlomo Schwartzberg

He may be one of the biggest stars in the world, but Asian movie icon Chow Yun-Fat has yet to crack the lucrative North American market. That's set to change as he prepares for the imminent release of his first American action film, "The Replacement Killers," in which he stars as a conflicted hit man opposite Chinese-speaking American actress Mira Sorvino.

Upon first meeting the handsome 42-year-old, one can't help but be struck by his movie star glamour. Wearing a white linen jacket, black pants and a silk tie, the urbane, polite and soft-spoken Chow prompts comparison to the cinematic royalty of olden days; the Cary Grant references that Chow's role in the John Woo-directed "Once A Thief" evoked seem fully justified up close. And judging by the reaction of the crowds in the theatre where he appeared at The Toronto International Film Festival, Chow certainly has a star's gift of exciting people merely by his presence—although such reactions still surprise him in a hemisphere where he feels he doesn't really have that much audience cachet.

"I'm glad that they give me a lot of support. I never think about the North American [public], but the people who have seen me in John [Woo's] films, they give me a lot of respect. I'm stunned when I walk into the theatre."

Chow Yun-Fat showed up in Toronto to present a retrospective showing of one of his favorite films—the formative one, in fact, that inspired him to go him into acting. Thanks to his Woo collaborations—which include "The Killer," "A Better Tomorrow" and "Hard-Boiled," the three Hong Kong productions that made Woo's name in America—Chow is thought of in the West as mainly an action star. But if "One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest" isn't a title you'd expect Chow to choose as one of his all-time favorites, you probably don't know the man and his background all that well.

"Actually," says Chow, "my career started in 1974. I started out by working for TV stations for 14 years, a long contract." As a television actor, he played doctor/lawyer/dramatic roles, mostly in Hong Kong soap operas, on which he never picked up a gun. "I never, never did action-hero types, like in 'A Better Tomorrow' or 'The Killer,' until in 1986 when I met John Woo and made 'A Better Tomorrow, Part One.' But the filmmakers who saw me first as a Hong Kong film idol holding two guns, they think of me as the action hero." Will he continue to be pegged solely as an action star? "It depends on the [performance of] my first American movie," he says. "If the movie sales come out good, then maybe I can do some comedy or drama." To prepare for that possibility, Chow numbers intense actors like Robert De Niro, Jack Nicholson, Marlon Brando and Nicholas Cage among the performers with whom he'd like to co-star.

> ***"In Hollywood, a lot of the audience and script-writers will stick to very physical or very logical ideas—they say, 'you cannot do that.'"***

The idea of working in Hollywood isn't as alien for Chow as one might think. "When I was a teenager [in Hong Kong] I saw a lot of Hollywood movies like 'The Longest Day,' 'The Great Escape.' Mostly, I liked the war movies." Hong Kong barely had a movie industry then, a state of affairs that lasted until the 1970s, with the arrival of Bruce Lee and his Kung Fu movies. "After Bruce Lee, the whole market changed," Chow says.

The Lee connection is an interesting one, since Lee was arguably the first Asian superstar to attract an American audience. Now Chow stands poised for his own pass at American stardom, and he recognizes just how much is riding on his first American film. Though it features some strong action elements, "The Replacement Killers" promises to offer Chow a chance to display some of his considerable acting range: As a hit man who refuses to carry out a contract killing on a young child and ends up being hunted himself, Chow will get the chance to play the kind of complex "good bad man" that made his Hong Kong films for Woo such an international sensation.

"The Replacement Killers" is, Chow admits, "absolutely" a test case for his chances of making it in the U.S. and Hollywood. And he's very aware that his success or failure in the U.S. will impact other Asian actors who want to break into the American film industry. "I feel a little bit of pressure," he says. "I'm glad I'm the first one to take the bullet."

But he also knows he can't really predict how "The Replacement Killers" will do at the U.S. boxoffice, something he could do in Hong Kong, where his name on the marquee pretty much guarantees a hit, as it does in all other Asian territories. "I do my best," he says. "My situation as an actor in foreign productions is totally different."

If Chow breaks through in the U.S., he will be following in the footsteps of at least one major Hong Kong film personality: his old friend Woo, a director who is among the hottest in Hollywood on the strength of last summer's blockbuster hit "Face/Off" and its predecessor "Broken Arrow." Given how close the two men are, it seems natural to wonder why Chow wasn't featured in those earlier Woo hits. According to Chow, Woo would have been taking needless risks by using an actor like Chow who is little-known in America before Woo himself was fully established in Hollywood. "This is a very sensitive political question. Mostly, I have to thank John Woo. John Woo brought my name to international [attention], so more or less, people who know John Woo know me. There are always some difficulties about the politics of the studios. They won't allow Woo [the freedom to choose his cast on] an $80 million budget. He's just a small kid in this market."

Now that he's made his own American film debut, Chow has noticed other interesting differences between the American production system and that of Hong Kong. "Hollywood is totally different from the Hong Kong style," Chow says. "Our working schedule [on 'The Replacement Killers'] was very systematic, everything fixed, you cannot change a line anytime. In Hong Kong, you shoot 20 hours and 40 hours straight. Here, they make sure it's 12 hours a day. [The Hollywood system] is much better, physically, for actors. In Hong Kong, you can [be shooting] four or five films, all at the same time!"

Budgetwise, the $28 million "Replacement Killers" towers over the average $1.2 million Hong Kong action epic. (Hong Kong budgets can go up to $6 million "if they belong to the Jackie Chan level," adds Chow.)

In general, Hong Kong actors are far more likely to do their own stuntwork than are their American counterparts. Chow did attempt to do most of his own stunts in "The Replacement Killers:" "More than 80 percent of the time, I tried to do it myself." But unions and the film's stunt coordinator often decreed otherwise; Chow estimates that he finally got to do only about half his stunts in the finished film.

He is basically happy with how he comes across in "The Replacement Killers," "except my English. At the very beginning, I was so afraid of the pronunciation, so I took great care." For Chow, the trade-off was that concentrating on the mechanics of the English language occasionally deflected him in his search for his character's "anguish" over his plight in the film. Co-star Sorvino (who has a degree in Chinese culture) helped a lot, especially as she and Chow could speak Mandarin to each other. "I'm glad that I had the privilege to work with her for my first American movie," Chow says, "because she never made me feel nervous at all. We had fun on the set, we talked a lot because sometimes Quentin [Sorvino's boyfriend, Quentin Tarantino, an acknowledged Chow Yun-Fat fan] would come to the set and say hello to everybody."

Chow's new experiences in the American industry do excite him, though he says he could live without the current fixation on a film's first weekend take at the boxoffice. "I think the problem is the [emphasis the] studio will put on the numbers, how much you get back from the market," he says. And while Hollywood may be physically easier for actors, it restricts the kind of films they can star in, feels Chow. "Hong Kong movies are not about reality, we're talking about fantasy. Mostly, in Hollywood, a lot of the audience and scriptwriters will stick to very physical or very logical ideas—they say, 'you cannot do that.' In Hong Kong, we're so free, we can do a drama with action and comedy together, we can do comedy with action and romance together, we can mix it together. But here, action is action, romance is romance. Hong Kong movies try to attract different kinds of audiences, so they put every ingredient in the soup."

Chow chose the part of the hit man in "The Replacement Killers" because it differed from the run-of-the-mill scripts he was being offered by Hollywood. "In the last few years, my [American] agent and my manger tried to set up a lot of different roles for me. But usually a lot of studios sent me the same [type of] scripts, with me as the gangster of Chinatown, the big brother. This is not the way to do it. So fortunately, my producer Max Baer proposed a different kind of script [which became 'The Replacement Killers']. I *had* to do this character—it seemed like a very good role for my first American movie."

Choosing to work with a first-time director as he did with Antoine Fuqua on "The Replacement Killers" may have seemed risky, but Chow insists his relationship with Fuqua was rewarding. "He's a very nice man, a very talented director. He gave me a lot of freedom to influence my character. And I also got involved in developing the script. I talked a lot to the scriptwriter." Chow took a hands-on approach to fleshing out his character, who was initially more generic. "More or less, I tried to get a sense of this guy, his own [reality as] a killer who is from China. His background, very clearly, is very Chinese, he's a soldier from before his life of crime."



SURE AS SHOOTIN': *A Woo-like face-off from "The Replacement Killers."*

Unlike most of his Hong Kong roles, in "The Replacement Killers," Chow doesn't get the girl. "It's not a romance, more of a buddy [relationship], no sex scenes, no kissing. It's very clean," says Chow with a laugh.

Depending on the performance of "The Replacement Killers," Chow may next star in a new version of "Anna and the King" (the drama on which Rodgers and Hammerstein's "The King and I" was based) or in a Hollywood movie directed by Woo. The Woo project is being developed under the title "King's Ransom;" Chow describes it as a caper comedy in the vein of Woo's "Once a Thief."

Recent reports of a declining boxoffice for indigenous productions in Hong Kong worry him. "The market is dying because the production is worse, we don't have a top writer, director. We need some new blood, including new stars." The home market matters greatly to Chow because, unlike other Hong Kong luminaries such as Woo and director Tsui Hark ("A Chinese Ghost Story"), both of whom have left the territory, Chow has no intention of emigrating from Hong Kong now that it has returned to Chinese rule. "We still have our freedom of speech, the economy is picking up faster than under the British, and the film market is picking up from this summer. I think [unless] you make a very serious film that goes against the communist party, things will be fine."

SPECIAL "GUEST"

Alan Rickman Invites Audiences into his "Winter" Wonderland

by Christine James



TIME AND TIDE: *Emma Thompson stands against a frozen sea in Alan Rickman's directorial debut "The Winter Guest."*

"There's a bug on your hand," BOXOFFICE informs Alan Rickman.

"Oh, I don't mind," he says in a gentle tone, delicately brushing the insect away while making sure not to injure the creature. "Go on, fly away," he tells it tenderly.

It's conclusive proof that the actor who thought nothing of annihilating innumerable humans in such films as "Die Hard" and "Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves" in real life would not hurt a fly.

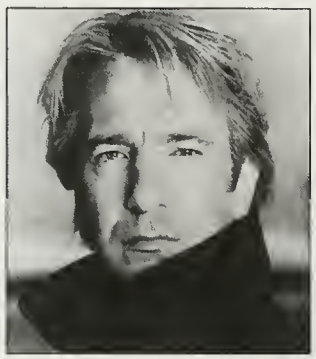
Of course, while Rickman is best known for his villainous characterizations, he has had equal success in portraying sensitive, sympathetic sorts in films like "Truly, Madly, Deeply" and "Sense and Sensibility." And now, he takes on another persona, this time assuming a role behind the camera. As the director of "The Winter Guest," Rickman tells the tale of four pairs of people and their perspectives on life.

Set in a small Scottish town on the coldest day in history—so cold the sea has frozen over—"The Winter Guest's" central focus is the contentious yet loving relationship between a mother and daughter, played by real-life mother and daughter Phyllida Law and Emma Thompson. Intertwined into their account are the stories of a teenage couple (Gary Hollywood and Arlene Cockburn) falling in love; two 12-year-old boys (Douglas Murphy and Sean Biggerstaff) embarking on adventures; and two 65-year-old women (Sheila Reid and Sandra Voe) whose hobby is attending funerals of people they don't know. "You're there with [these characters] looking at life through generations," Rickman synopsizes. "And if that sounds a little somber, it shouldn't, because I hope that a lot of it is very funny."

The material itself was commissioned by Rickman after many conversations with Lindsay Duncan, one of his co-stars in the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of "Les Liaisons Dangereuses," about her relationship with her mother. Rickman brought some of the ideas that came from these anecdotes to writer Sharman Macdonald, who scripted a stage version, which premiered in England in 1995 and which Rickman directed with Phyllida Law starring.

"When the notion for the piece came," Rickman recalls, "Sharman was the first person I thought of who should write it. I knew that it was her because of the fact that I had read her first play ['When I Was a Girl I Used to Scream and Shout'] when I was on a script panel at one of London's fringe theatres, and I'd recommended that it should be done. So it's sort of a full-circle thing.

"There's quite a lot of full circles in this piece," Rickman muses, "what with Phyllida not being able to do the play until the time when we did it, because she'd been nursing her own mother and she couldn't do any theatre. And then the absolute moment I rang her to ask her if she would read it was when she was available to do theatre again. And then the fact that when the notion of the film came up, it so happened that the circle was turning and it was exactly the right time for Emma. Five years earlier and she would have been too young."



Having a natural mother-daughter rapport already established with Law and Thompson was a boon, says Rickman, while acknowledging that "it might have been a nightmare. I can think of a few mother-daughter relationships that might not have worked at all on film. They might have been horribly competitive, or their real-life relationship might have been incredibly complicated to shake off in order to play a relationship that isn't theirs. As it happened, that wasn't the case. They're very different people, but they're very complementary. And they both have a huge amount of respect for each other as actors. And truth be told, after a while, you forget that they're mother and daughter, because they're two actors, and it would be an insult to treat them in any way other than as two actors. It's only really when you get to the editing room and suddenly in a shot, you get an echo of two profiles, or you see how fluid they are with each other in a scene where they're close, and the body language gives their relationship away. And then you realize how much of a bonus it has been."

> ***"[Filmmaking is like] an animal with many legs, and you keep finding another pair that you haven't put shoes on."***

Reflecting on his feature directing debut, Rickman likens the filmmaking process to "an animal with many legs, and you keep finding another pair that you haven't put shoes on. It's a fantastically rewarding job," he adds, "but of course you're not aware of that at the time. When people say, 'Do you enjoy it?', you kind of look back and think, 'Now, was there a moment where I had time to say, "Am I enjoying this?"'"

What Rickman is currently enjoying is the advance positive buzz from the Venice and Montreal film festivals. "I'm very happy that when people go and see it, it means a lot to them personally," he comments. "When the film ends, the conversation begins with the audience, and that's a new one every night it plays."

Rickman doesn't have any more directorial projects lined up at the moment, but he says he's "sure I will do it again if and when there is a piece of writing that suggests itself. But it will always be based on the quality of the writing. And so now I will act." His next role will be another typecasting-buster: He'll be playing an angel in Kevin Smith's ethereally-tinged comedy "Dogma." "The greatest thing is to be able to do something out of the blue that you couldn't have predicted and is free of any preconceptions. It would be wonderful to think that the future is unknown and sort of surprising."

When asked if he's happy with the evolution of his career, Rickman replies pragmatically, "There's no point in not being, really. Because it's what it is. Chaotic, I suppose. But there's a line in the film when Phyllida says, 'You've got to open up your heart and let chaos in.' So maybe that's a lesson that I've had to learn."

"The Winter Guest." Starring Emma Thompson and Phyllida Law. Directed by Alan Rickman. Written by Sharman Macdonald and Alan Rickman. Produced by Ken Lipper, Edward R. Pressman and Steve Clark-Hall. A Fine Line release. Drama. Opens Dec. 19.



Response No. 99

"MAD" MAN

BOXOFFICE *Alum Tom Matthews Becomes A "City"-fied Screenwriter*

by Bridget Byrne



Tom Matthews (center) is flanked by wife Pam and producer Arnold Kopelson on the set of "Mad City."

The web page is up," Tom Matthews remarks, noting one sure sign that "Mad City," the movie for which he wrote the screenplay, is indeed a reality.

Like many a writer who has toiled for years in hopes of seeing his credit up there on the silver screen, Matthews has often been a doubting Thomas. His anxieties were compounded by his first-hand knowledge of just how Hollywood functions. His insight was gleaned from studying movie production at film school and then working as a publicist, a film critic and a film business magazine editor. In fact, Matthews worked at this very publication for six years, rising in the ranks from associate editor to managing editor before leaving BOXOFFICE in 1991 to pursue his screenwriting dreams full-time.

Were Matthews still with BOXOFFICE, he might have been either reviewing the latest Warner Bros. movie or interviewing stars like Dustin Hoffman and John Travolta or director Costa-Gavras. But he escaped the mad city of Los Angeles, so instead he's on the phone from his home in Wauwatosa, in his native Wisconsin, expressing mild surprise that his boyhood dream has actually come true and that those actors and that director are making his movie, about to be released by that studio. Is it like he imagined it would be? Yes. As expected, he's both pleased and disappointed.

He'd only seen the movie 90 percent completed at the time of this interview, but says it was satisfying, if a little surreal, to see "what had only existed in my head" realized on the screen.

"It does follow my script fairly closely," he says, "but there is a lot of dialogue which doesn't make it, stuff I was quite attached to which is not in the film. But the meat of the story is there," he affirms, accepting the inevitability that actors, especially those with the clout and status of Hoffman and Travolta, will put their own spin on the writer's words and that the work of other re-writers has also been factored in (although Matthews does receive sole scripting credit.)

In 1993, in collaboration with his friend Eric Williams (a former BOXOFFICE contributor), Matthews conceived of the idea for "Mad City's" story, which involves a character-driven conflict that also takes on the issue of media responsibility. Utilized as inspiration were previous films on similar themes like Frank Capra's "Meet John Doe," Billy Wilder's "The Big Carnival," and Sidney Lumet's "Dog Day Afternoon" and "Network."

Because "Mad City's" main characters—a TV journalist (Hoffman) and a small town museum security guard (Travolta) who are both desperate to make up for life failures—are not essentially sympathetic, and there's no conventional happy ending, Matthews was pessimistic about the script's chances of getting made. He and his wife Pam had just decided to give up of the tensions of California living and relocate with their two young sons, Kevin and Paul, to Matthews' Wisconsin homeland when mere days later, the script sold for what the trade papers termed "a low six-figure sum." The deal was at Universal, but as is normal in Hollywood, nothing much happened after the initial enthusiasm, and the rights lapsed after 18 months. Subsequently, the rights were picked up by Warner Bros. and producer Arnold Kopelson, who moved the film into production within 10 months of the acquisition.

Matthews, by this time back in Wisconsin, did get to work intensely with Costa-Gavras on the script, but inevitably the moment arrived when he was "essentially dismissed" and re-writers were brought in. "Of course I knew that any Hollywood writer must have a thick skin, but when it finally happens to you, it hurts a bit," says Matthews. "I feel the producers, director and cast are usually denying themselves a major resource by arbitrarily deciding not to let the original screenwriter continue all the way. The guy who wrote the script knows the story better than anyone. He's been down all the blind alleys already and can tell them why those ideas won't pan out 30 pages later. Obviously if the first writer truly can't deliver more than just a good story idea, they have to find other writers, but too often, I feel, they instinctively bounce the original because that's just the way they do business."



"City" boys Dustin Hoffman and John Travolta.

However, Matthews did get to visit the set when they were shooting the museum interiors on a Hollywood sound stage and witnessed "over a hundred people gainfully employed because of something which came out of my head when I was sitting in my spare bedroom writing."

While writing, he imagined Alec Baldwin and John Goodman in the Hoffman and Travolta roles, but is certainly not at all unhappy with the finally casting. "In fact, I would be surprised if Travolta doesn't get an Oscar nomination," he says of the blue-collar role which allows the actor to keep the gut he acquired for "Michael."

Matthews admits that years of reviewing "way too many bad movies" have tarnished his dreams somewhat, just as taking too many bad meetings with potential producers has jaded his enthusiasm. But enough of his childhood aspirations survive from his days making "twisted little comedies" with a Super 8 camera he'd received for Christmas when he was 13.

Happier away from the Hollywood mainstream, Matthews is now gainfully employed in it. For producer Lynda Obst, he's drafted an adaptation of Tom Perrotta's comic novel "The Wishbones," about a guy in a New Jersey wedding band whose rock-and-roll dreams are slipping away. He's wrapping up a spec script, "Fireworks," an ironic screwball comedy about a man who stages his own death because he feels unwanted, then finds he has misjudged the situation and has to bring himself back to life. "The Shredder," his satire on capital punishment, once in development at New Line, is again attracting attention.

Now if only screenwriting didn't entail trips to Hollywood for pitch meetings and rewrite conferences, his dreams would have indeed come true.

"Mad City." Starring John Travolta and Dustin Hoffman. Directed by Costa-Gavras. Written by Tom Matthews. Produced by Arnold Kopelson. A Warner release. Drama.

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JANUARY TRAILERS

Welcome to our winter of content. And what a lot of content there is.

It's a new year, and it's a new era for exhibitors and audiences. During the 1990s, the studios have begun in some earnest to do what theatre folks and theatregoers have long wanted: to make the movie business a 12-month business. So 1998 opens with great expectations.

And, of course, with "Great Expectations," the first weekend's only new release. A sign of the times, however, the following frames are full of studio and big-indie fare. Perhaps too full, or too full unadroitly: Unlike this past November, in which no opening film went head to head with another new release for the same demographic on the same weekend, this month looks more contentious. The 1/9 weekend is one example, with



"Senseless," "Wag the Dog" and "Welcome to Woop Woop" each after all or parts of the comedy crowd.

Seven days later, the thrillers "Fallen" and "Desperate Measures" and the action/drama "Hard Rain" all go after similar demos in their attempts to maximize returns over what for some moviegoers is a three-day weekend (Jan. 19 being Martin Luther King Day). The 1/23 frame seems to be Distaff Days, with the pop-umentary "Spice World," romance drama "Courtesan" and romantic comedy "Still Breathing" appearing to favor the female moviegoer and give the male-trending 1/16 trio a second weekend of free play. Then it's the male set that returns to the fore at month's close, with actioners "Firestorm" and "Deep Rising" going head to head with each other on 1/30 and also banging the boards against the thriller "Incognito" and detective drama "The Magic Hour."

Will those great expectations be realized? Well, it might not be harmful if this-here month, as in Dickens' story, had some sort of guardian angel looking after it.

JANUARY 2

Great Expectations

This contemporary retelling of Charles Dickens' classic Victorian novel follows the journey of aspiring artist Finn Bell ("Gattaca's" Ethan Hawke), whose life is invaded by a dangerous convict named Lustig (Robert De Niro), the beautiful but icy Estella ("The Pallbearer's" Gwyneth Paltrow) and an old, crazed eccentric, Nora Dinsmoor ("G.I. Jane's" Anne Bancroft). Chris Cooper ("Lone Star") and Hank Azaria ("The Birdcage") co-star. Alfonso Cuaron ("A Little Princess") directs; Mitch Glazer ("Three of Hearts") scripts; Art Linson ("The Edge") produces. (Fox, 12/31 ltd, 1/16 wide)

Exploitips: *Last year's big literary adaptation—"The Crucible," also from Fox—underperformed ticket and Oscar expectations, and that was with the august Daniel Day-Lewis in the lead. Although Hawke in comparison might recall a certain vice-presidential tongue-lashing ("I knew Jack Kennedy..."), perhaps his teaming with Paltrow and the contemporary setting will pull the necessary twentysomething crowd, especially given that this is the week's sole debut. Cuaron's touch was near-perfect directing "A Little Princess," though that's a salable credit only with the few who saw it. Despite the "Great Expectations" temporal update, a bookstore tie-in could aid with distaff and collegiate types.*

JANUARY 9

Dark City

Originally a Fox project (and aka "Dark Empire"), this futuristic thriller stars Rufus Sewell ("Cold Comfort Farm") as a man who is wanted for murders he can't remember. He soon learns that his memories and his life as he knows it (and those of other people's) are artificial creations. William Hurt, Kiefer Sutherland and Jennifer Connelly also star. Alex Proyas ("The Crow") directs, and he scripts with Lem Dobbs ("Kafka") and David Goyer ("The Crow: City of Angels"); Andrew Mason produces. *See our June 1997 issue Sneak Preview.* (New Line, 1/9 on 1,600 screens)

Exploitips: *Previously a summer and then fall release, "Dark City"—at least for weekend #1—can count on the dependable SF crowd, which could be pulled by the filmmakers' various "Crow" credits, especially Proyas'. Unlike its previous dates, which slated it against direct genre competitors "Kull the Conqueror" and "Gattaca," the 1/9 frame gives "Dark City" its key demo to itself.*

Senseless

In this Penelope Spheeris ("The Little Rascals") comedy, a cash-starved collegian ("The 6th Man's" Marlon Wayans) works four jobs but still can't pay his bills. He agrees to be in a university medical experiment supposed to heighten his senses, which it does—but then starts causing bouts when one or another of his senses fail, leading to comic interludes. David Spade and Rip Torn co-star. David Hoberman and Eric L. Gold produce. (Miramax, 1/9 wide)

Exploitips: *This looks to have urban audiences to itself, and it could add to its exclusive mix the less demanding among comedy audiences (the good-timey type who is unlikely to sample, for example, the arthouse mirth of "Welcome to Woop Woop"), so highlight Spheeris' "Wayne's World" credit, even if a bit dated. "Wag the Dog," which has star power, could cut into this one's mainstream ticket take.*

Wag the Dog

In this satire, a White House adviser (Robert De Niro) and a Hollywood producer (Dustin Hoffman) conspire to stage a war in order to take the public's focus off the president's scandalous dalliances. In their efforts, they fabricate a hero—who turns out to be a mentally deranged soldier. Anne Heche ("Volcano"), Woody Harrelson, Denis Leary, Willie Nelson and Kirsten Dunst co-star. Barry Levinson directs; Hilary Henkin ("Romeo Is Bleeding") and David Mamet ("The Edge") script; Jane Rosenthal, Robert De Niro and Barry Levinson produce. (New Line, 1/9 after 12/24 NY/LA bow)

Exploitips: *Although this De Niro/Levinson ("Sleepers") reteaming arrives care of New Line, placing the distributor—which also opens "Dark City" this date—in competition with itself, more to the point genre- and demo-wise are "Senseless" and "Welcome to Woop Woop." Highlight the high-profile talent involved with this "Canadian Bacon" variant to help separate it from the comedy pack; unlike the lower-brow Miramax release and higher-brow Goldwyn, "Wag the Dog" could draw both crowds.*

Welcome to Woop Woop

In this comedy (aka "The Big Red") based on a Douglas Kennedy novel, an American con man ("That Thing You Do!'s"

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The Boxer

A once-promising fighter returns home after spending 13 years in a British prison, only to find his city of Belfast now a place full of hatred and desolation. He returns to the ring, determined to find a way out of the legacy of despair, and he rekindles a romance with his former lover ("Breaking the Waves'" Emily Watson), who now has both a husband who's himself in prison and a teenaged son that she is raising. In a creative reteaming of four "In the Name of the Father" principals, Daniel Day-Lewis stars, Jim Sheridan directs, Sheridan scripts with Terry George, and Sheridon produces with Arthur Lappin for Hell's Kitchen Prods. (Universal, 1/9/98 wide after 12/26 ltd bow)

Exploitips: *The prestige project "In the Name of the Father" pulled just $24 million for Uni after a 12/93 opening, and that was with Emma Thompson aboard. And that was $10 million better than the Sheridan/Day-Lewis "My Left Foot" managed with a best-picture Oscar. Although Day-Lewis did draw $74 million for "The Last of the Mohicans," most likely "The Boxer" is a title an exhibitor can book with and for pride, knowing it'll pull select serious audiences. By mid-February, when Oscar might come calling with noms, ticket-sales percentages will be swinging into exhibitors' favor.*

Johnathan Schaech) is forced to hide out in an isolated Australian town named Woop Woop. Rod Taylor ("The Time Machine"), Noah Taylor ("Shine") and Paul Mercurio ("Strictly Ballroom") co-star. Stephan Elliott ("The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert") directs; Michael Thomas (Miramax's upcoming "B. Monkey") scripts; Finola Dwyer produces. (MGM/Goldwyn, 1/9 ltd)

Exploitips: *Aussie entries have long seemed particularly palatable to American audiences (e.g., "My Brilliant Career," "Muriel's Wedding"), but to attract crossover moviegoers here it's playing up the participants' "Shine," "Strictly Ballroom" and (especially given the genre) "The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert" credits that should help make the sale. Given the Goldwyn lineage, one might expect most mainstreamers to opt for "Senseless" or "Wag the Dog" while the more serious-minded arthousers try...*

Good Will Hunting

Matt Damon ("The Rainmaker") stars as Will Hunting, a remarkably bright but defiant young man from South Boston whose only hope to avoid a pending jail sentence is therapist Sean McGuire (Robin Williams, in "Dead Poets Society" mold), a former college professor with an admiration for Hunting's emotional struggles. Stellan Skarsgaard ("Amistad"), Ben Affleck ("Chasing Amy") and Minnie Driver (also in this month's "Hard Rain") co-star. Gus Van Sant ("To Die For") directs; thespians Matt Damon and Ben Affleck also handle scripting chores; Lawrence Bender ("Jackie Brown") produces. (Miramax, 1/9/98 wide after 12/5 NY/LA bow)

Exploitips: *Given its close ties to Bender, Miramax—which has been accused of a see-what-sticks release approach—seems to be providing this full support; the distributor says it changed the exclusive bow from 12/25 to 12/5 to heighten Oscar awareness. Also, Williams' presence plus the choice of release pattern suggest the distributor expects strong coastal response to help persuade midlands auds to try out Van Sant product. If Coppola's "The Rainmaker" has been a hit, the Damon name should be a young-crowd pull.*

JANUARY 16

Fallen

After the conviction and execution of a serial killer that had been apprehended by two Chicago detectives, a new series of murders done in the late killer's peculiar style begins. Even as suspicion falls on one of the detectives, he works to unravel the mystery, only to come face to face with a surprising adversary: a fallen angel. Denzel Washington, John Goodman, Donald Sutherland and Embeth Davidtz ("The Gingerbread Man") star. Gregory Hoblit ("Primal Fear") directs; Nicholas Kazan ("Dream Lover") scripts and exec produces; former Turner Pictures and Columbia head Dawn Steel produces with Chuck Roven. *See photo, p. 16.* (Warner, 1/16)

Exploitips: *At one time a possible Arnold Schwarzenegger title on the New Line schedule, this supernatural thriller seems more in the mold of Washington's "Virtuosity" ($24 mil. domestic) than, say, "The Pelican Brief" ($101 mil.). But sophomore helmer Hoblit made the thinly scripted "Primal Fear" play larger onscreen and at the ticket counter ($56 mil.), and the supporting cast here backing up the wide-drawing Washington is quite strong. Emphasizing the Denzel presence and Hoblit's credit could pay decent dividends.*

Desperate Measures

In this suspense thriller, San Francisco police officer Frank Connor ("Night Falls on Manhattan's" Andy Garcia) must find a bone marrow donor for his dying son. The one match is a vicious murderer, Peter McCabe ("Multiplicity's" Michael Keaton, in a change-of-pace role), who has plans of a more nefarious nature in mind. When McCabe makes the hospital a battleground by trying to use it to escape to freedom, Connor must both pursue



and—for his son's sake—protect the killer. Brian Cox and Marcia Gay Harden co-star. Barbet Schroeder ("Before and After") directs, and he produces for Mandalay with Susan Hoffman (Schroeder's "Single White Female") and the "Tin Cup" duo, Lee Rich and Gary Foster; David Klass, Henry Bean (Garcia's "Internal Affairs") and Neal Jimenez ("Anaconda") script. (TriStar, 1/16)

Exploitips: *Schroeder's recent efforts haven't been blockbusters—a commodity that the talented Garcia also still lacks. The family/peril narrative, as variously used in the likes of "Ransom," "Cape Fear" and "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle," can be the genre's strongest, however, and as such those elements in the storyline should be played up—especially given that the mainstream demos being targeted here will also have two other high-profile entries from which to choose: "Fallen" and "Hard Rain." "Desperate Measures" was held by the studio from an overcrowded August 1997 date.*

Half-Baked

In this comedy, three hapless young men take desperate measures of their own to spring their friend from jail. Harland Williams ("RocketMan"), Dave Chappelle ("The Nutty Professor"), Jim Breuer (TV's "Saturday Night Live") and Guillermo Diaz ("Girls Town") star


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with Rachel True ("The Craft") and Laura Silverman. Tamara Davis ("CB4") directs; Neal Brennan and Dave Chappelle script; Robert Simonds ("Happy Gilmore") produces. (Universal, 1/16 wide)

Exploitips: *As currently accoutered, the 1/16 frame is a packed one. "Half-Baked," however, faces only Miramax's "The Mighty" in genre competition. Given its storyline, and with Peter Chelsom directing and Sharon Stone starring, "The Mighty" could draw older, even as "Half-Baked" grabs the young male set at the multiplex.*

Hard Rain

This disaster/crime thriller, aka "The Flood," follows a Midwestern sheriff ("ID4's" Randy Quaid) who must evacuate the residents of a small town when torrential rains threaten to flood the area. Meanwhile, an armored car breaks down and the driver ("Broken Arrow's" Christian Slater) is stranded and soon surrounded not only by thigh-high waters but by gunmen. Morgan Freeman ("Kiss the Girls") and Minnie Driver ("Grosse Pointe Blank") co-star. Mikael Salomon (who helmed "A Far Off Place") directs; Graham Yost ("Speed") scripts; Mark Gordon (also "Speed"), Gary Levinsohn ("The Real McCoy") and Ian Bryce (yet another "Speed"-er) produce. *See the Sneak Preview in our April 1997 issue.* (Paramount, 1/16 wide)

Exploitips: *Watching surface water swirl by isn't quite the thrill of watching a whole tornado tear through, and the low-key setting is more Mayberry than Manhattan, so repeat business for "Hard Rain"—originally slated for 5/2/97—will depend more on plot and character than did, say, "Twister" or the upcoming "Godzilla." Still, it's worthwile to emphasize the various makers' "Speed" credits. Have a bit of Wall Drug promotion fun and offer ticketbuyers free water.*

Star Kid

Aka "The Warrior of Waverly Street," this long-on-the-schedule children's sci-fi adventure tells the story of a 12-year-old boy ("Jurassic Park's" Joseph Mazzello) who finds a cybersuit. When he puts it on, he is thrust into a virtual-reality world and becomes involved in the efforts of a friendly alien nation striving to do good and evil beings intent on destroying mankind. Corinne Hohrer ("The Bridges of Madison County"), Joey Simmrin ("Nine Months") and young Japanese superstar Yumi Adachi co-star. Manny Coto ("Dr. Giggles") directs and scripts; Jennie Lew Tugend (the "Free Willy" and "Lethal Weapon" trios) produces. (Trimark, 1/16)

Exploitips: *Although it's yet to have its breakout success, Trimark continues to try to define itself as a wide-ranging maker of films for families, mainstream auds and arthousers. Its last for the young types, the 1994 Sissy Spacek fantasy "Trading Mom," found no boxoffice magic, but in production coinage "Star Kid" represents Trimark's biggest outlay to date. The distributor had earlier planned a fall 1996 rollout, then March and then August 1997, and at one time—before a similar plan led to a $3 million writeoff on "Meet Wally Sparks"—it had set a $14 million P&A budget to back "Star Kid."*

The Real

Rap stars LL Cool J and Snoop Doggy Dog star with Bokeem Woodbine ("Jason's Lyric") in this drama about a young man raised in the 'hood who, wanting to make a new life for himself after exiting prison, finds his luck heading south again. Darin Scott ("Tales From the Hood" writer/producer) makes his directing debut; Peter Heller ("Hotel de Love") produces. (Live, 1/16; could go late month)

Exploitips: *Expect heavy male turnout in urban areas, especially if released for MLK Day, even if likely to be a lighter draw in the suburbs. The key selling point is the presence of the rappers in the cast. Recently refinanced Live—like Gramercy—plans to periodically release urban-drawing fare along with its more mainstream efforts.*

The Mighty

In this imaginative comedy/drama, two outcast boys—Maxwell Kane, a giant, slow-witted boy, and Kevin, a tiny, sickly but super-intelligent child—team to face fights with local hoods and also adventures both mythical and real. Sharon Stone, Kieran Culkin, Gillian Anderson (TV's "The X-Files"), Harry Dean Stanton and Gena Rowlands co-star. Peter Chelsom (the success d'estime "Funny Bones") directs; Charles Leavitt ("Sunchaser") and Rodman Philbrick adapt Philbrick's novel; Simon Fields and Jane Startz produce. (Miramax, 1/16 wide after 12/19 NY/LA bow)

Exploitips: *One critic called "Funny Bones" "extraordinarily strange," and this one sounds not all that ordinary also. From the days of its disastrous launch of 1993's "Into*

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Response No. 49

the West," Miramax has wanted to establish a family label; even more than with Miramax's recent "Wide Awake," the question here seems to be whether the distributor wants to pull children to stories about children or adults to stories about children.

JANUARY 23

Spice World

Aka "The Spice Girls Movie" and "Spice—The Movie," this musical comedy mockumentary stars pop music's sassy, all-female and perhaps flavor-of-the-minute British group the Spice Girls in a story about a group of girl singers aiming to make their live debut. Richard E. Grant ("Jack & Sarah") co-stars. Bob Spiers (still better known for the Brit TV export "Absolutely Fabulous" than for his Disney "That Darn Cat" remake) directs; Brit sitcom writer Kim Fuller scripts; Uri Fruchtmann and Barnaby Thompson produce for Polygram's London-based Fragile Films. (Columbia, 1/23)

Exploitips: *When Sony acquired North and South American rights at Cannes, SPE topper John Calley said the Spice Girls "had reached a unique point in their career." That point includes just one #1 tune in America, though four have been chart-toppers in the U.K., with an album—only their second—slated for Christmas release. Expect the strongest response from those too young to know Bananarama, especially the young-girl Tiger Beat crowd. Tie-ins with music stores are naturals, as are cross-promos with your local MTV-carrying cable operator (MTV now catering to the teeny- and preteeny-bopper set).*

Courtesan

Catherine McCormack (most recently in "Loaded," but better known for "Braveheart") and Moira Kelly (ditto for "Entertaining Angels" and "The Tie That Binds") star in this romantic period drama—aka "The Honest Courtesan," "Venice" and "Indiscretion"—set in 16th-century Venice, about a poor but beautiful woman (McCormack) who seeks power to win the man she loves (Rufus Sewell, also in "Dark City"). Jacqueline Bisset co-stars. Marshall Herskovitz ("Jack the Bear") directs; Jeanine Dominy ("Incognito") adapts the novel by Margaret Rosenthal; Ed Zwick ("Courage Under Fire"), Marshall Herskovitz, Sarah Caplan, Arnon Milchan and Michael Nathanson produce for New Regency. (Warner, 1/23)

Exploitips: *Romance dramas play best with the distaff set, and period efforts draw older, so this has only indirect debut-day competition (from "Spice World" and "Still Breathing"). The studio originally had slated this for a Christmas limited release and January expansion—Christmas 1996 and January 1997, that is. But it's still true that bookstore tie-ins should be especially effective, given more bookstore patrons are women than men.*

Four Days in September

This Portuguese-language film tells the story of young Brazilians—including an inflexible rebel leader (Fernanda Torres), a zealot-in-training (Calo Junqueira), an innocent (Claudia Abreu) destined to be hardened by experience, and an idealist (Pedro Cardoso)—who kidnap an American ambassador ("Mother Night's" Alan Arkin) as a way of protesting the policies of their country's military regime. Bruno Barreto ("Carried Away") directs; Leopoldo Serran scripts; Lucy Barreto produces. (Miramax, 1/23 NY/LA)

Exploitips: *Our Berlin fest critic (June 1997 issue) gave this Producoes Cinematograficas LC Barreto production a commendable three stars, citing Barreto's storytelling prowess, calling the kidnapping operation "thrillingly rendered." But the reviewer said that characterization tends toward types, and "the connections with larger themes that make a good movie a great one are missing. Most of the time, the film comes off as a very well-made and well-acted TV cop drama set in a tropical locale." A demo plus: This is the date's only new foreign-language or serious art fare.*

Still Breathing

In this romance, a young Texas street performer, Fletcher ("George of the Jungle's" Brendan Fraser), and a professional con artist from Los Angeles named Roz ("Little City's" Joanna Going) manage to overcome their differences and fall in love thanks to Fletcher's psychic ability and a case of mistaken identity. Ann Magnuson, Lou Rawls and Michael McKean co-star. James F. Robinson directs and scripts, and he produces with Marshall Persinger. (October Films, 1/23)

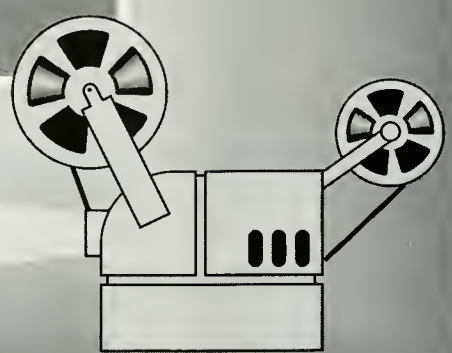
Exploitips: *New Universal division October acquired this after its Seattle-fest appearance, which generated a citable best-actor kudos for Fraser. In a 1 1/2-star review (Oct. 1997 issue), however, our Seattle critic called this film "an unwanted suitor striving to make us like it," citing a lack of sparks between the*

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* Statistics as of October 15, 1997

Response No 95

two players and Robinson's quirky direction and plodding pacing. Still, for couples looking for a date movie over the holiday weekend, "Still Breathing" is the only choice.

JANUARY 30

Deep Rising

In this action/thriller creature feature set in the South China Sea, a cruise ship becomes a chamber of horrors for hijackers led by Hanover ("Geronimo: An American Legend's" Wes Studi) and for the passengers, including John Finnegan ("The Phantom's" Treat Williams), after a monster from the depths invades the vessel. Famke Janssen ("GoldenEye") co-stars. Stephen Sommers ("Rudyard Kipling's The Jungle Book") directs and scripts; Laurence Mark ("Jerry Maguire") and John Baldecchi ("Gunmen") produce. (Buena Vista, 1/30)

Exploitips: *If not outside then inside theatres, this January seems more like summer, what with male-trenders like "Fallen," "Desperate Measures" and "Hard Rain" trying to dominate the multiplexes. To separate this from the competition, emphasize the action and creature elements. Originally a fall 1997 release, "Deep Rising" was moved to February and now advanced to 1/30, where (unless one exits) it faces a direct demo battle with...*

Firestorm

Former football star and current NFL commentator Howie Long ("Broken Arrow") stars in this action/adventure about Jesse Graves, a smokejumper who, in the middle of fighting a forest-fire inferno, comes upon escaped convicts disguised as fellow firefighters. As a friend and mentor ("Courage Under Fire's" Scott Glenn) tries to find him, Graves must outsmart the criminals' cunning leader ("Palookaville's" William Forsythe) and rescue an innocent hostage ("Blown Away's" Suzy Amis). Cinematographer Dean Semler (Oscar winner for "Dances With Wolves") makes his directing debut; Chris Soth and Graham Yost (also "Hard Rain") script; Tom M. Hammel, Matthew Weisman and Joseph Loeb III produce. (Fox, 1/30)

Exploitips: *This might move into February and thus evade the actioner-vs.-actioner conflict with "Deep Rising." If it doesn't, play up the genre but also the presence of Long, who is well-respected by the ticketbuyers most likely to attend: the males who watch Sunday sports and don't care that much about cinematic pedigree. Although football season is over by opening day, earlier cross-promos with your local Fox TV outlet could draw on the Long following and build awareness.*

The Magic Hour

Paul Newman, Susan Sarandon, Gene Hackman and Stockard Channing ("The First Wives Club") star in this contemporary detective story set in Los Angeles. Reese Witherspoon ("Fear"), Giancarlo Esposito ("Fresh") and James Garner co-star. Newman reteams here with his "Nobody's Fool" success d'estime creators: writer/director Robert Benton (who co-scripts with Richard Russo) and producers Arlene Donovan and Scott Rudin, who's on a winning streak for his studio. (Paramount, 1/30 ltd)

Exploitips: *This has "well-made" stamped on it, given the talents before and behind the camera. This could also trend toward more mature audiences, given Newman's (and Benton's) established reputation with that demo. Emphasize those strengths and expect audience support to take a couple weekends to build (whether booked for the limited bow or the later expansion), given that mature moviegoers aren't frequent first-nighters.*

Incognito

An art forger decides to make one final copy and then go straight. When his associates frame him for stealing the "original" artwork, he must flee for his life. Jason Patric ("Speed 2: Cruise Control"), Irene Jacob ("Othello") and Rod Steiger star. John Badham directs; Jeannie Dominy (this month's "Courtesan") scripts; Morgan Creek head James G. Robinson produces. (Warner, 1/30 wide)

Exploitips: *"Incognito" is of a genre that Morgan Creek likes ("White Sands," "Trial by Jury," "Diabolique"), but it's one the production company hasn't cracked. Despite recent casting missteps, Patric and Jacob can deliver onscreen; the question is, can Badham? His 11/95 "Nick of Time" grossed $8 million, and his four films before that averaged just $26 million. Warner held this from a 10/31 date, when it faced less studio-fare competition.*

Tempting Fate

Aka "Shakespeare's Sister," an allusion to Virginia Woolf's essay about gender inequality, this drama tells the story of a feminist writer ("12 Monkeys'" Madeleine Stowe) who with her husband (William Hurt) consults a priest ("Hamlet's" Kenneth Branagh) about marital troubles. Romantic complications ensue. Blythe Danner and Neil Patrick Harris ("Starship Troopers") co-star. Lesli Linka Glatter ("Now and Then") directs; Rick Ramage scripts; Ted Field, Scott Kroopf and Diane Nabatoff produce for Interscope. (Gramercy, 1/30)

Exploitips: *Originally a fall title, "Tempting Fate" now has the 1/30 weekend to itself in terms of arthouses, the more likely venue for this fare. In "The Magic Hour's" limited markets, however, "Tempting Fate" will face that competition. To maximize specialized turnout, emphasize the Branagh name; although controversy is said never to hurt, one might expect some grievances to be aired by the same Catholic groups that recently contested the TV series "Nothing Sacred," about a priest who questions his faith.*

JANUARY UNDATED

Bulworth

In "Bulworth" (a tentative title; the project was initially called "Tribulations"), a wealthy U.S. senator (Warren Beatty) is in danger of being killed but, tired of life, sees no reason to avoid the hit that's been planned by a friend—until, that is, the senator meets a beautiful African-American woman (Halle Berry) from South Central Los Angeles. When he tries to call off the killing, he discovers his friend has vanished. Paul Sorvino, Oliver Platt, Jack Warden and Don Cheadle co-star. Warren Beatty also directs, scripts and produces. (Fox, Jan. undated)

Exploitips: *This might not be as drama-laden as the description implies; early Fox materials depict the predicament thus: "He must frantically seek out the only one who can call off the killer in a hair-raising comic chase." So expect something more akin to "Heaven Can Wait" (which Beatty co-helmed and co-scripted) than to "Reds" (which he directed and co-scripted). Although Beatty directed 1990's "Dick Tracy" and produced and directed 1994's "Love Affair," that he handles all four key chairs here indicates a personal involvement that, as with "Reds," portends promise. Besides making another title change, Fox could move this to February.*

Goodbye, Lover

In this black comedy/thriller, family members scheme to inherit a $4 million insurance policy. Patricia Arquette ("Flirting With Disaster") stars as the wife of one brother and mistress to another. Ellen DeGeneres ("Mr. Wrong") co-stars as a detective on a case of possible murder. Dermot Mulroney ("My Best Friend's Wedding"), Don Johnson and Mary-Louise Parker co-star. Roland Joffe ("The Scarlet Letter") directs; Ron Peer scripts; Arnon Milchan daughter Alexandra, who heads the more indie-oriented Regency Vision, produces with Patrick McDarrah, Joel Roodman and Chris Daniel. (Warner, Jan. undated)

Exploitips: *The coming-out episode of DeGeneres' TV series "Ellen" likely raised her profile with moviegoers or at least replaced bad memories of "Mr. Wrong." Likewise, one wouldn't highlight Joffe's last credit, the much-derided "Scarlet Letter," but his older hits (e.g., "The Killing Fields") are of the wrong genre. So go with the gals—Arquette and DeGeneres—and target the month's underserved distaff clientele.*

Kundun

Directed by Martin Scorsese, this drama recounts the life of the current Dalai Lama from his childhood through the Chinese invasion and on into his time in exile. Tenzin Thuthob Tsarong, Kunga J. Tenzin and Tenzin Gyalpo star. Melissa Mathison (best known for "E.T.") scripts; Barbara De Fina (Scorsese's "Casino") produces. (Buena Vista, widens mid-Jan. after 12/25 ltd bow)

Exploitips: *Unless this delivers a good-hearted emotional wallop (hardly the Scorsese signature) that transcends America's "Tenzin" resistance to stories of other cultures, this looks to be a domestic prestige item for the studio and exhibitors, working best in select-site and high-profile bookings.*

Hurricane Streets

In this drama (aka "Hurricane"), Brendan Sexton III ("Welcome to the Dollhouse") stars as a poor 15-year-old living with his grandmother who falls for a young Latina and dreams of a better life. Isidra Vega, Jared Harris ("I Shot Andy Warhol") and L.M. Kit Carson ("Running on Empty") co-star; Morgan J. Freeman directs and scripts, and he produces with Galt Niederhoffer and Gill Holland. *See the Sneak Preview in our Sept. 1997 issue.* (UA, Jan. undated)

Exploitips: *This garnered three Sundance awards: best director, best cinematography,*

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Response No. 2

LATE MOVIE MOVES INTO THE HOLIDAYS...

SCREAM 2

Wes Craven continues to raise his career and the horror genre from the dead with this sequel to the original blockbuster "Scream." The characters played by continuing cast members Neve Campbell, Courteney Cox,



Liev Schreiber and David Arquette are reunited two years later when they find some secrets from the past are better left forgotten. Jerry O'Connell ("Jerry Maguire"), Jada Pinkett ("The Nutty Professor") and Sarah Michelle Gellar ("I Know What You Did Last Summer") co-star. All four back from the original, Wes Craven directs, Kevin Williamson scripts, and Cathy Konrad and Marianne Maddalena produce. (Miramax/Dimension, 12/12 wide)

Exploitips: *At least in part in response to rough-cut screening results, Miramax says, it returned this from a replacement 1/9 date to the original 12/12 frame and now plans a 3,000-screen debut (the company's largest ever), backed by event-picture ad spending and national cross-promos. Even if, as competing distributors charge, Miramax has cooked the numbers on the $103 million gross it claims for "Scream," the first entry in what Dimension hopes is a franchise was a wonderment to behold: grossing $6.4 million on its 12/20 opening (with "Beavis and Butt-head Do America" doing $20 mil.), then rising to capture another $9 million on weekend #2 and $10 million the next. What other screamer has done that? Having that presold base, combined with a lack of demo competition, should promise to make this a huge opener.*

THE IMAX NUTCRACKER

E.T.A. Hoffmann's much-adapted classic story of a young girl who stumbles into an enchanted kingdom ruled by a wooden prince now makes it to the giant screen. This contemporary, mostly non-ballet version of the fairy tale incorporates Tchaikovsky's noted score, performed by England's Bournemouth Symphony. Miriam Margolyes ("Balto") and newcomers Lotte Johnson (as the girl) and Benjamin Hall (as the Nutcracker Prince) star. Christine Edzard, a Parisian whose background is in costume design, writing and/or directing for the likes of "Little Dorrit" and "Tales of Beatrix Potter," handles all three tasks here; Olivier Stockman and Lorne Orleans produce. (Imax Corp., 11/26)

Exploitips: *This 40-minute film, which represents the largest simultaneous IMAX release ever, will bow at more than 150 theatres worldwide, both in 3-D and 2-D, depending on the venue technology. It's probably the grandest large-screen effort since 1995's "Wings of Courage," the first fiction film made using IMAX's then-new 3-D system. The benefits of the release timing are obvious; not only*



is this a holiday classic for the holidays, but the target audience—families—are looking for activities over the Thanksgiving and Christmas breaks, and theatre operators can expect heavy interest from elementary schools in between those two holiday periods.

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Response No. 26

and audience. Our reviewer (April 1997 issue) gave it three stars, calling it "a boy's coming-of-age story on the order of '400 Blows'." This will likely play best at arthouses, though its "Romeo and Juliet" element could draw mainstream youths. Held from fall.

Afterglow

Nick Nolte ("Nightwatch") and Julie Christie star in this drama about the intertwined personal lives of two Montreal couples. Lara Flynn Boyle and Jonny Lee Miller ("Trainspotting") co-star. Alan Rudolph directs and scripts; former Rudolph mentor Robert Altman produces for Moonstone. (Sony Classics, mid-Jan. exp after 12/25 NY/LA bow)

Exploitips: *The casting could draw both younger and older moviegoers of the select variety—of the select variety because of the Rudolph name. Rudolph for some is a taste never to be acquired; for others he's a leading arthouse light. For the latter, Rudolph will be the draw; look for positive fest and coastal notices to back this month's expansion.*

The Blackout

After a movie star (Matthew Modine) kicks his addictions, he begins to have nightmares that he killed someone during a blackout. "Betty Blue's" Beatrice Dalle and ubermodel Claudia Schiffer co-star as old and new girlfriends; Dennis Hopper plays a sleazy filmmaker. Abel Ferrara ("The Funeral") directs, and he scripts with Marla Hanson and Christ Zois; Edward R. Pressman and Clayton Townsend produce. (Trimark, Jan. undated)

Exploitips: *Our Cannes critic (July 1997 issue) gave this just a 1/2-star review. The complaints: the screen-friendly Modine isn't believable as an addict; the women characters are one-dimensional; and Ferrara's pacing is slack and his direction melodramatic. Still, one can play up the Ferrara name with the more grindy arthouse-goers, and Schiffer's presence should draw extra media attention.*

Suicide Kings

In this black comedy, four collegians nab a retired mobster (Christopher Walken) to help them. Denis Leary ("Wide Awake"), Jay Mohr ("Picture Perfect"), Henry Thomas ("Legends of the Fall") and Sean Patrick Flanery ("Powder") also star. Peter O'Fallon directs; Wayne Rice and Gina Goldman script; Rice produces with Morrie Eisenman. (Live, Jan. undated)

Exploitips: *If the ensemble here strikes sparks with the twentysomething crowd, this could build word of mouth in a way that "8 Heads in a Duffel Bag" did not. Our Toronto reviewer (Oct. 1997 issue) gave this three stars, citing Walken's energetic turn and certain intriguing twists in the narrative. Live held this from a Sept. 1997 bow.*

The Tango Lesson

Filmmaker Sally Potter ("Orlando") recounts her romantic involvement with Argentine tango dancer Pablo Veron and her multicontinental efforts to make a film about the Latin dance. Christopher Sheppard (also "Orlando") produces. (Sony Classics, Jan. undated exp after 11/14 NY & 12/25 LA bows)

Exploitips: *Potter's challenging "Orlando" grossed a good $7 million take in 1993, and highlighting that credit could draw arthouse audiences. Though "Orlando" would hardly have filled the bill, "The Tango Lesson"—rated a promotable PG (for brief language and some violent images)—might allow exhibitor outreach to local art programs.*

Ayn Rand: A Sense of Life

Via stock footage, rare photos, taped interviews and film clips, writer/director/producer Michael Paxton documents the life of author/social theorist Ayn Rand, who wrote "The Fountainhead" and "Atlas Shrugged." Sharon Gless narrates. (Strand, Jan. undated)

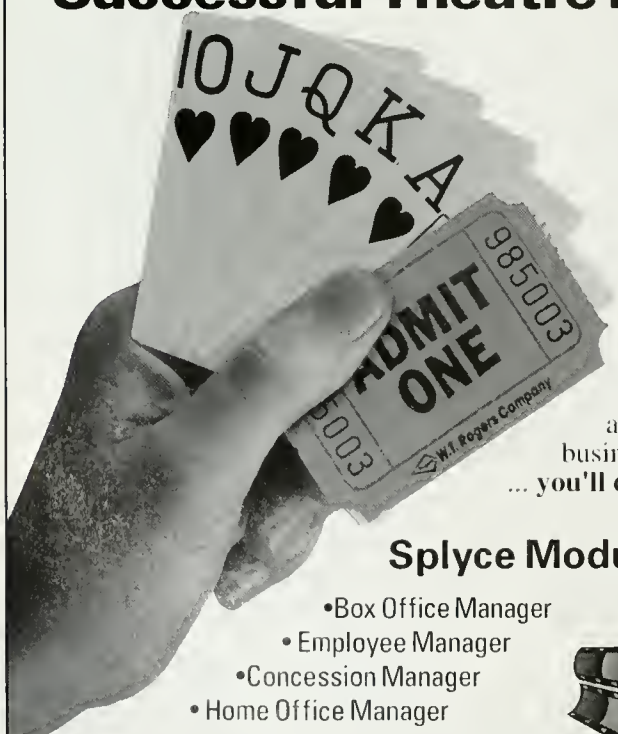
Exploitips: *Our 1996 Telluride critic (3/97 issue) gave this 3 1/2 stars, calling it "a vivid testament." Bookstore tie-ins are a natural.*

Fallen Angels

This 1995 Wong Kar-wai film (a sort of epilogue to "Chungking Express") stars Hong Kong pop star Leon Lai as a tough yet sensitive hitman, Michelle Reis as the cool woman who organizes his schedule, Karen Mok as a platinum blonde that he desires and Kaneshiro Takeshi as a young mute man. Chen Yi-cheng produces. (Kino, Jan. undated)

Exploitips: *This Cantonese-language film is likely to draw the same admirers, if in lesser number due to distributor, as attendees of the Miramax release "Chungking Express." Cite that film and Wong's newer "Happy Together," which Kino handled last fall.*

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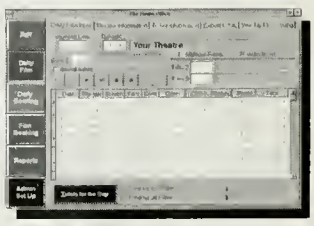
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SUNRISE, SUNSET

Internationally Acclaimed Abroad, Taiwanese Film Faces Trouble at Home *by Karen Achenbach*

The Taiwanese film industry is robust and on the rise internationally, but in Taiwan it's referred to as "The Sunset Industry" because it appears to be sinking. Taiwanese directors are producing innovative films that win awards, acclaim and boxoffice abroad, but they can't find an audience at home. Instead, the local boxoffice is dominated by Hollywood blockbusters and Hong Kong escapist fare.

In contrast to the approximately 400 foreign films released last year in Taiwan, there were only 15 domestic features. With little room to compete commercially, innovative Taiwanese filmmakers have been aggressively producing quality "art" films to great success around the world, but to little effect at home. "It has become a saying [in Taiwan] that winning an award means your film is not interesting to watch because it's serious," says Taiwanese film critic and scholar Robert Chen, who has written a book about the New Taiwanese Cinema and teaches film in Taiwan.



DIRECT ACCESS: *Taiwanese director Wang Shaudi.*

Fu Syou-ling, a young Taiwanese filmmaker now working in the United States, attributes the seriousness of Taiwanese "art" cinema to the history of the island itself. "Starting in the 1980s there were a lot of changes in Taiwan. Martial law had been rescinded and there was an economic boom, along with a new democracy movement. People started to reflect about their political past, and Taiwanese movies became almost personal."

Taiwan's political past needed to be reflected upon because the island had never been allowed to have a national identity. Taiwan's original aboriginal populations were colonized primarily by the Chinese. The Chinese ceded the island to Japan for 50 years of occupation during which time Japanese was made the official language. After Japan surrendered to the Allies at the end of World War II, the Nationalist Chinese government took over and Mandarin became the official language. When native Taiwanese rebelled in 1947, Nationalists massacred as many as 20,000 people (known as the 2.28 Incident because the event occurred on February 28, 1947). In the '50s, during a period called Taiwan's "White Terror," Nationalists persecuted and killed suspected communists. Only when martial law was rescinded in 1987 did a new democratic movement take hold and the Taiwanese were finally free to be Taiwanese.

This led to serious filmmaking about social and political issues that won international attention beginning in the 1980s. Edward Yang ("The Terrorists") and Hou Hsiao-hsien, whose "City of Sadness" addressed the 2.28 Incident, led this Taiwanese New Cinema, followed in the '90s by films like Wan Jen's heartbreaking tale of White Terror betrayals, "Super Citizen Ko."

Today Taiwanese audiences apparently reject any kind of introspection, even though new films focus on life in modern Taipei. Says Chen, "The public is not willing to see Taiwanese films."

But the public was willing in Los Angeles, where three new Taiwanese films premiered recently under the auspices of UCLA and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Two of the films were Lin Cheng-sheng's "Murmur of Youth," about teenage girls who bond to survive modern cruelties; and "The River," by Tsai Ming-laing.

Producer Huang Liming presented the third film, her comedy "Yours and Mine." Directed by Wang Shaudi, it's a raucous look at many angles of life in modern Taipei. In 1995, the two filmmakers formed Rice Film International; "Yours and Mine" is their company's third film, and has been chosen as the official entry of the Taiwanese government for the foreign language category of the Academy Awards.

Huang explained some of the reasons for this paradox: "The [Taiwanese] audience has developed the habit of not paying the ticket price for Taiwanese movies. They think Taiwanese movies should be watched on TV or video. This is killing Taiwanese movies, because people see your film cut apart on TV and then feel that Taiwanese movies are not good."

Videocassettes used to be issued only three weeks after a film's theatrical release, with cable screenings three months after release, giving audiences little incentive to pay the higher ticket prices in theatres. This past July, the video release window was extended to two months to help the industry.

As a result of audience attitude, theatres are reluctant to show local product, often screening with disregard for the printed schedules, or only in the mornings, when people are at work. There are approximately 200 screens in Taipei, but only a couple of theatre chains ever show Taiwanese films. To further aggravate the situation, the government allows up to 37 prints of a film (typically blockbusters like "ID4" or "The Lost World: Jurassic Park") to be shown at the same time in Taipei. According to Huang, "In 1995, the gross income for films

distributed in Taiwan was about US $S69 million. Only 2.5 percent of that is Taiwanese product—about US $1.7 million."

It's no surprise then that Taiwanese commercial film companies refuse to support Taiwanese directors. Instead, they invest in co-productions with Hong Kong and Mainland China. Some films that audiences identify as coming from the Mainland ("Temptress Moon," "To Live," "Farewell, My Concubine") were produced in Hong Kong and financed by Taiwanese companies. These Taiwanese co-productions are often shot in China, where production costs are least expensive.

Will Britain's recent handover of Hong Kong to China effect the local industry? Chen says no. "The local commercial film companies don't really worry about the handover because their money is already there." Chen adds, "Maybe what [the Hong Kong handover raises is] worries about censorship. The day might come when the Chinese government will try to regulate what should and should not be produced. But that day hasn't come yet."

Incredible as it sounds, all of this leaves leading Taiwanese filmmakers—from premiere director Hou Hsao-hsien ("City of Sadness," "Dust in the Wind"), whose films defined a nation reasserting its identity after successive occupations, to the new sensation Tsai Ming-liang (known for his gritty urban youth dramas "Rebels of the Neon God," "Vive l'Amour" and "The River")—dependent upon government funds.

"The only sponsorship available for filmmakers is from the government fund," asserts Chen. The Government Information Office (GIO) has a yearly competition to award seed grants for films. This year they'll offer nine films about $345,999 each, typically one-half to one-third of the total budget. The filmmakers must raise the rest of the money and align with a production and distribution company to receive the grant.

The fund comes in part from a tax on boxoffice receipts, about 50 cents from every $10. Deciding which films get chosen is a jury composed of film artists and film scholars, plus producers and distributors, most of them from the very production companies that supply the rest of the budget money.

This creates some conflicts. The producers and distributors lobby for films with commercial potential, while the scholars and film artists argue for more serious work. In addition, some producers don't add the GIO seed money to a film's budget, but use the money to cut their risks, according to Free China Review Magazine, which covers the Taiwanese business scene.

Huang has been lucky enough to win seed money grants for four of her films. As for finding matching funds, for two films she went to the Nationalist Chinese-owned Central Motion Picture Company (CMPC), the oldest and biggest film company and distributor in Taiwan. They provided the two-thirds matching funds, and Huang signed over all the rights to the films.

However, she and director Wang were responsible for marketing, promotion, even distribution. Local distributors do not want Taiwanese films, "so they are not active," says Huang. "I do all the promotion work myself." But independently produced films cannot be shown in theatres without going through the existing distributors, and even with a distributor, the theatres are a problem.



FOREVER MINE: *A neo-realist image from "Yours and Mine," one example of the kinds of indigenous art-house product being created in contemporary Taiwan.*

Chen explains, "You need to pay up front to a theatre, to guarantee they will play the film. And then if your film is not as successful as suspected, the theatre has the right to pull it, with no money back."

"Even though you have an agreement to show certain times and days, the theatre will pull you out" if your numbers are low, says Huang. She and Wang Shaudi opened "Yours and Mine" against "The Lost World: Jurassic Park," though they were warned against it, but "there is just no space between the big American films, so we put ours out on that weekend. After one week they took our film out of the multiplex which was playing three 'Lost World' prints, and played a fourth 'Lost World' in our theatre."

Filmmakers find new solutions. "After the theatrical release of 'Yours and Mine,'" says Huang, "we had a second run of the movie in a bookstore that had a small theatre, and the result came out better than the theatres. After that, we were approached by one [chain] that is willing to show our film in their theatres in a very good district."

Filmmakers often screen without charge in cultural centers and classrooms like Chen's at the universities. It's a survival strategy: Directors desperately need to win back the Taiwanese audience. Take the case of "Ah Tsong," a 1996 film directed by Chang Zhou-gi about a rural youth in a type of ghost dance ceremony. The film made back its costs with international awards before it was shown in Taiwan. At that point, the director had two choices: screen for free in order build an audience, or try a theatrical release. If Chang screened for free, he'd lose no money, but he decided to release theatrically. He spent US $103,448 for the theatre, plus costs for copies and promotion. "Ah Tsong" got low attendance, was pulled from the theatre, and Chang lost the money.

There is only one bankable director in Taiwan, Chu Yan-peng, who remakes popular Hong Kong or Hollywood films and draws a younger audience. (Surprisingly, he also applies for government seed grants, though he doesn't need the money.) Of the 15 domestic features Taiwan released last year, 10 were funded by GIO seed money. The other five came from Chu Yan-peng.

Today there is virtually no export market for Taiwanese films except for international film festivals. If a film does well, there are subsequent sales to TV stations and art cinemas abroad. So filmmakers frequently seek international cooperation. Hou Hsiao-hsien received Japanese capital for "City of Sadness" (which won the Golden Lion at Venice in 1995), and for "Puppetmaster."

Ang Lee, the one breakout Taiwanese director, found American producers. Lee went to film school in the U.S., and has lived there since 1978. His first film, "Pushing Hands," started with a Taiwanese (GIO) grant, but was produced by James Schamus and Ted Hope of New York's Good Machine, and only distributed in Asia. "The Wedding Banquet," "Eat Drink Man Woman" (Lee's last Taiwanese production) and "Sense and Sensibility" followed. Lee's latest film, "The Ice Storm," has been called the best film of 1997 by influential critics Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert.

Chen hopes for validation of the local industry. "Most of the directors in Taiwan chose to make art oriented films and to make a record in the history of cinema. When I write another book on Taiwanese cinema, I'll write about Hou Hsaio-hsien, I'll write about Edward Yang. I'll write about 'The River' and Tsai Ming Liang. I won't write anything about [populist director] Chu Yan-peng. He will be forgotten after several years."

THE ENVOY

MPAA President Jack Valenti Receives CineAsia's First-Ever International Distinguished Service Award

by Melissa Morrison

Jack Valenti has seen a lot in his life. As a decorated combat pilot, he flew B-25s from Italy during World War II. As a pressman riding in the infamous 1963 Kennedy motorcade in Dallas, he witnessed one of America's most soul-rattling events. As part of LBJ's administration for three years, he had a balcony view of one of the most tumultuous decades in American history. When he joined the Motion Picture Association of America in 1966 as its head, he oversaw industry history, establishing a rating system, presciently launching a worldwide anti-piracy movement, and expanding the now 75-year-old organization's reach into the realms of home video, television and, most recently, cyberspace. Valenti, who along with the MPAA will receive CineAsia's debut International Distinguished Service Award in Singapore on Dec. 3, says he has made history by always keeping an eye on the future.



PRESSING THE FLESH: *Jack Valenti and friend.*

"My greatest achievement? I survived," he told **BOXOFFICE** in a recent interview. "I'm not joking. I think survival is not an inconsiderable asset. I've survived, because I've tried to move with the times and not be rigid with my judgments. We're always looking to the future. I don't want to be like a Bourbon king of France with eyes in the back of my head... I'm really not so obsessed with the past as I am fascinated with the future."

The Wild West of the World Wide Web is his latest frontier, namely its potential to illicitly transmit movies and videos across cyberspace as easily as cattle rustlers thieving on the open range. Valenti urged Congress on Sept. 16 to protect intellectual property by ratifying two treaties negotiated in late 1996 in Geneva by the World Intellectual Property Organization.

"It's the biggest issue around the world," he says of piracy. "It's a cancer in the belly of our business. It's like a virus that flies around the world, and it's endemic everywhere which means we must be vigilant."

Asia—with roaring economies such as Taiwan's and China's, and its teeming Chinese and Indian populations—has major entertainment corporations salivating. But it poses an industry threat along with its promise. As Valenti told Congress, "In China, in Russia, in Italy, in scores of other countries, video pirates steal more than $2 billion of our intellectual property each year."

The MPA (the internationally focused offshoot of the MPAA) has made progress reining in pirates. In June, it signed an agreement with Chinese customs to protect copyrights. In March, two undercover MPA officials helped bust a Malaysian factory, where 30,000 pirated video CDs were seized. In 1996, the MPA participated in 515 similar raids.

But Valenti intends to address a more brotherly topic when he accepts his award in Singapore.

"I'm going to be talking about the community of filmmaking," he says, "because I think the grammar of film is the same in any language, the actors are just speaking a different language on screen. The structure of film, the storytelling is the same, which is why the community of filmmaking leaps beyond borders.

"When people wake up in morning, they don't say, 'Let's see a Japanese film,' or 'Let's see a Chinese film.' They say, 'What's on that's good?'"

But even though the MPAA's mandate is to make the world's markets more accessible to American entertainment, Valenti plans to reassure his audience that Hollywood doesn't want cultural hegemony in Asia's blooming markets. "What America strives for is not to be number one, but number two in those countries—number two in China, number two in Korea. The people in those countries want to see movies in their own language first."

In describing his plan for how to lure local audiences to homemade films, Valenti plans to hit a refrain familiar to anyone who's followed the public pronouncements of this avid free marketeer: "Government cannot cause good movies to be made," he says. "In fact, it can be a barrier to good film. The artist doesn't want to be cabined, cribbed and confined behind artificial barriers erected by governments operating under the defunct mythology that they can somehow cause every film coming out of that country to be loved by everybody."

Read "defunct mythology" as prohibitive taxes and cultural protectionism that limits the exhibition of other countries' movies, videos and TV programs. Speak those words in Asia, though, and they could also could refer to the censorship policies of countries such as China. China's Min-

istry of Propaganda has long stifled artists whose work doesn't jibe with the communist government's values, but it cracked down harder just before Deng Xiaoping died in 1996, when it canceled the film version of popular novelist Wang Shuo's comedy, "An Awkward Life," for example, and refused to release Chen Kaige's 1996 Cannes-exhibited film "Temptress Moon" domestically. More recently, the summer return of Hong Kong from British to Chinese hands has put the former colony's frenetic film industry on guard.

Such issues, however, don't keep Valenti awake nights. "There's censorship boards in every country in the world," he says. "They're in the European Union, in Latin American countries, Canada, Australia—many countries in Asia have government intervention in television and film. I'm not pointing a finger at China. It's in illustrious company. My point is, in most countries, governments intervene in one way or another in television, home video and cinema arenas."

The areas of censorship and the free market may soon overlap. The films "Seven Years In Tibet," which opened in October and stars Brad Pitt, and Martin Scorsese's "Kundun," which opens on Christmas Day, both bring attention to China's 1950 invasion of Tibet and the subsequent Chinese oppression of Tibetan Buddhists. The latter film prompted the Chinese to chill Disney, the company that made "Kundun," with a threat against conducting any of its mega-business in the most populous country in the world.

On this topic, the normally voluble Valenti doesn't have much to say.

"I don't want to get into that," he says. "My guess is no one wants to see film restricted, but China is a sovereign nation—it has a right to do whatever it thinks is good for people." Besides, "we only had 10 pictures shown in China last year. Out of 160 pictures, only 10."

As for the industry's future, the man who believes his MPAA legacy is one of facing forward has no idea. "I haven't the foggiest," he says. "Bill Gates can't tell you where we'll be in four or five years. It's like a roulette table. Our companies are investing in four or five years, placing bets."

The advent of digital transmission will have an impact on how people around the world receive and choose their entertainment, as will the World Wide Web, that much he knows. But he can't predict what kind of an impact all this will have.

"People thought movies would be obliterated by cable, but last year more people went to movies than in the past 40 years," he says. "That's with surfing the Web, satellite, cable, television—people are still going to movies in greater numbers.

"The answer is in the human condition. People don't want to be chained to an electronic box, they want to have a social experience. They still say, 'Let's go to a movie and get a pizza after.'"



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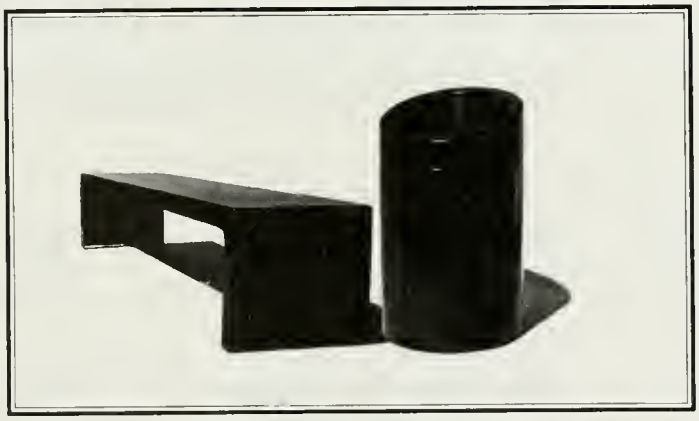
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SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 3

8:00 a.m.-8:30 a.m. **Breakfast** (Sponsor: ITT)

8:30 a.m.-10:00 a.m. **Technical Seminar: "Upgrades."** Moderator: Russell Scott, ITT

10:00 a.m.-12 noon **Screening: Columbia/TriStar Intl.**

12:30 p.m.-2:00 p.m. **Lunch** (Sponsor: Columbia/TriStar Intl.)

2:00 p.m.-5:30 p.m. **Trade Show and Cocktail Party** (Sponsor: Sony Cinema Products)

5:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m. **Screening**

7:45 p.m.-8:45 p.m. **Welcoming Cocktail Party** (Sponsor: Eastman Kodak)

9:00 p.m.-11:15 p.m. **Welcoming Dinner, Awards Ceremony and Keynote** (Sponsor: Coca-Cola)

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4

8:00 a.m.-8:45 a.m. **Breakfast**

8:45 a.m.-10:15 a.m. **Seminar: "An Overview of the Asian Film Industry"**

10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. **Screening: Warner Bros. Intl.**

12:30 p.m.-4:00 p.m. **Trade Show and Lunch** (Sponsor: Warner Bros. Intl.)

4:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m. **Screening: Buena Vista Intl.**

6:30 p.m.-8:45 p.m. **Screening and Product Reel: Buena Vista Intl.**

9:00 p.m.-11:00 p.m. **Dinner** (Sponsor: Buena Vista Intl.)

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5

8:30 a.m.-11:00 a.m. **Trade Show**

11:00 a.m.-1 p.m. **Screening: United Intl. Pictures**

1:00 p.m.-2:30 p.m. **Lunch** (Sponsor: United Intl. Pictures)

2:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m. **Screening: United Intl. Pictures**

5:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m. **Screening: 20th Century Fox Intl.**

9:00 p.m.-11:00 p.m. **Farewell Dinner** (Sponsor: 20th Century Fox Intl.)



FIRST "RATE"

A Brief Historical Summary of the Rise of Jack Valenti, CARA and the MPAA

by Jon A. Walz

CineAsia's first-ever Lifetime Achievement Award will be given to one of the most deserving figures this magazine can think of: the MPAA's legendary Jack Valenti. Valenti's accomplishments and influence almost defy description; during his 30 year career, it can honestly be said that virtually no one involved with the film industry has had greater, perhaps even comparable influence.

Because of the breadth of Valenti's achievements, we felt a bit of historical perspective was called for. So here, with our best regards, is a thumbnail sketch of the Valenti's legacy— or at least his legacy so far. One thing those of us who cover the screen trade know by heart is that, when you're talking about an energetic achiever like Jack Valenti, anything you have to say will always be at least one step behind.



While the Motion Picture Association of America, or MPAA, is best known as the originator and custodian of the movie—and now, television—ratings system, its legacy of promoting and protecting the U.S. film industry as a collective dates back to well before synchronized sound invaded Hollywood, Grauman's Chinese Theatre was constructed or the Academy Award was even conceived. Today, the organization's mandate has been broadened to include such duties as congressional and other governmental lobbying, drafting international treaties specific to the U.S. motion picture industry, collecting royalties, and detecting and eliminating film piracy.

The organization is funded entirely by fees paid by its seven members, the major studio releasing companies: Buena Vista, MGM, Paramount, Sony, Fox, Universal, and Warner Bros. The studios are required to submit every film, trailer, and print advertisement to an independent division of the MPAA, called the Classification and Ratings Administration, or CARA, for rating or approval. In return, the MPAA works to guarantee that all films and advertisements are acceptable to general audiences in every community in the nation.

CARA, which is headed by Jack Valenti, president of the MPAA, and William F. Kartozian, president of the National Association of Theatre Owners, is not an approval board like its predecessor, the Production Code Administration, or PCA. Under the stalwart hand of Valenti's predecessor, Will H. Hayes, content of the member studios' films was either "approved" or "disapproved" by the PCA. The PCA's reign lasted from the late '30s until the advent in 1968 of the new ratings system, which was fought for and designed under the guidance of Jack Valenti.

As movies in the '50s and '60s began to reflect a new, gritty realism—exposing the public for the first time to language and sexual content previously deemed inappropriate—parents and parental groups began to complain that their children could potentially be exposed to objectionable content. Iconoclastic filmmakers like Otto Preminger led a charge against the PCA's authority with films like the sexually-charged-for-its-time "The Moon is Blue" (1953) and the drug-themed "The Man With the Golden Arm" (1955). Both films dealt with "forbidden" subjects and were released successfully without the PCA's seal of approval—the first significant cracks in the Code's authority.

In the 1960s, the Production Code Administration quickly fell victim to the pace and energy of the times. Audiences fervently supported a new, aggressive wave of cinema which empowered filmmakers over the studios. As the studios became mortally hobbled by an inability to anticipate changing audience tastes, landmark films by dynamic young directors began to slip into release.

In 1966, the double-blows of Mike Nichols' "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" and Michelangelo Antonioni's "Blow-Up" raised many eyebrows—including the government's. "Woolf" was chastised for flaunting such scandalous (for the time) dialogue as "screw" and "hump the hostess." The foreign-made "Blow-Up," meanwhile, became the first studio release to contain nudity. The ratings system had yet to be created, but Valenti was able to negotiate slight concessions from Warner Bros., which released "Woolf," and from MGM, which had acquired "Blow-Up." Valenti would later write that he really didn't

feel it right for grown men to sit around a studio discussing ways to remove the word "screw" from an accomplished motion picture.

Victorious in his quest to replace mandatory PCA censorship with voluntary MPAA labeling, Valenti's ratings plan went into effect on November 1, 1968. All film releases from MPAA member companies were required to carry one of four MPAA rating codes: "G," "M" (soon changed to "GP" and later "PG"), "R," and "X." Additionally, any film created or released outside the aegis of MPAA member companies could submit itself for ratings consideration.

The "PG-13" category was added in 1984, and "X" was replaced with "NC-17" in 1990. The MPAA edict—to "provide advance information to enable parents to make judgments on movies they want their children to see or not to see"—has been widely embraced over the past 30 years and, according to various polls, seems to serve parents well.



MPAA ratings are exclusive to releases in the United States. An international lobbying division of the MPAA, called the Motion Picture Association (or MPA) works to ensure an open, non-restrictive marketplace for American entertainment overseas. As a demonstration of its influence under Valenti, the MPA has earned the nickname "the little State Department" for its willingness to immerse itself in tough negotiations on behalf of its members.

Founded in the aftermath of World War II, during a time when anti-U.S. trade restrictions were pummeling the country, the Motion Picture Export Association of America (the name was shortened to Motion Picture Association in 1994) works to "reestablish American films in the world market, and to respond to the rising tide of protectionism resulting in barriers aimed at restricting the importation of American films." Today, the MPA's duties have grown to include liaison duties, the drafting of treaties, and the direction of worldwide anti-piracy efforts.

Under Jack Valenti's guidance, the combined MPAA/MPA has become a vital, pro-active force protecting every constituent of the American motion picture industry. It's a high standard of accomplishment, and with the recent explosion of such advances as digital media, video-on-demand and direct satellite transmission, Valenti and the MPAA's most important work could very well lie ahead.

BLAST FROM HIS PAST

Jack Valenti on the State of Film Content, 1970

The following bylined article was authored by Jack Valenti for our issue of July 20, 1970. It originally appeared under the title "Are Walls Crumbling Down?"

Themes for children: A homosexual episode between two 13-year-old boys... A girl's first menstruation... An unwanted pregnancy. Are the walls crumbling down? Can't you hear the wails of defamers of the movies? "Obscene and decadent... lurid and demoralizing... the ratings system is a fraud..."

But wait. These aren't movie themes at all. Not movies...not really? No, not movies at all. These are themes of recent new books for children. Children are buying them. All ages are welcome. No problem, no trouble, no restraint...just pay at the cash register as you go out.

Is there any criticism in the press, any flood of censorship and classification bills introduced in legislatures? Do newspapers or radio or television refuse advertisements for these books for children? If there's a ripple, the rumbling hasn't been picked up by my ears.

Now, I haven't read the books and I don't condemn them. I don't point a finger. I think that writers and publishers should give children and young people a more accurate view of life, if parents choose for their children to read these books.

But imagine if the three themes were in movies, were emphasized in movie advertisements. How many persons would have waited to see the movies before blasting the film business? It seems to me to be an imperishable rule that you are best qualified to denounce the movie that you haven't seen. And not just one film but all films, and the motion picture industry and its people to boot. When you see a film you have to undergo the agony of knowing what you're talking about.

Let us suppose some more. Suppose the movies are rated R or X. How many advertisements would be refused? Is there anyone who needs the answer to be spelled out?

I think that movies, like books, in drawing on life and man's experiences, should give a more honest view, too. I contend that the comparison with books does not stop there. I don't think there should be a double standard, one for literature, another for the screen. I believe that the same criteria of judgement should apply to both. It mangles truth to maintain that what is permissible for a child in a book is impermissible for a child in film.

It could reasonably be said, I believe, that, if anything, harsher judgements could be made about books. A youngster reads a book alone. Alone, he can become in imagination prey to visions and distortions stirred by the reading. A child sees a movie in a theatre in the company of peers and grownups. Any impressions from the screen are filtered and softened by a feeling of closeness and security arising from this comfortable association.

Again, I am not here to pin devil's ears on book publishers. I am for book publishers... and I am for motion picture producers. Really, if anyone should entertain the slightest doubt, it is the parent that I have in mind. I am for parents and I am for movies, too. I think, though, that just as double vision is not good for driving an auto, it is not good for looking upon movies. A parent, I feel, should view a movie in the same light as he does a book. Is it suitable for my child? Is the theme treated with taste and decency, with reasonableness and respectability? Is my child mature and settled enough to understand and cope with it?

If these questions should perplex a parent, and I think they should, I have a suggestion. Make a companion of the motion picture rating system and let it serve as a guide. It will not provide all the answers for every parent and every child, but it is the best place to start that I know.

Parents who have followed the ratings since the system began on November 1, 1968 have had plenteous numbers of films from which to choose. More than two-thirds of all films rated in this period have been in the unrestricted categories: G and GP, all ages. The figures are 479 G- and GP-rated films out of a total of 710 rated through June of this year.

Aside to readers in the industry: These are some of the things I say when I talk to parents. I find, far more often than not, that we can come to a common meeting ground where reason and reasonableness rule. Perhaps more of us should engage in dialogues with parents... and with patrons? It's a way to stop walls from crumbling down.—**Jack Valenti**

SIXTH SENSE

China's Independent "Sixth Generation" Takes Risks and Makes Art for Today's Asia

by Karen Achenbach

The films of Communist China's newest group of directors, the so-called "Sixth Generation," could be mistaken for independent films from any capitalist country. Their plots are filled with rockers, abortions, homosexuals, adulterers, tiny apartments in dirty cities—all dangerously taboo topics to Chinese bureaucrats. But to young filmmakers, these are important portrayals of life in China today, particularly of Beijing's urban youth, who, after seeing the hopes of their generation crushed at Tiananmen, live with tightening government restrictions while being exposed to western products, information, and trade. And talk about independent: Because it's the only way to get their "taboo" films made, filmmakers work outside the government's studio system in a country where to do so is illegal.



FROZEN OUT: *The director of the allegorical "Frozen" goes by the Chinese term for "No Name" to avoid suppression from the Chinese regime.*

China numbers each distinct group of its filmmakers by generation. Zhang Yimou ("To Live"), Chen Kaige ("Farewell, My Concubine"), and Tian Zhuang-zhuang ("The Blue Kite") are of the Fifth Generation, members of the Beijing Film Academy's first graduating class in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution—the blackest period in modern Chinese history, during which vast purges of Chinese society were mounted in the name of purifying the Communist body politic of Western and other anti-communist ideas. Mere children who fled into the countryside during that infamous period of Maoist oppression, today the Fifth Generation filmmakers make films of their experiences—films often critical of the Cultural Revolution, as well as the policies it fostered.

Sixth Generation directors, on the other hand, are generally defined by five interlocking factors. One, they are usually the inheritors of the legacy of the Cultural Revolution, rather than actual participants in its events. Two, they graduated in 1989—the year of the Tiananmen massacres. Three, as former students, they were suspect within China's "official" film industry because of Tiananmen. Four, they wanted to make films immediately, so they chose to make independent, though illegal, films. And five, they regard the films of the Fifth Generation as not radical enough, and want to make new films to show the truth of Chinese society today. As Berenice Reynaud, a scholar and critic specializing in Chinese films, puts it, "For the last two or three years, I would say that the term 'independent cinema' in China and the term 'Sixth Generation' have been synonymous."

In August, L.A. audiences saw the U.S. premiere of "Frozen," a recent Sixth Generation independent film. Made without government knowledge, smuggled out of China, and put through post-production in Rotterdam, "Frozen" was directed by the anonymous Wu Ming (Chinese for "No Name") and screened in "Electric Shadows '97: A Pan-Asian Film Festival," presented by the UCLA Film and Television Archive in association with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Wu remains unnamed because, if discovered, he could be permanently banned from filmmaking in China.

Feng Xun, a Chinese national and producer of "Frozen," describes her generation: "In the old days people had to work for five or six years to gain the experience before they're allowed to direct. Some young people couldn't wait, so they went ahead and made independent films by themselves, which brought some of them bad luck. They were 'frozen,' which means the [government-controlled] studio—and labs—will not sponsor you to make any film in the future."

"Frozen" focuses on a Beijing performance artist so upset by the state of things that he ends up dead. For his last performance, he melts chunks of ice with his body heat. The artist is a muscular 20-something with a laconic drawl and post-modern ennui. That he appears Westernized to Westerners and a spoiled brat to older Chinese is of a piece with what China, a deeply divided country, is experiencing today.

Charles Ruas, author, critic, and a Fulbright Scholar who has taught in China, explains: "Most Western experimental art acts against a known value in the culture. With artists in Communist China, the idea for the experiment doesn't come from within, it comes from outside, and it comes from the west."

Ruas sees this gravitation by younger Chinese artists to models from the West as an



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unintended consequence of the Cultural Revolution, which imprisoned, tortured and/or executed an entire generation of Chinese artists, writers and philosophers, as well as millions from other walks of life. "They were all punished, banished and killed," says Ruas. "All. Anyone with any skill. Not just intellectuals and artists, but elementary school teachers, the garbage man, the policeman, anyone who had a specific function was attacked. People used [the Cultural Revolution] to exact vengeance on their neighbors or on people they didn't like, and the whole society went out of control."



FRESH PRODUCE: *Producer Feng Xun accompanied a print of the controversial Sixth Generation feature "Frozen" during its L.A. debut.*

How out of control did China become during the Cultural Revolution? According to Ruas, French sociological teams described evidence of ritual cannibalism in many outlying villages. "You'd expect communities to be able to hold together, but they had been disintegrated by the extremity of the violence to the level of this horrifying, barbaric, pre-civilization ritual."

After Mao died in 1976, people were brought in from the countryside and put back into their old apartments and old jobs, right beside the citizens who had informed on them to the government. Their attackers were unpunished; some had been even been promoted for their "service."

The government policy was to forget the Cultural Revolution ever happened. This meant that films criticizing the Revolution were banned. Today, that ban extends to films criticizing any part of Chinese society.

China's leading Sixth Generation director is Zhang Yuan. His 1990 debut film, "Mama," was hailed as the first Chinese independent movie since 1949. A semi-documentary about a mother and her retarded son, "Mama" was smuggled out of China. The next three of Zhang's films were officially banned: the 1993 rockumentary "Beijing Bastards," 1994's "The Square" (about Tiananmen), and the 1996 documentary "Sons."

Zhang's new film, "East Palace, West Palace," is based on the trouble Chinese AIDS clinics have finding men who will admit to being homosexual. It was made with French co-producers, who screened the movie at Cannes despite Chinese government prohibitions. In retaliation, Zhang's passport was seized. Because of this and similar incidents, China has instituted regulations to control all film negatives on foreign co-productions in order to secure the government's power to censor Chinese films, or to prohibit them from screening at festivals, no matter who owns the copyright.

In addition, new campaigns against what is euphemistically called "spiritual pollution" have been initiated—campaigns Zhang fears could make directors avoid certain topics. Except that those topics, by their appeal in the West, bring in the hard currency China's film industry needs.

According to Reynaud, China's push toward privatization has meant that "in the last two or three years, the situation has changed. It is still illegal to make movies outside of the [government-financed] studio system, but the studios can no longer afford to produce movies." The studios are allowed to make a certain quota of films per year, so they sell quotas (essentially, permission to make a film) to independent production companies throughout China, including 20 to 30 foreign co-producers per year—foreigners who often want films dealing in the very sensationalized topics the Chinese government wants banned. These movies are made using none of the studio's resources, but they retain the studio stamp. This means the studio can refuse to distribute the movie on the Chinese mainland, which makes investors very leery.

> ***"For the last two or three years, I would say that, in China, the term 'independent cinema' and the term 'Sixth Generation' have been synonymous."***

But all of China is in conflict between socialist control and capitalist reward. Despite government regulations and censorship, there is a thriving underground for banned culture. According to some, the only requirement to stay clean with the law is enough money to bribe your way out of trouble.

"The younger generation peddles cigarettes and leather jackets or Nikes to make quick money," says Ruas. But Ruas warns that the present Chinese government is run by "brutish hardliners" who have "eliminated all dissent from Tibet, from China, even eliminating people as innocuous as union organizers" and people working to fund Chinese social security or put an eight hour cap on workdays. According to Ruas, in today's China, nearly any social activity can be judged as seditious if it is seen as blocking the government's interests in competing in the global business economy.

Money talks in filmmaking too. Tian Zhuang-zhuang's "The Blue Kite" (seen on U.S. cable in 1997) was a studio-made film, but he shot a script different than the one the studio approved. As a result, Tian was blacklisted, forced to resign from the studio where he'd worked for 10 years, and banned from film work in China for five years. Yet one year later Tian was at the Beijing Film Studio, overseeing production there because the studios respond to the market, and his film had found an audience in the west.

With approximately 18 Film Studios in China, annual domestic production is between 150 and 200 features, though boxoffice is dominated by foreign films. In 1994, the Ministry of Radio, Film and Television decided to import 10 overseas films a year for "boxoffice sharing" including "The Fugitive" and "True Lies." (Of the high-profile U.S. titles the Ministry imported, only "Forrest Gump" flopped. The Chinese thought the passive Gump was not heroic.)

In 1996, foreign films accounted for 70-80 percent of China's total boxoffice revenues. Meanwhile, the mainland's domestic industry is failing, due in part to a reluctance to distribute much of the domestic product.

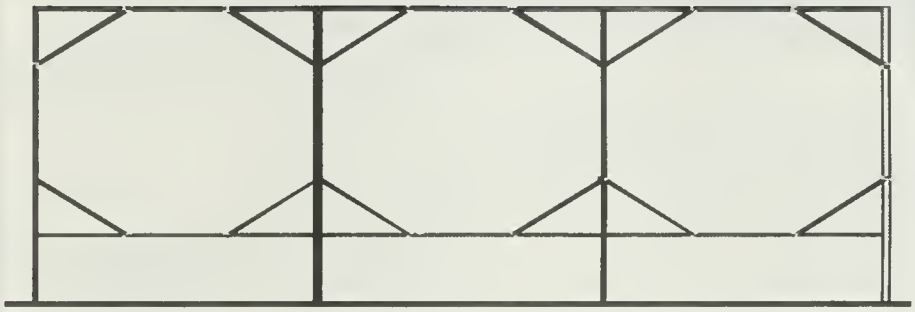
If the government's Film Bureau continues to ban films, foreign investors may withdraw from China. The international market can only sustain one or two independent Chinese films a year, which means foreign co-productions have to get a return on their investment in China itself. "The market [for Chinese-language films] is in China," says Reynaud. "So if [the Film Bureau] keeps films from being distributed in China, it means that the Film Bureau is going to kill the Chinese film industry, and everybody's very worried about that."

The Sixth Generation, commonly perceived as being less political than the Fifth, is taking economic action by staying outside the official industry. "Once you start working within the studio system, they have you," says Reynaud. "They give you the money or they don't give you the money. They release your film or they don't release your film. If you're totally illegal [like the Sixth Generation directors], they won't put you in jail. They'll take your passport away, but then they have to give it back at some point. If you're totally illegal, they have no hold over you. Of course, it's also a difficult life."

"I'd prefer to choose a more comfortable and normal way of making films," says producer Fen Xun. "But if they [the Film Bureau] still place us in this position and restrict our freedom, then I hope to continue to make independent films."

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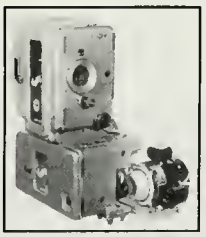
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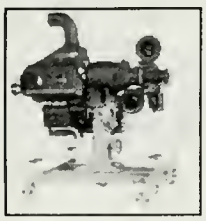
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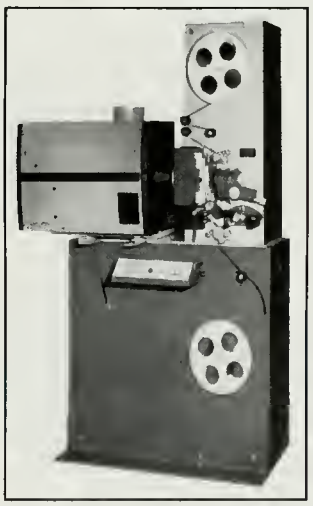


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BOXOFFICE REVIEWS

December 1997

★★★★★ OUTSTANDING
★★★★ VERY GOOD
★★★ GOOD
★★ FAIR
★ POOR
(no stars) BOMB

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MONTREAL FEST/ DAY AND DATE: DEC. 19

THE WINTER GUEST ★★★1/2

Starring Emma Thompson and Phyllida Law. Directed by Alan Rickman. Written by Sharman Macdonald and Alan Rickman. Produced by Ed Pressman, Ken Lipper and Steve Clark-Hall. A Fine Line release. Drama. Rated R for language and brief sensuality. Running time: 106 min. Screened at Montreal. Opens 12/19 ltd.

Though stateside audiences were introduced to British actor Alan Rickman via his bad-guy turn in "Die Hard," the British actor is really a serious sort, as shown by his more existential turns in "An Awfully Big Adventure" and "Michael Collins." So it's likely little surprise to art-house-goers that Rickman in his feature directing debut brings to the screen a work with terrific cast work and a certain haunting quality yet one that leaves audiences with fewer answers than questions, the most basic being, who is the winter guest?



ICE STORM: *Fine Line's "The Winter Guest."*

This adaptation of Sharmon Macdonald's play follows four pairs of people in a Scottish seaside hamlet on a winter day so cold the sea has frozen. Although a decent amount of time is lent to recounting the escapades of two truant boys along the shore, two old biddies taking the bus to a funeral and two teenagers falling and then not falling into precarious love, the main focus is on a depressed woman (Emma Thompson) whose self-involved husband has died and on her mother (Thompson's real-life mom, Phyllida Law), who tries to rile her daughter into a new way of existence but more often than not simply riles her.

Rickmon has brought the cloistered stage play to vibrant life throughout the tiny town, and his work with the actors is universally superb; there is not a false note struck among the compony. That said, the close-in work via dialogue between the characters and the resolute feeling of hidden symbolism hovering above the proceedings make this, like "An Awfully Big Adventure," a pleasurable sit only for moviegoers who like the microscopism of introspection. Except for a careful reticence in telling his tale of peaple living on a land closed off by ice, Rickman makes nary a slip.—***Kim Williamson***

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ASIAN EXTRA

ELECTRIC SHADOWS FEST '97

"Electric Shadows '97: A Pan-Asian Film Festival," held this past August at UCLA in conjunction with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, provided a look at the creative hotbed that is new Asian cinema. Below, we review four of the offerings, including two that will be seeing stateside release in 1998. **BOXOFFICE** *also previously reviewed three other significant titles shown at Electric Shadows: Park Chul-soo's "Farewell My Darling" (March 1997 issue), Tsai Ming-liang's "The River" (June 1997) and Oguri Kohei's "The Sleeping Man" (April 1997). "Films produced in Asia...have moved from highly specialized venues, of interest to only a handful of cinephiles, into the mainstream of international film production and the cutting edge of cinematic innovation," says Robert Rosen, director of UCLA's Film and Television Archive. His comment is borne out below.*

FROZEN ★★1/2

Starring Jia Hongshen, Ma Xiaoqing, Bai Yu and Li Geng. Directed by Wu Ming. Written by Pang Ming and Wu Ming. Produced by Xu Wei and Shu Kei. An International Film Circuit release. Drama. Mandarin-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 99 min.



COOL WOMAN: *"Frozen" co-producer Feng Xun.*

A depressed young artist eventually decides to do a performance art piece wherein he melts blocks of ice with his body heat (he's not acting) until he becomes hypothermic. This 1997 Chinese film, which was shot guerilla-style in China because it's illegal to make a film without approval, was based on a real artist who later killed himself, and has some of the most exceptional cinematography coaxed out of 16mm film.

Although it's wonderful that young Chinese filmmakers are making gritty, semi-documentary urban tales, this one is interesting only because it's not the usual fare from the mainland. A featured (not lead) character has the most dynamic scene, an extremely funny sequence during which he attempts to convince psychiatric doctors that his friend, not he himself, is the one who needs their help. Another noteworthy element is performance artists shown eating soap; one would hope they are acting, but they aren't.—***Karen Achenbach***

TWO PUNKS ★★★1/2

Starring Osawa Takao, Dankan, Kataoka Reiko and Aoyama Chikako. Directed by Aoyama Shinji. Written by Kaneko Shoji. Produced by Kai Naoki, Nagasawa Katsuaki and Okagawa Akimoto. A There's Corporation, Tokyo production; no stateside distributor set. Action/drama. Japanese-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 99 min.

Written by the late Kaneko Shoji, who liked to depict the yakuza as imperfect and troubled, "Two Punks" ("Chinpira," a 1996 Japanese production) is a touching "Donnie Brasco"-like story of an ambitious country kid getting himself to Tokyo and hooking up with an older yakuza associate (Osawa Takao), who's not a "made" guy. Played by rising star Dankan, the young mover is an original character who behaves against every expectation and continually surprises. The yakuza also notice his unusual responses, and he benefits.

This is Aoyama Shinji's third film, a deceptive work that quietly weaves an emotional web that by film's end captures viewers completely. The two men are bookies that appear more like slackers. The younger, seen in present time at the beginning of the movie and then in flashbacks, recites a poem in scattered pieces throughout: "Under the gold and silver neon waves," "Tokyo the capital of glory," "Yakuza isn't the only life," "Beauty is not only for women."

Aoyama builds with interesting sound techniques: a yakuza chief on acid is stabbed in a pachinko parlor, and as he staggers until dead all sound stops. The film's score is an outstanding solo guitar by famed rock guitarist Makato Ayuakawa. Good-looking men in nice suits, the pieces of poem ("skyscrapers, tombstones"), some memories, many actions, the guitar score—all these move the story forward without noticeable intensity until the sudden and brutal confluence of all the elements. Al-

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ASIAN EXTRA

though plot weakness due to having the characters make simply stupid moves diminishes the logic of the ending, its power is irrefutable. The whole of the young man's life has been expressed, including a precious lesson and its tremendous cost. And it is unclear whether he will survive the sadness of knowing that he didn't understand the value of something before it was destroyed.—*Karen Achenbach*

YIN AND YANG: GENDER IN THE CHINESE CINEMA ★★★★

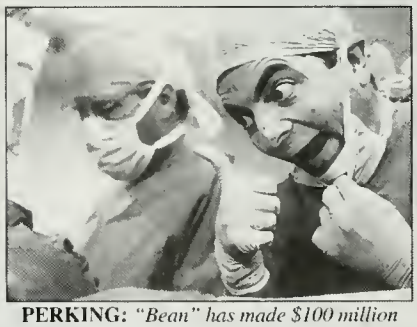
Starring John Woo, Tsui Hark, Ang Lee, Chen Kaige and Leslie Cheung. Directed by Stanley Kwan. Written by Edward Lam. Produced by the British Film Institute. A Miramax release. Documentary. Mandarin- and Cantonese-language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 82 min.

This 1997 Hong Kong production, the latest installment of the British Film Institute's "Cenentary of Cinema" TV series, is an invaluable record of the world's premier Asian directors as they talk about their filmmaking in interviews organized around the question, "Are Chinese movies intentionally homoerotic?" Stanley Kwan, a gay male director from Hong Kong, has a topic that international audiences love to debate, plus scenes from Hong Kong action, Taiwanese gay punk, and kung fu movies of all types. Fifty years of Chinese cinema is reviewed, but the draw is to see and hear these giants, a too-rare and infinitely repeatable pleasure.

Surprising pieces of information include: Until the '50s, Chinese cinema gave top billing only to women; and a certain female actress in the '50s and '60s who played the man in a famous screen couple off the screen lived with her co-star. The director's mother makes a profound impression when asked about society's disapproval of her son: He's gay, he's successful, and he takes care of her—they deserve a good life. Miramax reportedly will release a dubbed version in 1998.—*Karen Achenbach*

PREVIOUSLY REVIEWED: *NOVEMBER/DECEMBER/JANUARY FILMS*

The alphabetical list below notes the issue of BOXOFFICE in which our review of an upcoming film appeared, gives its star rating, and provides newly updated distributor and release date information.



PERKING: *"Bean" has made $100 million overseas before its 11/7 U.S. opening.*



CUTTING EDGE: *Neil Jordan's "The Butcher Boy" opens Nov. 26.*

"Bean" ★★★1/2: Gramercy, 11/7 wide; see Sept. 1997.
"The Butcher Boy" ★★★★: Warner Bros., 11/26; see Sept. 1997.
"Deceiver" ★★★1/2: MGM, 11/21; see Nov. 1997.
"Enter the Dragon" (reissue) ★★★: Warner Bros., 11/9 Sacto; 8/27/73 issue.
"Four Days in September" ★★★: Miramax, 1/23; see June 1997.
"Happy Together" ★★: Kino, 11/14 SF; see Sept. 1997.
"Hurricane Streets" ★★★: UA, 1/9 ltd; see April 1997.
"Kiss or Kill" ★★★: October Films, Nov. undated; see Nov. 1997.
"The Leading Man" ★★★: Legacy, Nov. undated; see April 1997.
"The Little Mermaid" (reissue) ★★★★1/2: Buena Vista, 11/14; see Jan. 1990.
"Ma Vie en Rose" ★★★★: Sony Classics, 12/25 NY/LA; see Aug. 1997.
"Nick and Jane" ★★: CFP, 11/14 ltd; see June 1996.
"One Night Stand" ★★★: New Line, 11/14 700 runs; see Nov. 1997.
"Parallel Sons" ★★★: Greycat, Nov. undated; see May 1997.
"Sick" ★★: CFP, 11/7 NY/LA; see Nov. 1997.
"Slaves to the Underground" ★1/2: First Look, 11/14 NY; see April 1997.
"Still Breathing" ★1/2: Warner Bros., Jan. undated; see Oct. 1997.
"The Sweet Hereafter" ★★★★: Fine Line, 11/21 NY, 11/26 LA; see Aug. 1997.
"Swept From the Sea" ★: TriStar, 1/23; see Nov. 1997.
"The Tango Lesson" ★1/2: Sony Classics, 11/14 NY; see Nov. 1997.
"Underground" ★★★★1/2: New Yorker, Dec. undated; see Sept. 1995.
"Welcome to Sarajevo" ★★★1/2: Miramax, 11/26 NY/LA; see July 1997.
"The Wings of the Dove" ★★1/2: Miramax, 11/7 NY/LA, 11/14 exp; Nov. 1997.

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ASIAN EXTRA

YOURS AND MINE ★★★

Starring Bai Bing-bing, Gu Baoming, Hsih Li-jing and Lin Cheng-sheng. Directed and written by Wang Shaudi. Produced by Huang Liming. A Rice Film Intl. production; no stateside distributor set. Comedy. Mandarin and Hokkien language; English subtitles. Not yet rated. Running time: 114 min.



HIS AND HERS: *Scenes from "Yours and Mine."*



This Taiwanese production (aka "My Insanity" and "Things That Drive Me and You Crazy") is an intriguing look at modern Taipei through the misadventures of an interweaving bunch of its citizens. A trio of punk kids with dyed red and yellow hair steal cars and set up teenage girls for kidnap by gangsters; a rich surgeon (famed comedian Gu Baoming) thwarts thieves as well as he schemes. Also starring rock singer Hsih Li-jing and filmmaker Lin Cheng-sheng, the film moves like episodic TV, though its themes are more serious and current: loneliness, poverty, and fear of crime. Most amusing is the surgeon's desperate plea to his daughter, just back from L.A., to speak Mandarin, please!

Before the film's release in Taiwan, female lead and noted talk-show host Bai Bing-bing's teenage daughter was kidnapped and murdered in an extortion attempt. That event's similarity to the film's plotline highlights the fact that Taiwan has the second most kidnappings in the world. (Singapore has even more.) — ***Karen Achenbach***

SPECIAL FORMATS

X-WING VS. TIE FIGHTER ★★★

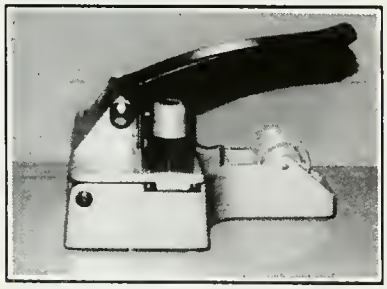
LucasArts; Windows '95; $42.95.

Those wizards at George Lucas' computer game company, LucasArts, are at it again. "X-Wing Vs. Tie Fighter," developed in conjunction with Totally Games, is the latest entry in the ever-growing collection of "Star Wars"-themed computer games, allowing the player to act out his "Skywalkerion" fantasies of being a starfighter pilot engaged in the great space war between the forthright Rebels and the Evil Empire. And, like the re-releases of the "Star Wars" movies earlier this year, this new game is not so much a sequel as it is an update: bigger in scope and better at graphics, but essentially the some old thing. "X-Wing Vs. Tie Fighter" is a flight combat simulation in which a player can choose to be a Rebel Alliance pilot (as in the earlier game "X-Wing") or an Imperial Fleet pilot (as in the earlier "Tie Fighter"). The visuals are much improved from the older product, with high-resolution 16-bit graphics, and there are more keyboard commands, giving the player better control of his spacecraft.

Although these upgrades do create an incredibly lifelike three-dimensional universe, the game is still a flight-based "shoot-'em-up," a type that has glutted the market for a decade. The best improvement is the ability for "multi-player" combat, in which several people can connect through modems or even via the Internet to play together at the same time, flying either for the Rebellion or the Empire. This type of "head-to-head" gaming has been a standard feature on other programs for years, but this is the first time it's been available for one set in the "Star Wars" universe. This feature alone is enough to recommend the game to longtime fans. They finally receive their wish: to join with friends (or compete against them) in the battle for domination of the universe.—***Michael Payne***

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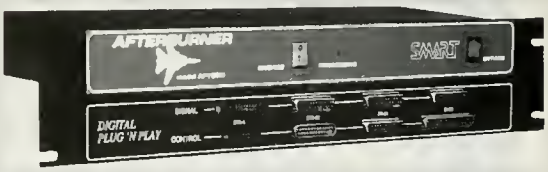


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FLASHBACK: *APRIL 5, 1947*
What BOXOFFICE *said about...*

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

[Made in 1946 by England's Rank/Cineguild and then imported by Universal-International, David Lean's "Great Expectations" was Oscar-nominated for best picture, script and direction and won for cinematography and art direction. A contemporary version from Fox opens limited this Dec. 31 and goes wider in January. Here's what BOXOFFICE *said about Lean's work.]*



A reasonably faithful screen adaptation of the Charles Dickens classic that captures all of the flavor and much of the warmth and charm of the literary original, "Great Expectations" is a well-acted, superbly photographed period piece. It will add prestige to the Universal-International program, even if it will require strong selling to offset its lack of marquee names. Its audiences will be drawn chiefly from the oldsters with fond memories of Pip's adventures and from the students and younger readers of Dickens' works. Because director David Lean has lingered fondly over many scenes and introduced countless subsidiary characters, the footage is overlong, meaning average audiences could find it slow-moving.

SELLING ANGLES:

Except for two members who have a following in art theatres—John Mills, who played in "In Which We Serve," and Valerie Hobson, recently in "The Years Between" and other British films—the cast is lacking in marquee power. Concentrate on the Charles Dickens angle by arranging tieups with bookshops for displays of this and other works by the famous author. Put window cards or display boards in public libraries or in school reading rooms.

REVIEWS

ILL GOTTEN GAINS 1/2

Starring Djimon [Hounsou], Akosua Busia, De'Aundre Bonds and Clabe Hartley. Voice by Eartha Kitt. Directed, written and produced by Joel Ben Marsden. A Spats Film release. Drama. Not yet rated. Running time: 102 min.

Sadly, "Ill Gotten Gains" is an amateurish and often unintentionally comical treatment of the African slave trade. Resembling nothing less than a "Saturday Night Live" parody of Steven Spielberg's upcoming "Amistad," this $2 million black-and-white production will beat Spielberg into the marketplace but won't cause him to lose any sleep.

Set on a clipper anchored off the Guinea Coast of Africa in 1869, "Ill Gotten Gains" chronicles a rebellion by African captives against pirates who have seized them in violation of international laws forbidding slavery. Debuting filmmaker Joel Ben Marsden destroys any sense of period versimilitude, however, by filling his script with 1990s slang and profanity. His storytelling style is crude and pretentious, but Ben Kufrin's striking, high-contrast photography gives the film a veneer of professionalism.—***Joseph McBride***

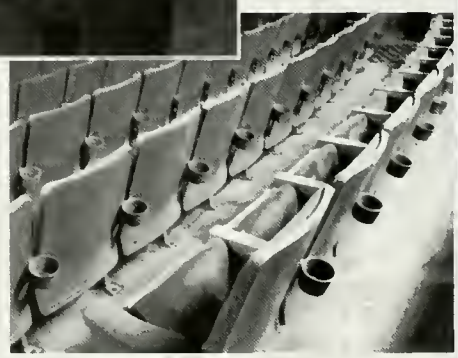
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REVIEWS

CRITICAL CARE ★★★

Starring James Spader, Kyra Sedgwick, Helen Mirren and Albert Brooks. Directed by Sidney Lumet. Written by Steven S. Schwartz. Produced by Steven S. Schwartz and Sidney Lumet. A Live release. Satire. Rated R for language and a scene of sexuality. Running time: 109 min.

The essential callowness that audiences have come to associate with James Spader characters doesn't provide a strong central heartbeat to support "Critical Care," Sidney Lumet's scathing assault on modern medicine, but nevertheless this Live/Village Roadshow/ASQA co-production gradually finds its own strong lifeline, establishing a tone and momentum that prove successful. Spader plays Dr. Ernst, an ambitious young medic who, because of a lack of care and an absence of caring, and due to his urge to dally with a teasing blonde (Kyra Sedgwick), finds himself swept into a nightmare: the ethical void of contemporary critical-care medicine.

As Dr. Ernst is learning his morality lesson, the script cuts cruelly and sharply to the cold heart of reality and finds bleak and crazy humor in exposing the horrifying hypocrises that bind society's notions of life and death. Helen Mirren ("Some Mother's Son"), as the practical but true nurse, as always gives a sterling performance, and Albert Brooks ("Mother") is subtle as a mercenary old sot.—*Bridget Byrne*

I LOVE YOU, I LOVE YOU NOT ★★★

Starring Jeanne Moreau, Claire Danes and Jude Law. Directed by Billy Hopkins. Written by Wendy Kesselman. Produced by Joe Caracciolo Jr., John Fiedler and Mark Tarlov. A CFP release. Drama. Unrated. Running time: 91 min.

In the coming-of-age "I Love You, I Love You Not," Claire Danes is Daisy, a shy student in a posh private school who occasionally feels like an outsider because of her Jewish lineage. In typical teen fashion, Daisy is infatuated with the school's Golden Boy, Ethan (Jude Law); though she can't even bring herself to speak to him, he notices her glances and begins to court her.

Nana (Jeanne Moreau), the loving, wry grandmother whom Daisy visits each weekend, is a true confidante to her beloved granddaughter. In turn, Nana shares with Daisy the hardships she suffered as a girl during the Holocaust. Nana's younger self in these scenes is played by Danes, further illustrating the identification between the two. Daisy is haunted yet fascinated by these accounts, representing her own struggle to accept her heritage and herself.

It's a simple yet elegant and authentic portrait of the delicate emotions of a delicate girl, and of how her grandmother teaches her to embrace an aspect of herself she once viewed with shame, strengthening her. Moving performances are given by Moreau and Danes.—*Christine James*

A LIFE LESS ORDINARY ★★

Starring Ewan McGregor, Cameron Diaz and Holly Hunter. Directed by Danny Boyle. Written by John Hodge. Produced by Andrew MacDonald. A Fox release. Romance. Rated R for violence and language. Running time: 104 min.

The first Hollywood feature by the human hat trick (Boyle-Hodge-MacDonald) that came up with the edgy and hilarious junkie comedy "Trainspotting" doesn't even come close. The plot of "A Life Less Ordinary" is, actually, quite ordinary. Robert (Ewan McGregor), sporting a Bay City Rollers haircut, is fired as a janitor and retaliates by kidnapping the boss' spoiled daughter, Versace-clad Celine (Cameron Diaz, with an unconvincing snarl), who winds up having to give the hapless Robert how-to's. Meanwhile, two angels (Holly Hunter and Delroy Lindo) must make the pair fall in love or face censure from the ultimate Boss. Who'd have thought the 1983 Olivia Newton-John/John Travolta "Two of a Kind" would be such an influence on these maverick filmmakers?

In fact, a lot of "A Life Less Ordinary" has been done elsewhere, usually to better effect. A karaoke scene ("My Best Friend's Wedding" redux) in a rural bar becomes a '30s-style dance number: hello, Dennis Potter. Bullets fly with comic-book abandon; nods to Quentin T. The one original thing is Hunter's turn as a fierce angel.—*Melissa Morrison*

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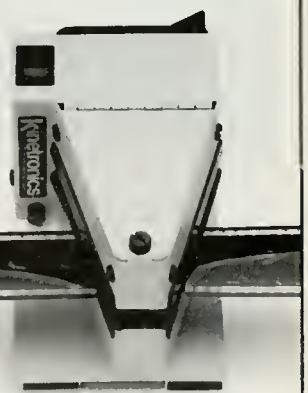
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REVIEWS

THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE ★★★

Starring Keanu Reeves, Al Pacino, Charlize Theron, Jeffrey Jones, Judith Ivey and Craig T. Nelson. Directed by Taylor Hackford. Written by Jonathan Lemkin and Tony Gilroy. Produced by Arnon Milchan, Arnold Kopelson and Anne Kopelson. A Warner Bros. release. Thriller. Rated R for sexuality, nudity, violence and language. Running time: 152 min.

Despite the obvious pitfalls associated with casting Keanu Reeves as an attorney, "The Devil's Advocate" actually manages to serve up one of the season's juicier entertainments, a conventional fantasy/thriller executed with unconventional panache and anchored by dazzling performances from Al Pacino and Charlize Theron.

Audiences able to stay with the film through an overlong introduction (nearly 90 minutes) will find their efforts rewarded in the latter hour as the masks are drawn away and the sinister and even satanic plottings of law firm founder John Milton (Pacino) are revealed. The good news about Reeves is that, though he is still predictably bad and horribly miscast, he's not intolerable.

With the exception of a cheap, derivative post-climatic tag and a penchant for letting dialogue scenes drag on, scripters Jonathan Lemkin and Tony Gilroy have respectably adapted Andrew Neiderman's novel, giving director Taylor Hackford the chance to vigorously, if bombastically, exercise his highly stylistic sensibilities.—*Wade Major*

I KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER ★★★

Starring Jennifer Love Hewitt, Freddie Prinze Jr. and Sarah Michelle Gellar. Directed by Jim Gillespie. Written by Kevin Williamson. Produced by Neal H. Moritz, Erik Feig and Stokely Chaffin. A Columbia release. Horror. Rated R for strong horror violence and language. Running time: 100 min.

Scripter Kevin Williamson ("Scream") avoids the sophomore slump by building on the best of that first film's hallmarks: blenderizing the funny and the scary. "I Know What You Did Last Summer" does it more successfully than its monosyllabic predecessor, as when a schlocky beauty pageant is crosscut with a murder.

And like "Scream," this new entrant features a dewy cast sucked right off TV (including the "Scream" star Neve Campbell's fellow "Party of Fiver" Jennifer Love Hewitt), the tweaking of horror-film cliches, and the obligatory pop-culture references. Overall, it's a successful formula, but sometimes the seams show.

The m.o.: Hook-wielding fisherman guts his human catch. The excuse: Four teens have a hit-and-run; fearing for their futures, they toss the victim into the sea. A year later, former honor student Julie (played by Hewitt and her breasts) comes home from college with pasty skin and bad grades; her best friend, dishy beauty queen Helen (Sarah Michelle Gellar and her breasts), has given up her acting dreams and works behind the perfume counter. Their exbeaus (Freddie Prinze Jr. and Ryan Phillippe) are also failures. And now someone's terrorizing them about the previous summer's events.

The galoshes-wearing killer isn't as scary as "Scream's" costume goblin; in fact, he looks like the logo for Fisherman's Friend throat lozenges. But the film has some good thrills and good jokes. You'll shriek, you'll laugh.—*Melissa Morrison*

EYE OF GOD ★★

Starring Martha Plimpton, Hal Holbrook, Kevin Anderson and Nick Stahl. Directed and written by Tim Blake Nelson. Produced by Wendy Ettinger and Michael Nelson. A Castle Hill release. Drama. Rated R for violence, language and depiction of abortion. Running time: 84 min.

A small-town diner waitress ("Beautiful Girls'" Martha Plimpton) has been waiting for years to meet a prisoner with whom she has been corresponding: a man (Kevin Anderson, of TV's "Nothing Sacred") who, unbeknownst to her for some reason, is incarcerated for brutally killing his pregnant wife. They meet, fall in love, and marry quickly—and she becomes pregnant.

Hal Holbrook ("The Firm") has a lovely role as a moral,



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REVIEWS

world-weary cop, but writer/director Tim Blake Nelson's visually ambitious yet dramatically benign and sickeningly tragic story of a romance between a right-wing religious zealot and a woman who long ago rejected God fizzles because he—like many directors on the independent scene—substitutes cool camera stuff and exotic editing for dramatic substance.—*Jon A. Walz*

PLAYING GOD ★★

Starring David Duchovny, Timothy Hutton and Angelina Jolie. Directed by Andy Wilson. Written by Mark Haskell Smith. Produced by Marc Abraham and Laura Bickford. A Buena Vista release. Drama/thriller. Rated R for strong graphic violence, gore, pervasive language and some drug use. Running time: 94 min.

David Duchovny ("Kalifornia," but better known from TV's "The X-Files") plays Eugene, a de-licensed surgeon who becomes a doctor for maniacal crime boss Raymond ("French Kiss'" Timothy Hutton), in part for the money and in part for the proximity this allows to Raymond's beautiful girlfriend Claire ("Foxfire's" Angelina Jolie). From the onset, this action/drama/thriller is as lackadaisical as its star's notoriously mellow delivery.

The protagonists are not particularly sympathetic or endangered, and the villain is not very convincingly intimidating. "Playing God," amid wanton bloodletting, tries to be introspective and philosophical, but it's about as engaging in that respect as its denouement involving car chases and bumbling cops.—*Christine James*

ROCKETMAN ★★1/2

Starring Harland Williams, William Sadler, Jessica Lundy, Jeffrey DeMunn and Beau Bridges. Directed by Stuart Gillard. Written by Craig Mazin and Greg Erb. Produced by Roger Birnbaum. A Disney release. Comedy. Rated PG for language, crude humor and thematic elements. Running time: 94 min.

Computer programmer Fred ("Down Periscope's" Harland Williams) has a fantasy: to be an astronaut. Suddenly, he gets his chance. Together with the woman of his dreams, Mission Specialist Julie ("The Stupids'" Jessica Lundy), Commander Overbeck ("Solo's" William Sadler) and a chimpanzee, Fred heads to Mars.

"RocketMan" is humorous at the beginning and then matures along the way. Although the Caravan production is continually enlivened by some genuinely funny moments, those splashes of humor begin to overshadow the film's theme. Yet Williams' brand of humor and timing show he has, if not the right stuff, at least the right stuffing.—*Dwayne E. Leslie*

GANG RELATED ★★

Starring James Belushi, Tupac Shakur, Lela Rochon, James Earl Jones and Dennis Quaid. Directed and written by Jim Kouf. Produced by Brad Krevoy, Steve Stabler and John Bertolli. An MGM/Orion

REVIEWS

release. Drama. Rated R for strong language, some violence and a scene with nudity. Running time: 106 min.

Cops Divinci ("Race the Sun's" James Belushi) and Rodriguez ("Gridlock'd's" Tupac Shakur) use impounded narcotics and Divinci's girlfriend Cynthia ("Waiting to Exhale's" Lela Rochon) to lure drug dealers to their last deal and the duo's profit. All is going fine until one of their chalk outlines is an undercover DEA agent.

The toughness of language and abuse of authority his role involves fits Belushi, but the late Shakur spends most of his time brooding; the chemistry between them isn't there. Instead of being dirty cops, Belushi and Shakur seem more like henchmen working for the mob.*—Dwayne E. Leslie*

MOST WANTED ★★1/2

Starring Keenen Ivory Wayans and Jon Voight. Directed by David Glenn Hogan. Written by Keenen Ivory Wayans. Produced by Eric L. Gold. A New Line release. Action/drama. Rated R for violence and language. Running time: 99 min.

That one-man band, movie star/comedian/talk-show host Keenen Ivory Wayans, has jumped into new terrain—that of screenwriter—with "Most Wanted." His script for this political conspiracy thriller is hardly complex, ricocheting as it does between just-the-facts terseness and rather labored one-liners, but it keeps its plot moving. The actors must deal with cardboard characters, but they have fun.

As the star and protagonist, set up to be killed by apparently everyone he encounters, Wayans has the size and ease to make his mundane action hero watchable. Aiding is music video alum David Glenn Hogan in his feature debut.*—Bridget Byrne*

NAPOLEAN ★★1/2

Voices by Jamie Croft, Carole Skinner and Casey Siemaszko. Directed by Mario Andreacchio. Written by Michael Bourchier, Mario Andreacchio and Mark Saltzman. Produced by Michael Bourchier and Mario Andreacchio. An MGM/Goldwyn release. Adventure. Rated G. Running time: 82 min.

Occasionally charming and endearing family fare, "Napolean" is a fairly diverting live-action fantasy, fatally damaged by a stop-and-go narrative and a plain, straightforward visual style that misses the essential magic and imagination. There is much that's clever and creative in Mario Andreacchio's direction, but he crosses the line from innocence to infantilism.

The story, which Andreacchio co-scripts, concerns a curious puppy (voiceover by Jamie Croft) named Napolean; he drifts away from home in a balloon-driven basket and experiences both harrowing and amusing adventures in the Australian wilds. Friendly companions on the quest include a wise-cracking parrot. The animals are adorable, but they have more cuteness than character. For the intrepid child in all, "Napolean" is too much like a lengthened novelty short to work fully.*—Dale Winogura*

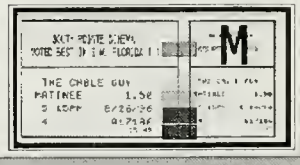
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Review Digest

Genre key: (Ac) Action; (Ad) Adventure; (An) Animated; (C) Comedy; (D) Drama; (Doc) Documentary; (F) Fantasy; (Hor) Horror; (M) Musical; (My) Mystery; (R) Romance; (Sat) Satire; (SF) Science Fiction; (Sus) Suspense; (Th) Thriller; (W) Western.

TITLE/MPAA DISTRIBUTOR	5 Excellent 4 Very Good 3 Good 2 Fair 1 Poor	RUN TIME	GENRE	REVIEWED IN ISSUE	BOXOFFICE	VARIETY	H. REPORTER	L.A. TIMES	N.Y. TIMES	USA TODAY	AVERAGE	TOTAL BOXOFFICE$**
Air Bud **PG** (BV)		*98*	C	10-97	3	3	3	3	2	2	2.8	23.6
Air Force One **R** (Col)		*120*	Ac	9-97	3	3	4	4	2		3.2	169.5
The Assignment **R** (Tri)		*115*	D	11-97	3	2	1	3	2		2.2	0.5
Boogie Nights **R** (NL)		*150*	C D	11-97	3	4	3			4	3.5	0.1
Conspiracy Theory **R** (WB)		*134*	Th	10-97	3	2	4	2	2	4	2.8	74.4
Contact **PG** (WB)		*150*	SF D	9-97	3	3	2	3	3	3	2.8	100.0
Cop Land **R** (Mir)			D	9-97	3	3	3		3	4	3.2	44.3
The Edge **R** (Fox)		*118*	D	10-97	3	3	2	3	3	3	2.8	20.3
Excess Baggage **PG-13** (Col)		*101*	Ac D	11-97	3	2	2	2			2.3	14.0
Face/Off **R** (Par)		*139*	Ac	8-97	4	3	4	4	4		3.8	112.0
Fire Down Below **R** (WB)		*99*	Ac	11-97	3	3	3	3	3		3.0	15.3
The Full Monty (FS)		*90*	C	4-97	4	4	3	3	4		3.6	19.9
G.I. Jane **R** (BV)		*125*	D	9-97	3	4	2	2	3	2	2.7	46.4
The Game **R** (Pol)		*128*	Th	11-97	3	3	4		2	4	3.2	43.2
Gang Related **R** (MGM)			D	12-97	2	2		2			2.0	3.3
George of the Jungle **PG** (BV)			C	8-97	2	3	4	3	3		3.0	101.7
Good Burger **PG** (Par)		*95*	C	9-97	3	4	3	3	3		3.2	22.7
Hercules **G** (BV)			Ani	8-97	3	4	4	4	4	4	3.8	96.3
Hoodlum **R** (UA)		*134*	D	11-97	2	3	3				2.7	23.3
The House of Yes **R** (Mir)		*90*	C D	4-97	3			3		2	2.7	0.1
How to Be a Player **R** (Gra)			C	9-97	2	1	2	2	1		1 6	13.9
The Ice Storm **R** (FS)		*112*	D	7-97	3	4	3		4	4	3.7	0.4
In and Out **PG-13** (Par)		*90*	C	10-97	3	3	3	3		4	3.2	30.3
Kiss the Girls **R** (Par)		*110*	Th	12-97	3	3	3	3	2	2	2.7	28.5
L.A. Confidential **R** (WB)		*135*	D	8-97	4	4	2	4	4	4	3.7	23.0
Leave It to Beaver **G** (Uni)		*87*	C	10-97	3	2		2	2		2.2	10.7
Liar Liar **PG-13** (Uni)		*86*	C	5-97	3	4	4	3	3	3	3.3	181.4
The Lost World: Jurassic Park **PG-13** (Uni)		*129*	Adv	7-97	4	3	3	3	2	3	3.0	229.1
The Matchmaker **R** (Gra)		*97*	R C	12-97	2	2	2	3	2		2.2	2.5
Men In Black **PG-13** (Col)		*96*	SFAc	8-97	3	4	3	4	4		3.6	243.6
Mimic **R** (Mir)			Hor	8-97	3	2			2	2	2.2	25.4
Money Talks **R** (NL)		*92*	Ac C	10-97	2	3	2	3	2	2	2.3	39.9
Most Wanted **R** (NL)		*99*	Ac D	12-97	2	2					2.0	2.8
Mrs. Brown **PG** (Mir)		*103*	D	8-97	4	4		4	4	4	4.0	7.4
My Best Friend's Wedding **PG-13** (TS)		*107*	RC	8-97	3	3	4	3	3	3	3.2	123.7
Nothing To Lose **R** (BV)		*98*	C	9-97	3	3	3	2	2	3	2.7	44.1
The Peacemaker **R** (DW)		*122*	Ac	10-97	3	2	3	3	3	3	2.8	31.5
Pippi Longstocking **G** (Legacy)		*78*	Ani	12-97	3	2	2	3	3		2.6	0.4
Rocketman **PG** (BV)		*94*	C	12-97	2	2	3	2		2	2.2	4.5
Seven Years in Tibet **PG-13** (TS)		*139*	D	11-97	3	2	3	3			2.8	10.1
Shall We Dance? **PG** (Mir)		*122*	C	5-97	3		4	3	3		3.2	7.8
She's So Lovely **R** (Mir)		*100*	D	8-97	2	3		2		2	2.2	7.2
Soul Food **R** (Fox)		*114*	D	11-97	2	3	3	3	3	3	2.8	30.3
Spawn **PG-13** (NL)		*95*	SFAc	9-97	3	2	2		1	2	2.0	53.9
A Thousand Acres **R** (BV)		*106*	D	11-97	3	2	3	3	2	3	2.7	7.4
U-Turn **R** (TS)		*123*	D	11-97	3	4	4	2	3	3	3.2	5.2
Ulee's Gold (Ori)		*113*	D	4-97	4	4		4	4	4	4.0	8.6
Washington Square **PG** (BV)		*115*	D	10-97	3	3	3	2	4	3	3.0	0.1
Wishmaster **R** (Liv)		*89*	Hor	12-97	2	1	2	2	2		1.8	14.4

** Total boxoffice, in millions, as of Oct. 14, 1997.*

REVIEWS

KISS THE GIRLS ★★1/2

Starring Morgan Freeman and Ashley Judd. Directed by Gary Fleder. Written by David Klass. Produced by David Brown and Joe Wizan. A Paramount release. Thriller. Rated R for terror, violence and language. Running time: 110 min.

Full of sound and fury and based on the best-selling novel by James Patterson, "Kiss the Girls" is endemic of what is happening in most all Hollywood films these days. The craft of the movie is impeccable, the cast is excellent and the plot has all the requisite twists and turns. But the film has no soul. For brief shining moments—a snip of dialogue here, there a look between a sublime Morgan Freeman as a serial-killer detective and Ashley Judd as a tough intern helping him—"Kiss the Girls" flirts with being about something—and then disappoints.—*Susan Lambert*

MATCHMAKER ★★1/2

Starring Janeane Garofalo. Directed by Mark Joffe. Written by Karen Janszen, Louis Nowra and Graham Linehan. Produced by Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner and Luc Roeg. A Gramercy release. Romantic comedy. Rated R for language. Running time: 97 min.

Bostonian sass meets romantic blarney in this comedy of Aerrors about brash political aide Marcy ("The Truth About Cats and Dogs'" Janeane Garofalo) heading to the Emerald Isle on a PR mission and finding herself caught up in a local matchmaking fest.

There's an unfortunate feeling of contrivance, which is a pity because this was the role Garofalo was born to play: strong, smart, caustic, funny and vulnerable. Her sardonic charm is on target, but no one is buying the scenario or the chemistry.—*Christine James*

THE LOCUSTS ★★

Starring Vince Vaughn, Jeremy Davies, Ashley Judd and Kate Capshaw. Directed and written by John Patrick Kelly. Produced by Brad Krevoy, Steve Stabler and Bradley Thomas. Drama. Rated R for sexuality. Run time: 123 min.

Southern gothic goes grotesque in this overheated tale of a drifter ("Swingers'" Vince Vaughn) come into a small ranching town, where he meets up with an alcoholic breaker of men (Kate Capshaw), her mentally troubled son ("Going All the Way's" Jeremy Davies) and a local good-time girl ("Kiss the Girls'" Ashley Judd). Instead of trying to tell one story—of psychosis, say, or incest, or murder, or blackmail—writer/director John Patrick Kelly decides to tell them all at once. He tells them heartfully, but in "The Locusts" crisis and casualty are on overload, and so is the audience.—*Kim Williamson*

WISHMASTER ★★

Starring Tammy Lauren, Andrew Divoff and Robert Englund. Directed by Robert Kurtzman. Written by Peter Atkins. Produced by Pierre David, Clark Peterson and Noel A. Zanitsh. A Live release. Horror. Rated R for horror violence and gore, and for language. Run time: 89 min.

Dominated by the magnetic, seductive charm of Andrew Divoff as an evil Djinn (or genie, if you will) in human form, "Wishmaster" is otherwise a lukewarm stew of supernatural horror, mythical fantasy and gratuitous gore. The cheap production values, often amateur acting and Robert Kurtzman's lively but uninspired direction keep the promising concept from reaching the intended fruition.—*Dale Winogura*

AARON'S MAGIC VILLAGE ★★

Voices by Fyvush Finkel, Tommy Michaels and Tovah Feldshuh. Directed by Albert Hanan Kaminski. Written by Albert Hanan Kaminski and Jacqueline Galia Benousilio. Produced by Dora Benousilio and Peter Vorkle. A CFP release. Animated. Unrated. Running time: 77 min.

The sophisticated wit and sparkle of Isaac Bashevis Singer's folk tales have been emasculated in this adaptation into a cutened, sweetened cartoon feature for the wholesome family. But Singer's positive moral lessons are intact, even if the animation is not consistently smooth or colorful to express them well enough.—*Dale Winogura*

INTERNATIONAL NEWS BRIEFS

PACIFIC OVERTURES

NOTES FROM THE PACIFIC RIM *by Kim Williamson*

LEAD STORY: HONG KONG—THE FIRST HUNDRED DAYS

HONG KONG—"There's a lot of anticipation and worry and frustration about the [Hong Kong] situation," filmmaker Tsui Hark told **BOXOFFICE** for our last CineAsia issue (2/97), just months before the territory's June 30 handover by the British to the Chinese. Added producer Terence Chang, "The Hong Kong film industry is not very healthy at the moment. In fact, it's never been worse." Golden Harvest vice president of production Tom Gray and Film Library Group president Alexandra Sun also shared their concerns about increased censorship of artistic expression and about the slackening success of the Hong Kong movie industry.

One hundred days after the beginning of Chinese rule, in an October speech widely carried on the region's broadcast and cable outlets and itself perhaps an acknowledgment that the world is watching the new government, Hong Kong chief executive Tung Chee-Hwa said that Hong Kong has "a first-class infrastructure, a sound legal framework, and an administration that upholds intellectual property, freedom of publication, and privacy of communication. All these serve to protect creative expression and encourage the growth of these industries."

During the two-hour address, Tung said he plans to establish a film services office that will promote film production and location shooting in Hong Kong. Local filmmakers have complained that they face constraints on location shooting that foreign filmmakers, thanks to assistance lent such visitors by the tourism authority, do not. To further build a bridge between hometown moviemakers and city hall, Tung said, broadcasting secretary Chau Tak-hay will now also chair a film services advisory committee whose aim is "to promote dialogue between the industry and government."

Boxoffice results for the week ending October 1 provided a market snapshot. Fox International's "Volcano" at HK$7.7 million ($996,222) was the #1 film and outdrew its nearest local competitor by 2 to 1, but five of the top 10—including Golden Harvest's "We're No Bad Guys," Mandarin's "Eighteen Springs" and Jade City's "Railway Rats"—were not Hollywood fare. By comparison, eight of Japan's top 10 draws for the week were American-made, as were nine of Australia's.

NEW HK HEADACHE: PREMIERES ON PPV

HONG KONG—Local exhibitors who resisted booking "The Gate of Heavenly Peace" earlier this year because the Chinese political drama was also being sold for pay-per-view TV airings now have a worry that American circuit bookers have kept in the back of their minds since MGM (in)famously debuted 1983's "The Pirates of Penzance" in theatres and on PPV. Four Miramax titles—"Basquiat," "Chasing Amy," "The Crow: City of Angels" and "Swingers"—will have simultaneous runs in theatres and on Wharf Cable TV's Cineplex platform, the PPV service offered by Hong Kong's monopoly pay TV network. Unlike the stateside experiment, in which PPV pricing was higher than that of theatre tickets, the Hong Kong scenario calls for the films to cost the same—HK$50 ($6.47)—regardless of large- or small-screen venue. Peter Tsi, who oversees Wharf's PPV operations, said he expects that boxoffice will not be affected due to planned PPV cross-promotions and because the films are not having a wide release. (Only certain United Artists theatres have booked the Miramax offerings.)

NEXT UP: NICHOLSON NOTES?

TOKYO—Noted for its capitalization of the commercial real estate industry to the tune of $20 billion, Japanese investment house Nomura Asset Capital Corp. has announced it will establish a fund of up to $1 billion to finance entertainment ventures via a variant of "Bowie Bonds," named after the $55 million worth of 10-year notes (purchased earlier this year by Prudential Insurance Co. of America) that are backed by singer David Bowie's EMI catalog and future revenues. Led by Ethan Penner, the company's Nomura Capital Entertainment Finance division will pool large numbers of music and film loans into diversified portfolios (to be repaid with future library revenue). Penner's plan would also allow a producer's percentage of a film's gross to be leveraged. Bear, Stearns & Co. and CS First Boston are other financial institutions entering this dawning market.

CHINA: BROUGHT TO YOU BY...

BEIJING—With its distribution of "Dante's Peak," monopoly film importer China Film has joined selected regional distributors in the practice of attaching advertisements to movies. The practice will continue, on a revenue-sharing basis, with the small number of Hollywood titles allowed into the country via China Film, which operates a circuit of more than 300 theatres in 15 cities.

KISSING LIGHTS UP MALAYS

KUALA LUMPUR—The Malaysian movie market continues in an expansion mode, but electricity bills at the new theatres might grow larger than expected. Tanjong Golden Village recently opened a 10-plex in Selangor outside Kuala Lumpur and has announced a 13-screener for the Kuala Lumpur City Centre, and new exhibition entrant Mega Pavilion is projecting it will have 70 screens in the nation by the year 2000. Meanwhile, though, local authorities in Kota Baru have ordered the northeastern town's two moviehouses to keep their auditoriums lit while movies are being shown to "prevent immoral acts like kissing, cuddling and other activities," says Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat, chief minister of the Kelantan state. The Kelantan government, dominated by members of a fundamentalist Islamic party, already require exhibitors to cover pictures of bare-headed women on one-sheets.

AUSSIES VENTURE UP ABOVE

SYDNEY—The Hoyts circuit will open a 12-plex at South London's Bluewater shopping center in early 1999. Like homegrown competitor Village Roadshow, Hoyts is targeting Europe for its expansion plans, which include a five-year forecast for 150 screens in the United Kingdom and 160 screens in Germany. Of the $190 million raised in two recent public offerings by Hoyts, almost $75 million will be devoted to global growth. Hoyts currently operates about 1,220 screens in the Americas and Australia; topper Peter Ivany foresees 3,000 screens by the new century.

DO YOU HAVE AN EXHIBITION-RELATED NEWS ITEM ABOUT THE ASIA-PACIFIC MARKET? E-MAIL US CARE OF boxoffice@earthlink.net

EXHIBITION BRIEFINGS

LOEWS, CINEPLEX CONFIRM MERGER PLANS



Lawrence J. Ruisi, president and CEO of LCE.

Sony Corp. of America and Cineplex Odeon have announced an agreement to merge Sony-owned Loews with Cineplex to create the world's largest theatrical exhibition company. The combined company will be named Loews Cineplex Entertainment (LCE) and will have 2,600 screens in 460 locations in North America.

According to Sony, anticipated revenues from the combined entity will amount to approximately $1 billion annually. Sony Retail Entertainment will own 51.1 percent of LCE's shares (representing 49.9 percent of the voting shares); Universal Studios will own 26 percent subsequent to a cash contribution of $84.5 million; the Charles Rosner Bronfman Family Trust will own 9.6 percent; and Cineplex Odeon shareholders will own 13.3 percent. Cineplex Odeon shares will be exchanged for shares in LCE at closing. It is estimated that the total number of shares in the combined company will be 452 million. The transaction is expected to close in approximately six months.

Lawrence J. Ruisi, currently president of Sony Retail Entertainment, has been named president and chief executive officer of LCE. "We are very excited about what we have set in motion with this combination, creating a company with significant growth capacity and the opportunity to enjoy substantial cost savings and operating efficiencies," said Ruisi in a prepared statement. "Using our expertise in designing, building and operating successful theatres, coupled with our significant cash flow and full access to capital markets, LCE will be able to aggressively participate in the dramatic changes taking place in the U.S. and Canadian marketplace, as well as pursue the many lucrative opportunities which exist in international markets."

Allen Karp, Cineplex Odeon's president and chief executive officer, will serve as chairman and chief executive officer of Cineplex Odeon Canada, the Canadian operating subsidiary of LCE. "I am proud to have seen this merger through to fruition for the benefit of our company and its shareholders," said Karp. "Additionally, this combination will benefit the Canadian film industry in that Cineplex Odeon has a long and proud history of supporting [Canadian production], and I am delighted that LCE is committed to continue that tradition."

The merger of the two exhibition giants will give LCE a key presence in 22 states, including major cities such as New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston, Seattle, Washington D.C. and Houston, as well as a leading position in Canada, particularly in Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal. LCE's corporate headquarters will be in New York, with Canadian headquarters in Toronto.

CINEASIA EXTRA: SMART DEVICES ACQUIRES PANASTEREO LINE FROM AUSTRALIA'S RAIDEK

SMART Devices Inc. of Atlanta, Ga. has announced the acquisition of the Panastereo product line from Raidek Pty. Ltd. of Sydney, Australia. The product line includes the THX-approved Panastereo cinema stereo processor, the newly-developed Panalogic computer-based booth automation system, and a high-power booth sound monitor.

The transaction includes exclusive manufacturing rights along with current production stock and replacement parts.

Panastereo products will be manufactured entirely in the U.S. beginning January 1998. New options to the stereo processor, such as the "Circle Surround" six-channel DSP matrix, Panalogic automation integration and other features will be incorporated into the product at that time.

Raidek will stock processors and spares for customers in Pacific Rim countries, and will also maintain warranty repair facilities in Sydney. SMART has been a stockholder in Raidek Pty. Ltd. for over a year.

SHOWEST ANNOUNCES CHANGES FOR '98 CONVENTION

ShoWest '98, which will be held March 9-12 at Bally's Hotel in Las Vegas, will be making some changes this year in response to delegate feedback. Attendees at last year's convention found that the jam-packed schedule didn't allow for enough time to visit all the booths, so the trade show hours will be extended. The trade fair will run from 2 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 10; from 10 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 11; and from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Thursday, March 12. Additionally, there will be a Trade Fair Exhibitors Only desk in the Trade Fair office, to allow those with booths to expedite their badges, have questions answered and get information without standing in line. The Trade Fair Office will open at 7 a.m. on Monday, March 9, so badges can be obtained before move-in begins at 8 a.m. And a new Ambassador Program will put more people on the trade show floor to answer conventioneers' questions, expedite problem solving and provide general information. For more information about ShoWest, call 310-657-7724.

CENTURY'S RAMPING UP IN RENO

San Francisco-based Century Theatres is constructing a 16-plex at Park Lane Mall in Reno, Nev., as part of a redevelopment plan for the area. The 70,000-square-foot theatre, due to open this spring, will be all-stadium seating with love seats, and will have digital sound on all screens. According to Century, the Park Lane Mall is situated at one of Reno's busiest intersections, with a daily traffic count of approximately 55,000 cars. To relocate to this prime site, Century will be closing its smaller facility across the street, a theatre Century has operated for 25 years that was expanded over time from one to 11 screens. "We had the opportunity to expand at the site again, but preferred Park Lane," says Century president and CEO Raymond Syufy. "The property is centrally located and the opportunity to be situated next to restaurants, retail shops and other forms of entertainment is what we're looking for." Other Reno-area builds in the works for Century include another 16-plex and a 14-plex. Century currently operates 500 screens at 60 locations in five western states.

HOYTS' SHOPPINGTOWN SPREE

Hoyts Cinemas Corp. has opened a 10-plex in ShoppingTown Mall in Syracuse, N.Y., a market in which the circuit now operates 55 screens. In celebration of the new theatre, Hoyts hosted a special fundraiser to benefit Camp Good Days and Special Times, Inc. A reception was held which included a silent auction and a screening of the "The Peacemaker." Some of the items auctioned off included a "Peacemaker" movie poster autographed by stars George Clooney and Nicole Kidman and director Mimi Leder. Also up for bidding was a season pass entitling the holder and a guest to attend movies at any of Hoyts' theatres.

BANK INVESTMENT PAYS OFF

The Bank Street Theatre in New Milford, Conn., has reopened after extensive renovations. Over half a million dollars was invested to transform the 70-year-old, three-screen art deco theatre into a state-of-the-art complex. Every system, wall surface and fixture was either replaced or dramatically upgraded, according the Bank Street Theatre's owner and operator, Steven "Rocky" Barry. Auditoriums one and three were equipped with Dolby Surround, while auditorium number two features both Dolby and DTS systems. New high-backed chairs with cupholder armrests were installed in all three cinemas, as well as new drapery, carpeting and paint. The screen sizes have been increased in two auditoriums to stretch to 20 feet wide. The lobby was also remodeled to include a game and party room, and the exterior's art deco black and white glass facade has undergone restoration.

The renovations also uncovered two architectural features of the building not seen by the public in over 50 years: In the lobby, a previously-covered decorative terrazzo stone floor has been restored, and a pressed tin ceiling with soffit lights has been revealed underneath the marquee.

YOUNGQUIST FORMS BIRTCHER CONSTRUCTION SERVICES

Andrew Youngquist, former president of Birtcher Construction Ltd. (now known as MBK Construction Ltd.), has announced the formation of Birtcher Construction Services. The new company, based in Irvine, Calif., focuses solely on construction and management services for the theatre industry. Jim Lefler, also formerly of MBK, is senior executive vice president, and is in charge of the firm's stadium seating retrofitting division. Birtcher Construction Services has recently signed construction agreements with Pittsburgh, Calif.'s Brenden Theatre Corp.; Chicago's Kerasotes Theatres; and Shulman Theatres in Texas. The firm currently has more than 200 screens under construction.

DRIVE-IN DELIRIUM

BOXOFFICE received several letters in response to an item we published a few issues back reporting on the debut of "Drive-In Speaker," a newsletter devoted to ozoners. Most respondents simply wanted to express their gratitude for our attention to the subject of drive-ins, a form of exhibition whose decline in screen numbers is made up for by the passion of its enthusiasts. Donald C. Brown Jr. pointed out another resource for drive-in fans called "Update," a publication of the Drive-In Theatre Fanatic Fan Club in Baltimore; and Lawrence and Debrean Loy, authors of "Films, Food & Fun: A Guidebook to Operational U.S. Drive-In Theatres," also wrote to extol the D.I.T.F. Fan Club, mentioning that Good Morning America recently aired a drive-in segment in which the club was featured. The D.I.T.F. Fan Club can be contacted at P.O. Box 18063, Baltimore, MD 21220-0163; the Loys' book can be ordered by writing to P.O. Box 607, Germantown, MD 20875. And the Drive-In Speaker's D.B. Lounder has announced a new address: 62 Kensington Rd., P.O. Box 7001, Kensington, CT 06037-7001.

MOVIEFONE PHONES IN RESULTS

MovieFone has announced that a record performance for the company was reached this past summer. The interactive phone service, which provides callers with movie listings and over-the-phone ticketing, reportedly received 21 million calls during exhibition's hottest season. MovieFone's service covers 30 major markets and more than 12,000 screens.

SHOWMINDER CONVENTION CALENDAR

Remember to save the following dates: **ShoWest**, March 9-12, 1998, Bally's Hotel and Casino, Las Vegas, Nev. Call 310-657-7724...**ShowCanada**, May 10-14, Victoria, British Columbia. Call 416-969-7057 ...**Cinema Expo, June 15-19, 1998, Amsterdam. Call 212-246-6460...Australian Movie Convention**, August 18-22, Royal Pines Resort, Gold Coast. Call 011-617-33-56-5671 ...**NAC Expo**, Sept. 15-18, Radisson Twin, Orlando, Fla. Call 312-236-3858.

CINEASIA EXTRA: ROBERT ROSEN AND UCLA BRING ASIAN CINEMA TO U.S.

American audiences today are familiar with films like Zhang Yimou's "Raise the Red Lantern" and Chen Kaige's "Farewell, My Concubine," but few realize that one reason these mainland Chinese films are now part of our filmgoing experience is because the UCLA Film and Television Archive and its director Robert Rosen helped bring Chinese filmmakers to the attention of the film community in the United States.

The Archive is the world's largest library of motion pictures and broadcasting materials outside the Library of Congress, and actively screens, preserves and restores film and TV treasures. Located in America's moviemaking capital, the Archive takes pains to keep Hollywood aware of films from around the globe.



For more than a decade, Rosen has been involved in foregrounding Asian cinema starting at a time when Asian filmmaking as a whole was viewed as very marginal. In the 1980s, Rosen made frequent trips to China at the invitation of the China Film Association. This was after the Cultural Revolution, during the Great Liberalization, and before Tiananmen Square. Rosen recalls, "It was a period of great effervescence—first, because there were two generations of young filmmakers, and second, because the Fifth Generation [which came of age after the Cultural Revolution] were very experimental in their approach, though their movies were not met with great favor by the film bureau and had no popular distribution in China."

Chen Kaige's first film, "Yellow Earth," was one example. "That movie was made at a tiny studio out in the provinces, with a dirt floor sound stage, and yet they made this wildly experimental movie," Rosen marvels.

Another film Rosen discovered was "The Black Cannon Incident" directed by Huang Jian-xin. "I was told informally that foreigners weren't going to see this," Rosen explains. "So when I asked at the Film Bureau they said there were no prints in Beijing, the only print was in Xi'an." (Xi'an, inland southeast from Beijing, is said to be the origin of culture because the Ming Dynasty ruled from there, and it is the site one of the approximately 18 government-controlled film studios in China.) Rosen traveled to Xi'an to see the film, loved it, and understood the prohibition. "It was really a film about China's paranoid, xenophobic fear of foreigners," Rosen explains. "Although completed in '85, it has still not been released to the Chinese public."

Later, at a banquet in Xi'an with the director of "Black Cannon," Rosen promised that within a year, "Black Cannon" and the director would be in Los Angeles. Everyone thought that would be impossible because the film was not in distribution and the government didn't want it seen by foreigners. But a year later, in January 1987, Rosen had the film and its director in Los Angeles. Rosen accomplished this by meeting in L.A. with the China Film Industry's head of international distribution. "I told him I had good news and bad news. The good news was I had seen eight films that will play internationally, that represent the directors of the future, that will win prizes at international film festivals, and that will make Chinese cinema an international cinema. The bad news is they are none of the films you want to export."

The Chinese didn't want to export these films because they were "art" films that wouldn't do well in China, and because some of the films were controversial. Rosen persisted, offering to tour the films in major U.S. cities, to pay with foreign currency (a big enticement at the time), and to guarantee international recognition for these movies. "And I got them!" Rosen exclaims. "The film series was hugely successful. This was the first major screening in the United States of the New Chinese Cinema and many of the directors we showcased began to create films that were now in wide distribution." Highlights included directors Tian Zhuang-zhuang ("The Blue Kite") and Xie Fei ("A Girl from Hunan"); the American premiere of "The Black Cannon Incident"; and "Yellow Earth," directed by Chen Kaige (now a U.S. resident) and photographed by Zhang Yimou, the two Chinese directors most familiar to American audiences today.

It was something Rosen felt very proud about doing. He concludes, "The history of motion pictures for a hundred years has been the result of an unceasing dialogue among national cinemas, where each one has been influenced by the other, directly or indirectly. The differences in viewpoint and the differences in style ultimately work to the best interests of everyone, of world cinema as a whole, and American cinema in particular." ***—Karen Achenbach***

BOXOFFICE

	September	October	November	DECEMBER (Current)
Buena Vista (818) 567-5000 (212) 593-8900	**A Thousand Acres**, 9/19, Dra, R, 103 min, Dolby SR & SR-D, Flat. Jessica Lange, Michelle Pfeiffer, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Jason Robards, Keith Carradine, Colin Firth, Kevin Anderson. Dir: Jocelyn Moorhouse.	**Rocket Man**, 10/10, Com, PG, 94 min, Flat, Dolby SR & SR-D, DTS. Harland Williams, Beau Bridges. Dir: Stuart Gillard **Playing God**, 10/17, Dra, R, 94 min, Dolby SR & SR-D, Flat. David Duchovny. Dir: Andy Wilson. **Washington Square**, 10/5 NY, 10/10 exp, Dra, PG, Dolby SR, Flat. Jennifer Jason Leigh, Albert Finney Dir Agnieszka Holland	**The Little Mermaid** (1989 reissue), 11/14, Ani, G, 89 min, DTS, flat. Voices: Jodi Benson, Pat Carroll, Samuel E. Wright, Buddy Hackett. Dirs: John Musker, Ron Clements **Flubber** (formerly The Absent Minded Professor), 11/26, Com, PG, Flat. Robin Williams, Raymond J Barry, Ted Levine, Marcia Gay Harden, Wil Wheaton. Dir: Les Mayfield	**An American Werewolf in Paris**, 12/25, Hor, R, 106 min, Dolby-SR & SR-D, Flat. Julie Delpy, Tom Everett Scott. Dir: Anthony Waller. **Mr. Magoo**, 12/25, Com/Live Act. Leslie Nielsen, Kelly Lynch, Nick Chinlund, Ernie Hudson, Malcolm McDowell. Dir: Stanley Tong. **Kundun**, 12/25 ltd, Dra, S-35. Tenzin Thutob Tsarong, Gyurme Tethong, Kunga J. Tenzin. Dir: Martin Scorsese.
Columbia (310) 244-4000 (212) 833-8500		**I Know What You Did Last Summer**, 10/17, Thr, R, 100min, SDDS, Scope. Sara Michelle Gellar, Jennifer Love Hewitt, Freddie Prinze Jr. Dir: Jim Gillespie. **Gattaca** (formerly The Eighth Day), 10/24, SF, PG-13, 108 min, SDDS, Scope. Ethan Hawke, Uma Thurman, Jude Law, Alan Arkin, Loren Dean, Gore Vidal, Ernest Borgnine. Dir: Andrew Niccol.		
MGM/UA (310) 449-3000 (212) 708-0300	**The End of Violence**, 9/12 ltd, Dra, R, 121 min, DTS. Gabriel Byrne, Bill Pullman, Andie MacDowell, Traci Lind Dir: Wim Wenders. **The Locusts**, 9/26 ltd, Dra, R, Dolby SR-D, Anamorphic Kate Capshaw, Jeremy Davies, Vince Vaughn, Ashley Judd Dir: John Patrick Kelly	**Gang Related**, 10/8, Dra, DTS, SR-D. James Belushi, Tupac Shakur, Lela Rochon. Dir: Jim Kouf. **Napoleon**, 10/10 ltd, Fam, G, 82 min, SR. Voices: Adam Wylie. Dir: Mario Andreacchio. **Red Corner**, 10/31, Dra/Thr, R, DTS Richard Gere, Bai Ling, Byron Mann. Dir: Jon Avnet. **Hurricane Streets**, 10/24 ltd, Dra, R, 89 min. Brendan Sexton III. Dir: Morgan J. Freeman.	**Deceiver** (formerly Liar), 11/21 ltd, Dra/Thr, R, SR Tim Roth, Chris Penn, Michael Rooker, Renee Zellweger, Rosanna Arquette, Ellen Burstyn Dirs: Jonas and Joshua Pate. **Beni**, 11/26 ltd, Dra. Luthare Bluteau, Clive Owens, Brian Webber. Dir: Sean Mathias.	**Tomorrow Never Dies** (aka Bond 18), 12/19, Act/Adv, DTS. Pierce Brosnan, Michelle Yeoh, Jonathan Pryce, Ten Hatcher, Desmond Llewelyn, Judi Dench. Dir: Roger Spottiswoode.
Miramax (212) 941-3800 (213) 951-4200	**Mouth to Mouth** (Spain), 9/5 NY/LA, Com, R, 111 min, Dolby SR-D, Anamorphic. Javier Bardem, Aitana Sanchez-Gijon. Dir. Manuel Gomez Pereira.	**The House of Yes**, 10/10 NY/LA, 10/17 & 10/24 exp, Dra/Com, ~90 min Parker Posey, Josh Hamilton. Dir: Mark Waters **Wide Awake**, 10/17, Dra, PG, Flat Dana Delany, Denis Leary, Rosie D'Donnell. Dir: M. Night Shyamalan.	**The Wings of the Dove**, 11/7 NY/LA, exp 11/14 , 11/21 & 11/26, Dra. Helena Bonham Carter, Linus Roache, Terence Stamp, Alison Elliott. Dir. Ian Softley. **Welcome to Sarajevo** (formerly Sarajevo), 11/14 NY/LA, Dra, Anamorphic. Stephen Dillane, Woody Harrelson, Marisa Tomei. Dir: Michael Winterbottom.	Good Will Hunting, 12/5 NY/LA, 1/23 wide, R. Matt Damon, Ben Affleck, Robin Williams. Dir: Gus Van Sant. **Jackie Brown**, 12/25 wide. Pam Grier, Samuel L. Jackson. Dir: Quentin Tarantino. **Scream 2**, 12/12 wide. Hor. Neve Campbell, David Arquette, Courteney Cox, Sarah Michelle Gellar, Jamie Kennedy, Laurie Metcalf, Liev Schreiber. Dir: Wes Craven.
New Line (310) 854-5811 (212) 649-4900		**Most Wanted** (formerly America's Most Wanted), 10/10, Act/Com, R, Dolby SR, SR-D, SDDS, Scope. Keenen Ivory Wayans, Jon Voight, Paul Sorvino. Dir: David Hogan. **Boogie Nights**, 10/12 ltd, 10/17 exp, 11/7 wide, Com/Dra, R, Dolby SR & SR-D, SDDS, Scope. Mark Wahlberg, Julianne Moore, Burt Reynolds. Dir: Paul Thomas Anderson.	One Night Stand (formerly One Night), 11/14 ltd, Dra, R, 103 min, Dolby SR, SR-D, SDDS, Flat. Wesley Snipes, Nastassja Kinski, Robert Downey, Jr., Ming-Na Wen, Kyle MacLachlan. Dir. Mike Figgis. **Mortal Kombat II: Annihilation**, 11/21, Act, 96 min, Flat. Robin Shou, Talisa Soto, Brian Thompson, Sandra Hess. Dir: John R. Leonetti	
Paramount (213) 956-5000 (212) 373-7000	**In and Out**, 9/19, Com, PG-13, 90 min, SR-D, DTS. Flat. Kevin Kline, Tom Selleck, Joan Cusack, Debbie Reynolds, Wilford Brimley, Greg Jbara. Dir: Frank Dz.	**Kiss the Girls**, 10/3, Thr, R, 117 min, SRD, DTS, Scope. Morgan Freeman, Ashley Judd, Alex McArthur, Cary Elwes Dir. Gary Fleder **FairyTale: A True Story**, 10/24, Dra, PG, 98 min. Peter D'Toole, Harvey Keitel, Phoebe Nicholls. Dir: Charles Sturridge. **Switchback**, 10/31, Thr, R, 118 min, Anamor Stuart. phic. Dennis Quaid, Danny Glover, Jared Leto. Dir: Jeb Stuart	**The Rainmaker**, 11/21, Dra, Dolby SR. Matt Damon, Claire Danes, Mary Kay Place, Teresa Wright. Dir: Francis Coppola.	**Titanic**, 12/19, Rom/Adv. Dolby SR & SR-D, DTS Leonardo DiCaprio, Kate Winslet, Bill Paxton, Kathy Bates, Suzy Amis. Dir: James Cameron.
TriStar (310) 244-4000 (212) 833-8500		**U-Turn**, 10/3, Flat Sean Penn, Billy Bob Thornton, Jennifer Lopez, Nick Nolte, Powers Boothe. Dir: Oliver Stone. **Seven Years in Tibet**, 10/8, Dra, Scope. Brad Pitt. Dir: Jean-Jacques Annaud.	**Starship Troopers**, 11/7, SF, DTS, SDDS, Flat. Casper Van Dien, Dina Meyer, Neil Patrick Harris, Denise Richards, Jake Busey. Dir: Paul Verhoeven.	**As Good As it Gets** (formerly Old Friends), 12/25, Dra, SDDS, Flat Jack Nicholson, Helen Hunt, Greg Kinnear. Dir: James Brooks.
20th Century Fox (310) 369-1000 (212) 556-2400	**The Edge**, 9/26, Act/Thr, R, 118 min, Dolby SR & SR-D, Anamorphic Anthony Hopkins, Alec Baldwin, Elle Macpherson, L.Q. Jones, Harold Perrineau Dir Lee Tamahori. **Soul Food**, 9/26, Dra, R, 115 min, Dolby SR & SR-D, Flat. Vanessa Williams, Mehki Phifer, Nia Long Dir: George Tillman Jr.	**A Life Less Ordinary**, 10/24, Dra, R, Dolby SR & SR-D, SDDS, DTS, Flat Cameron Diaz, Holly Hunter, Ewan McGregor. Dir Danny Boyle.	**Anastasia**, 11/21, Ani, G, Dolby SR & SR-D, Anamorphic. Voices. Meg Ryan, John Cusack. Dirs: Don Bluth, Gary Goldman. **Alien Resurrection**, 11/26, SF, R, 115 min, Dolby SR & SR-D, SDDS, DTS, Anamorphic. Sigourney Weaver, Winona Ryder, Brad Dourif, Dan Hedaya, Dominique Pinon, Ron Perlman. Dir: Jean-Pierre Jeunet.	**Home Alone 3**, 12/19, Com, ~110 min, Dolby SR & SR-D, Flat. Alex D. Linz, Olek Krupa, Rya Kihlstedt. Dir: Raja Gosnell. **Great Expectations**, 12/31ltd, 1/16 exp, Dra, R, ~106 min, Dolby SR & SR-D, Anamorphic. Robert De Niro, Gwyneth Paltrow, Ethan Hawke, Anne Bancroft. Dir: Alfonso Cuaron.
Universal (818) 777-1000 (212) 759-7500			**The Jackal**, 11/14, Thr, Anamorphic. Bruce Willis, Richard Gere, Sidney Poitier, Diane Venora, Mathilda May. Dir: Michael Caton-Jones.	**For Richer Or Poorer**, 12/12, Rom/Com. Tim Allen, Kirstie Alley. Dir: Bryan Spicer. **The Boxer**, 12/26 ltd, 1/9/98 wide, Dra. Daniel Day-Lewis, Emily Watson. Dir: Jim Sheridan.
Warner Bros. (818) 954-6000 (212) 484-8000	**Fire Down Below**, 9/5, Act, R, 105 min, Dolby SR-D, DTS, SDDS, Flat Steven Seagal, Marg Helgenberger Dir: Felix Enriquez Alcala **L.A. Confidential**, 9/19, Dra, R, 136 min, Dolby SR-D, DTS, Anamorphic. Kevin Spacey, Kim Basinger, James Cromwell, Danny DeVito, Russell Crowe. Dir: Curtis Hanson.	**Breaking Up**, 10/17 ltd, R, 89 min, DTS, Flat. Russell Crowe, Salma Hayek. Dir Robert Greenwald **The Devil's Advocate**, 10/17, Dra,, R, 138 min,SR, SRD, DTS, SDDS, Anamorphic. Al Pacino, Keanu Reeves, Charlize Theron. Dir. Taylor Hackford	**Mad City**, 11/7, Dra, PG-13, 110 min, DTS, SR, SRD, SDDS, Anamorphic. John Travolta, Dustin Hoffman. Dir: Constantin Costa-Gavras. **The Man Who Knew Too Little**, 11/14, Com/Thr, PG, DTS, Flat. Bill Murray, Joanne Whalley, Peter Gallagher. Dir: Jon Amiel. **Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil**, 11/21 Kevin Spacey, John Cusack, Jack Thompson, Jude Law. Dir: Clint Eastwood	**The Postman**, 12/25, SF. Kevin Costner, Olivia Williams, Larenz Tate. Dir: Kevin Costner.

FEATURE CHART — DECEMBER 1997

January '98	February '98	Forthcoming	
eep Rising, 1/30, Act/Thr, S-35 Treat Williams, Famke Janssen, Wes Studi. Dir: Stephen ommers.	**Meet the Deedles**, 2/13. Dennis Hopper, Paul Walker. Dir: Steve Boyum. Kripendorf's Tribe, 2/13	**Eaters of the Dead**, 3/6 Antonio Banderas. Dir John McTiernan. **6 Days 7 Nights**, Rom/Com. Harrison Ford, Anne Heche. Dir Ivan Reitman. The Horse Whisperer, May 98, Dra, Scope. Robert Redford, Kristin Scott-Thomas, Sam Neill, Dianne Wiest, Scarlett Johansson. Dir: Robert Redford. **Armageddon,** 7/1. Bruce Willis. Dir: Michael Bay **A Civil Action** John Travolta Holy Man. Eddie Murphy **Ishmael**, Dra. Dir. Jon Turteltaub. **Mighty Joe Young**, June, Adv. Charlize Theron, Bill Paxton, Regina King Dir. Ron Underwood **Mulan**, July, Ani Voice: Ming Na-Wen. Dirs: Barry Cook, Tony Bancroft. An Alan Smithee Film. Com, R. Sylvester Stallone, Jackie Chan, Whoopie Goldberg. Dir. Arthur Hiller.	**Buena Vista** (818) 567-5000 (212) 593-8900
pice World (formerly Spice Girls Movie), ichard E. Grant, Spice Girls. Dir: Robert Spirs.	**The Replacement Killers**, 2/6, Act. Chow Yun-Fat, Mira Sorvino, Michael Rooker, Clifton Gonzales-Gonzales, Jurgen Prochnow Dir: Antoine Fugua **Shut Up and Dance**, 2/98. Vanessa Williams, Kris Kristofferson. Dir: Randa Haines.	**Gloria**, Summer '98, Dra. Sharon Stone. Dir Scott Kalvert **Les Miserables**, April. Liam Neeson, Uma Thurman, Geoffrey Rush. Dir. Bille August **My Giant,** 2nd Quarter. Billy Crystal, Gheorghe Muresan. Dir: Michael Lehmann. **Palmetto** 1st Quarter Woody Harrelson, Elisabeth Shue, Michael Rapaport. Dir: Volker Schlondorff. **Sour Grapes** Steven Weber, Craid Bierko, Karen Sillas. Dir: Larry David **Wild Things** Kevin Bacon, Matt Dillon. Dir: John McNaughton. **Zero Effect.** Bill Pullman, Ben Stiller, Ryan O'Neal. Dir: Jake Kasdan.	**Columbia** (310) 244-4000 (212) 833-8500
Welcome to Woop Woop 1/9, Com, Dolby SR. Johnathon Schaech, Rod Taylor, Noah Taylor, Paul Mercurio. Dir: Stephan Elliott.	**Music From Another Room**, 2/6, Rom/Com. Brenda Blethyn, Jude Law. Dir. Charlie Peters. **The Man in the Iron Mask**. 2/20, Adv Leonardo DiCaprio, John Malkovich, Gabriel Byrne, Gerard Depardieu, Jeremy Irons. Dir: Randall Wallace.	**Best Men** (aka Independence), Dra. Drew Barrymore, Luke Wilson, Dean Cain. Dir: Tamra Davis. **Dirty Work**, 4/3 ltd, Com. Norm MacDonald, Chevy Chase, Don Rickles, Jack Warden. Dir: Bob Saget. **I Love You... Don't Touch Me**. Rom/Com Dir Julie Davis. **Mod Squad** , 4/3, DTS Dir. Scott Silver. **One Man's Hero**. 3/13. Tom Berenger, Daniela Romo. Dir. Lance Hool. **Storefront Hitchcock**, 3/27,Doc, SR-D. Dir: Jonathan Demme	**MGM/UA** (310) 449-3000 (212) 708-0300
our Days in September	**B. Monkey**, Dra. Asia Argento, Jared Harris, Rupert Everett. Dir: Michael Radford **Little City**, 2/20. Annabella Sciorra. **I-95**, 2/27. Malik Yoba. Dir: Millicent Shelton.	**Sonatine**, 3/6 NY/LA. Dra. Dir/Star: Takeshi Kitano. **Spanish Fly**, 3/13. **Sliding Doors** Gwyneth Paltrow **Artemisia**, 3/20 NY/LA. Michel Serrault, Miki Manojlovic. Dir Agnes Merlet. **A Price Above Rubies**, 3/27, Dra. Renee Zellweger. Dir: Boaz Yakin. **Phantoms**, 1st quarter. Hor. Peter O'Toole, Joanna Going, Rose McGowan. Dir: Joe Chappelle. **Senseless,** 1st quarter, Com. Marlon Wayans. Dir: Penelope Spheeris **The Mighty**, 1st quarter, Dra Sharon Stone, Gena Rowlands, Harry Dean Stanton, Gillian Anderson Dir Peter Chelsom.**Talk of Angels**, May/Jun '98, Dra, PG-13, 97 min. Polly Walker, Vincent Perez. Dir: Nick Hamm. **Firelight.** Sophie Marceau Dir. William Nicholson. **Nirvana**, 4/98 wide. Chnstopher Lambert. **Heaven**, 5/98. Martin Donovan. **Velvet Goldmine**, 6/98. Ewan McGregor **Doberman**. 7/98. Tcheky Karyo. **My Life So Far**. 9/98. Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio.	**Miramax** (212) 941-3800 (213) 951-4200
lark City (formerly Dark Empire), 1/9, F/Thr, Dolby SR & SR-D, SDDS, Scope. Wiam Hurt, Rufus Sewell, Kiefer Sutherland, ennifer Connelly Dir: Alex Proyas. **Wag the Dog**, 1/16, Com/Dra, Dolby SR, SR-, SDDS, Scope Dustin Hoffman, Robert De iro, Woody Harrelson, Anne Heche. Dir: arry Levinson.	**The Wedding Singer,** 2/13, Com, Dolby SR & SR-D, SDDS. Adam Sandler, Drew Barrymore. Dir: Frank Coraci. **Blade**, 2/27, Thr, Dolby SR & SR-D, SDDS. Wesley Snipes, Stephen Dorff, Kris Kristofferson. Dir: Stephen Norrington.	**No More Mr. Nice Guy**, 3/13 wide, Act/Com. Jackie Chan. **Lost in Space**, 4/3, Act/Adv, Dolby SR & SR-D, SDDS. William Hurt, Gary Oldman. Dir: Stephen Hopkins. **Players Club** 4/3, Dolby SR & SR-D, SDDS. Ice Cube, Jamie Fox Dir: Ice Cube. **American History X**, 5/15, Dra. Dolby SR & SR-D, SDDS. Edward Norton, Edward Furlong Dir. Tony Kaye. **Rush Hour**, Act/Com, 8/98, Dolby SR & SR-D, SDDS. Jackie Chan, Chris Tucker **Looking for Eve**. 9/98, Dolby SR & SR-D, SDDS. Dir. Hugh Wilson. **Pleasantville**, 9/98, Com. Jeff Daniels, Joan Allen. Dir: Gary Ross. **Frequency** 10/98. Dir: Renny Harlin. **The Astronaut's Wife**. 10/98 **The Kiss** 11/98. Danny DeVito, Holly Hunter, Queen Latifah. Dir: Richard LaGravenese **Woo,** Rom/Com, Dolby SR & SR-D, SDDS, Flat. Jada Pinkett., Tommy Davidson, Isaax Hayes. Dir: Daisy Von Scherler Mayer	**New Line** (310) 854-5811 (212) 649-4900
ard Rain (formerly The Flood), 1/16, Act, R-D. Christian Slater, Morgan Freeman, Mine Driver, Randy Quaid. Dir: Mikael alomon. **ntitled Robert Benton** (formerly The Magic our), 1/30 ltd, Dra, SR-D. Paul Newman, usan Sarandon, Gene Hackman. Dir: Robert enton.	**The Truman Show**, 2/13, Dra, Flat. Jim Carrey, Ed Harris, Laura Linney Dir. Peter Weir **The Real Blonde**, 2/27, SR-D. Matthew Modine. Dir: Tom DiCillo.	**Dead Man on Campus**, 3/13, Com. Dolby SR. Tom Everett Scott. Dir: Alan Cohn. **Grease** (reissue), 3/27. John Travolta, Olivia Newton-John. Dir: Randal Kleiser. **The Odd Couple II: Travelin' Light**, 4/10, Com. Jack Lemmon, Walter Matthau. Dir. Howard Deutch. **Deep Impact**, 5/8, Act/Thr Tea Leoni, Elijah Wood, Vanessa Redgrave, Robert Duvall. Dir: Mimi Leder. **Snake Eyes**, Thr. Nicolas Cage. Dir: Brian De Palma.	**Paramount** (213) 956-5000 (212) 373-7000
esperate Measures. 1/16, Act. Michael eaton, Andy Garcia, Brian Cox, Marcia Gay arden. Dir: Barbet Schroeder.	**Homegrown**, 2/98, Dra. Billy Bob Thornton, Kelly Lynch, Hank Azaria. Dir: Stephen Gyllenhall.	**Godzilla**. 5/20, Hank Azaria, Matthew Broderick, Jean Reno. Dir: Roland Emmerich. **Swept From the Sea** (formerly To Love and Be Loved, Forever), 1st quarter., Dra. Vincent Perez, Rachel Weisz. Dir: Beeban Kidron.**The Mask of Zorro**, Summer, Act/Adv. Antonio Banderas, Anthony Hopkins. Dir: Martin Campbell. **Apt Pupil,** Dra. Ian McKellen, Brad Renfro, Kevin Pollak, Joe Morton. Dir: Bryan Singer. **Hush** (formerly Bloodline/Kilronen), Thr Jessica Lange, Gwyneth Paltrow, Johnathan Schaech. Dir: Jonathan Darby. **Stepmom**. Julia Roberts, Susan Sarandon. Dir: Chris Columbus. **Stinkers**, Com B.D Wong, Bronson Pinchot, Jennifer Coolidge. Dir: Barnet Kellman.	**TriStar** (310) 244-4000 (212) 833-8500
irestorm, Act/Adv, R Howie Long, Scott lenn, Suzy Amis, William Forsythe. ir: Dean Semler.		**A Cool, Dry Place**, Mar/Apr, Dra. Vince Vaughn, Monica Potter, Joey Lauren Adams. Dir: John N. Smith. **Doctor Dolittle**, Summer, Com. Eddie Murphy, voices: Chris Rock, Norm MacDonald Dir: Betty Thomas. **Hope Floats**. Com. Sandra Bullock, Gena Rowlands, Harry Connick, Jr Dir: Forest Whitaker **How Stella Got Her Groove Back**, Dra. Angela Bassett Dir Kevin Rodney Sullivan. **The Newton Boys**, 1st quarter. Matthew McConaughey, Skeet Ulrich, Ethan Hawke. Dir: Richard Linklater. **The Object of My Affection**, Dra. Jennifer Aniston, Paul Rudd, Tim Daly, Alan Alda. Dir: Nicholas Hytner. **The Thin Red Line**, Act/Dra. Sean Penn, Ben Chaplin, George Clooney. Dir: Terrence Malick. **Bulworth**, Warren Beatty, Oliver Platt, Halle Berry, Paul Sorvino. Dir: Warren Beatty. **The X-Files Movie**. Summer. David Duchovny, Gillian Anderson, Martin Landau. Dir: Rob Bowman.	**20th Century Fox** (310) 369-1000 (212) 556-2400
alf-Baked, 1/16, Com. Dave Chappelle, Jim rewer. Dir: Tamara Davis.	**Blues Brothers 2000**. 2/6, Com. Dan Aykroyd, John Goodman. Dir: John Landis. **Meet Joe Black**, 6/12 (tentative), Rom/Dra. Brad Pitt, Anthony Hopkins, Claire Forlani. Dir: Martin Brest.	**Mercury Rising** , 4/3. Bruce Willis, Alec Baldwin. Dir: Harold Becker. **Out of Sight** 7/17. George Clooney, Jennifer Lopez, Ving Rhames, Danny DeVito. Dir. Steven Soderbergh. **Primary Colors** 3/20. Dra. John Travolta, Emma Thompson, Billy Bob Thornton. Dir: Mike Nichols. **Reach the Rock**, Dra/Com. Alessandro Nivola, William Sadler, Bruce Norris. Dir: Bill Ryan. **Simple Simon**. Thr. Bruce Willis. Dir: Harold Becker **Virus**. Thr. Jamie Lee Curtis, Donald Sutherland, William Baldwin, Cliff Curtis. Dir. John Bruno.	**Universal** (818) 777-1000 (212) 759-7500
llen, 1/16, Dra. Denzel Washington, John odman, Donald Sutherland. Dir: Gregory olit. **urtesan** , 1/23, Dra, R, 112 min, DTS, SR, SRD, DS, Catherine McCormack, Moira Kelly, Rufus ewell. Dir: Marshall Herskovitz. **ognito**. 1/30, Thr, R, Anamorphic. Jason tnc, Irene Jacob, Rod Steiger. Dir: John dham.	**Sphere**. 2/13, SF. Dustin Hoffman, Sharon Stone, Samuel L. Jackson. Dir: Barry Levinson.	**City of Angels**. Dra. Meg Ryan, Nicolas Cage. Dir: Brad Silberling. **Edwards and Hunt**. Com. Chris Farley, Matthew Perry, Eugene Levy, Lisa B. Dir: Chnstopher Guest. **Enter the Dragon** (reissue), Act. Bruce Lee. Dir: Robert Clouse. **Eyes Wide Shut**. Tom Cruise, Nicole Kidman. Dir: Stanley Kubrick. **Home Fries**. Com. Drew Barrymore, Gary Busey, Luke Wilson. Dir: Dean Parisot. **U.S. Marshals**, Act Tommy Lee Jones, Wesley Snipes Dir: Stuart Baird **Without Limits** (formerly Pre), Dra. Billy Crudup, Donald Sutherland, Monica Potter. Dir: Robert Towne.	**Warner Bros.** (818) 954-6000 (212) 484-8000

BOXOFFICE Independent Feature Chart DECEMBER 1997

NOVEMBER

Artistic License
212-265-9119

Other Voices, Other Rooms. Dir: David Rocksavage. 11/7 NY

Avalanche
212-265-9119

Nick and Jane, Rom/Com, 95 min. Dir: Richard Mauro. 11/14 exp

Capitol Entertainment
301-564-9700

Autumn Sun *(Argentina)*, Rom/Dra, 103 min. Norma Aleandro, Federico Luppi. Dir: Eduardo Mignogna.

CFP
212-995-9662

Sick: The Life and Death of Bob Flanagan, Supermasochist, Doc. Dir: Kirby Dick. 11/8 NY/LA

Fine Line
212-649-4800

The Sweet Hereafter, Dra, R. Ian Holm, Robert Lantos, Sarah Polley, Bruce Greenwood. Dir: Atom Egoyan. 11/21 NY/LA

First Look
310-855-1199

Slaves to the Underground, Dra. Dir: Kristine Petersen. 11/14 NY

Gramercy
310-385-4400

Bean, Com, 87 min. Rowan Atkinson. Dir: Mel Smith. 11/7

Greycat
702-737-0670

Parallel Sons, Rom/Dra, 93 min. Dir: John G. Young.

International Film Circuit
212-691-0770

Every Little Thing *(France)*, Doc, 105 min. Dir: Nicolas Philibert.
Frozen *(China)*, Dra, 90 min. Dir: Wu Ming.

International Pictures
212-925-0404

The Knowledge of Healing, Doc. Tanzin Gyatso (Dalai Lama). Dir: Franz Reichley. 11/5 NY

Island Digital Media
415-275-5405

Tokyo Fist.

Kino
212-629-6880

Happy Together *(Hong Kong)*, Dra/Rom, 94 min. Leslie Cheung. Dir: Wong Kar-Wai. 11/14 exp

Kit Parker
800-538-5838

Nueba Yol III, Com/Dra, 95 min. Luisito Marti, Raul Carbonel. Dir: Angel Muniz. 11/13 exp

Live
818-778-3174

Critical Care, Dra/Thr. James Spader, Albert Brooks, Kyra Sedgwick. Dir: Sidney Lumet. 11/7

Northern Arts
413-268-9301

Hugo Pool, Com, 93 min. Robert Downey Jr., Sean Penn. Dir: Robert Downey Sr.. 11/7 NY/LA
Midaq Alley *(Mexico)*, Dra. Salma Hayek. Dir: Jorge Fons.
Withnail and I *(1987 reissue, U.K.)*, Com, 105 min. Richard E. Grant. Dir: Bruce Robinson.

October
212-539-4000

Kiss or Kill, Dra/Thr, 96 min. Matt Day, Frances O'Conner, Chris Haywood. Dir: Bill Bennett.



LIVE Entertainment's "Suicide Kings."

Phaedra
310-478-3308

Bollywood Cinema Series *(India)*, Collection of five films.

Sony Classics
212-833-8851

The Tango Lesson, Dra. Dir: Sally Potter. 11/14 NY/LA

Spats Films
213-469-6660

Ill Gotten Gains, Dra. Djimon Hounsou, Akosua Busia. Dir: Joel Marsden. 11/14 LA/NY/Chi/SF

Strand
310-395-5002

Full Speed *(aka Toute Vitesse) (France)*, Dra, 85 min. Elodie Bouchez. Dir: Gael Morel.
The Mouse, Dra. John Savage, Angelica Torn. Dir: Dan Adams.

Trimark
310-314-3040

Eve's Bayou, Dra. Samuel L. Jackson, Lynn Whitfield. Dir: Kasi Lemmons. 11/17 exp

Turbulent Arts
415-552-1952

Never Met Picasso, Dra. Dir: Stephen Kijak. 11/28

DECEMBER

Artificial Eye
212-255-1922

Beyond the Clouds, Dra. Dir: Michaelangelo Antonioni. 12/25 NY, Jan. exp
The Mother and the Whore *(France, 1973)*, Dra, 210 min. Jean-Pierre Leaud. Dir: Jean Eustache. 12/12

Dreamworks SKG
818-733-7000

Amistad *(formerly Mutiny)*, Dra. Matthew McConaughey, Anthony Hopkins, Morgan Freeman. Dir: Steven Spielberg. 12/10 LA, 12/12 NY
Mousehunt, Com/Ani. Voices: Nathan Lane, Lee Evans. Dir: Gore Verbinski. 12/25

Fine Line
Deconstructing Harry, Com. Woody Allen, Kirstie Alley, Judy David, Richard Benjamin, Billy Crystal, Robin Williams. Dir: Woody Allen. 12/12 NY/LA/Tor, 12/24 exp, 2/6 wide
The Winter Guest, Dra. Emma Thompson, Phyllida Law. Dir: Alan Rickman. 12/19 NY/LA/Tor

First Run
212-243-0600

O Amor Natural, Doc, 76 min. Dir: Heddy Honigmann. 12/31

Fox Searchlight
310-369-4402

Oscar and Lucinda, Dra, R, 131 min. Ralph Fiennes, Cate Blanchett. Dir: Gillian Armstrong. 12/31 NY/LA

Gramercy
The Big Lebowski, Dra/Com. Jeff Bridges, John Goodman, Steve Buscemi. Dir: Joel Coen. 12/25 NY/LA, 1/16 exp

New Yorker
212-247-6110

Beaumarchais: The Scoundrel *(France)*, Com, 100 min. Fabrice Luchini. Dir: Edouardo Molinaro. 12/19
Underground, Dra, 128 min. Miki Manojlovic, Lazar Ristouski. Dir: Emir Kusturica.

Sony Classics
Ma Vie en Rose, Com, 89 min. Michele Laroque, Jean-Philippe Ecoffey. Dir: Alain Berliner. 12/25 NY/LA

Strand
Office Killer, Hor. Carol Kane, Molly Ringwald. Dir: Cindy Sherman. 12/3 NY, 12/5 LA, 12/12 SF

Zeitgeist
212-274-1989

Will It Snow for Christmas? Dominique Reymond, Daniel Duval. Dir: Sandrine Veysset. 12/17 NY

JANUARY '98

Castle Hill
212-888-0080

A Further Gesture, Dra, 96 min. Stephen Rea. 1/30 ltd

First Run
Arguing the World, Doc, 107 min. Dir: Joseph Dorman.

Fox Searchlight
Hard Men *(U.K.)*, Dra. Vincent Regan, Ross Boatman, Lee Ross. Dir: J.K. Amalou.
Two Girls and a Guy, Com. Robert Downey Jr., Natasha Wagner, Heather Graham. Dir: James Toback. 1/30

Gramercy
Tempting Fate *(formerly Shakespeare's Sister)*, Dra. Kenneth Branagh, Madeleine Stowe, William Hurt. Dir: Leslie Linka Glatter. 1/30

Island Digital Media
General Chaos: Uncensored Animation, Ani. Dir: (Various).

Kino
Fallen Angels, Thr. Leon Lai, Karen Mong, Michele Reis. Dir: Wong Kar-Wai.

Live
The Real, Dra. LL Cool J, Snoop Doggy Dog, Bokeem Woodbine. Dir: Darin Scott. 1/6
Suicide Kings *(formerly Boys Night Out)*, Dra/Thr, 107 min. Christopher Walken, Henry Thomas. Dir: Peter O'Fallow.

October
Still Breathing, Rom, 109 min. Brendan Fraser, Joanna Going, Ann Magnuson. Dir: James F. Robinson. 1/23 ltd

Phaedra
Gonin *(Japan)*, Act, 104 min. Takeshi Kitano. Dir: Takashi Ishii.

BOXOFFICE Independent Feature Chart DECEMBER 1997

Sony Classics
Afterglow, Rom/Dra. Nick Nolte, Julie Christie. Dir: Alan Rudolph.

Strand
La Sentinelle *(France)*, Thr, 144 min. Emmanuel Salinger. Dir: Arnaud Desplechin.
Toute Vitesse. Elodie Bouchez.

Trimark
The Blackout, Dra. Matthew Modine, Dennis Hopper. Dir: Abel Ferrara.
Star Kid *(formerly Warrior of Waverly Street)*, SF. Joseph Mazzello. Dir: Manny Coto. 1/16

FEBRUARY '98

Artificial Eye
A Summer's Tale *(France)*, Rom/Com. Dir: Eric Rohmer. NY, exp in March

CFP
Junk Mail, Com. Robert Skjaerstad. Dir: Pal Sletaune.
Love and Death on Long Island, Dra. John Hurt, Jason Priestley. Dir: Richard Kwietniowski. 2/27

First Look
Mrs. Dalloway, Dra, 97 min. Vanessa Redgrave, Rupert Graves, Michael Kitchen. Dir: Marleen Gorris. 2/20

First Run
Paul Monette: The Brink of Summer's End, Doc. Dir: Monte Bramer. 2/6

Fox Searchlight
Polish Wedding, Dra. Claire Danes, Gabriel Byrne, Lena Olin. Dir: Theresa Connelly. 2/20

International Film Circuit
Mother and Son *(Germany/Russia)*, Dra, 73 min. Dir: Alexander Sokurov. 2/4

Live
Tarzan & Jane, Rom/Adv. Casper Van Dien. Dir: Carl Schenkel. 2/27 (tentative)

Polygram
310-385-4000
The Borrowers, Fam. John Goodman. Dir: Peter Hewitt.
The Gingerbread Man, Thr. Kenneth Branagh, Embeth Davidtz. Dir: Robert Altman.

Sony Classics
Nil by Mouth, Dra. Kathy Burke, Edna Dore. Dir: Gary Oldman.

Strand
Ayn Rand: A Sense of Life, Doc. Dir: Michael Paxton.
The Mummy. Alison Elliot. Dir: Michael Almereyda. 2/13
Nights of Cabiria *(Italy, 1957 reissue)*, Dra. Dir: Federico Fellini.

MARCH '98

Dreamworks SKG
Paulie: A Parrot's Tale. Tony Shalhoub, Gena Rowlands. Dir: John Roberts. 3/20

Fox Searchlight
Cousin Bette, Dra. Jessica Lange, Elisabeth Shue, Bob Hoskins. Dir: Des McAnuff. 3/20
Slums of Beverly Hills. Alan Arkin, Marisa Tomei. Dir: Tamara Jenkins.

Gramercy
Long Time, Nothing New, Dra/Rom. Lauren Holly, Blythe Danner, Jon Bon Jovi, Edward Burns. Dir: Edward Burns.

Sony Classics
A Friend of the Deceased *(Ukraine)*, Dra/Thr. Alexandre Laza. Dir: Vyacheslav Krishtofovich.
Men With Guns, Dra. Federico Luppi. Dir: John Sayles.

APRIL '98

Live
The Substitute 2. Treat Williams, B.D. Wong. Dir: Steven Pearl. 4/3

Polygram
Barney's Great Adventures, Fam. Trevor Morgan, Diana Rice, Kyle Pratt, George Hearn, Shirley Douglas. Dir: Steve Gomer.

MAY '98

Gramercy
What Rats Won't Do *(U.K.)*, Rom/Com. Natascha McElhone, James Frain. Dir: Alaistair Reid.

Live
The Second Arrival, SF. Patrick Muldoon, Jane Sibbett. Dir: Kevin Tenny. 5/8

JUNE '98

Dreamworks SKG
Saving Private Ryan, Dra. Tom Hanks, Ed Burns, Tom Sizemore, Matt Damon. Dir: Steven Spielberg. 6/12

Gramercy
Clay Pigeons. Janeane Garofalo, Vince Vaughn. Dir: David Dobkin.

FORTHCOMING

Artistic License
Color of a Brisk and Leaping Day, Dra. Dir: Christopher Munch.

Cinema Village
212-431-5119
Cartoon Noir, Ani, 85 min.

Dove
310-786-1600
Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, Com/SF. Douglas Adams.

Dreamworks SKG
Antz, Ani. Voices: Woody Allen, Danny Glover, Sylvester Stallone. Dir: Eric Darnell, Larry Guterman, Tim Johnson. 1999
El Dorado: City of Gold, Ani. Voices: Kevin Kline, Kenneth Branagh, Rosie Perez, Armand Assante. Dir: Will Finn, David Silverman. 1999
Keeper.
Neanderthal.
The Prince of Egypt, Ani. Voices: Val Kilmer, Steve Martin, Ralph Fiennes, Martin Short, Sandra Bullock. Dir: Brenda Chapman, Steve Hickner, Simon Wells. Nov. '98
Shrek, Ani. Voices: Chris Farley, Janean Garofalo, Eddie Murphy. Dir: Kelly Asbury, Andrew Adamson. 1999
Small Soldiers.
Untitled Neil Jordan *(formerly Blue Vision, In Dreams)*. Annette Bening. Dir: Neil Jordan. Fall 1998

Fine Line
Didier *(France)*. Alain Chabat. Dir: Alain Chabat.
Esmeralda Comes by Night *(Mexico)*, Com. Maria Rojo. Dir: Jamie Humberto Hermosillo.
Girl Talk, Dra/Com. Troy Beyer, Randi Ingerman, Page Brewster. Dir: Troy Beyer.
The Legend of the Pianist on the Ocean, Dra. Tim Roth. Dir: Giuseppe Tornatore. Sept. '98
Passion in the Desert, Dra. Ben Daniels, Michel Piccoli. Dir: Lavinia Currier. May
Pecker. Edward Furlong. Dir: John Waters. Aug. '98
Red Violin. Samuel L. Jackson. Dir: Francois Girard.
When I Close My Eyes *(Japan) (formerly Love Letter, Letters of Love)*, Rom/Com, PG, 116 min. Miho Nakayama, Etsushi Toyokawa. Dir: Shunji Iwai.
Wild Man Blues.

First Look
The Other Side of Sunday *(Norway)*, Dra, 104 min. Bjorn Sundquist, Hildegunn Riise, Maria Theisen. Dir: Berit Nesheim.
This is the Sea, Dra. Richard Harris, Gabriel Byrne, John Lynch.

First Run
Didn't Do It for Love, Doc, 80 min. Dir: Monika Treut. April/May

Fox Searchlight
Ship of Fools *(aka Shooting Fish)*, Dra/Com. Tony Shalhoub, Stanley Tucci, Isabella Rossellini. Dir: Stanley Tucci.

Gramercy
Body Count, Act. Ving Rhames, Forest Whitaker, David Caruso. Dir: Robert Patton Spruill.
Elizabeth I, Dra. Geoffrey Rush, Cate Blanchett. Dir: Shekhar Kapur.
The Hi-Lo Country. Woody Harrelson, Billy Crudup. Dir: Stephen Frears.
I Want You, Rom/Dra. Rachel Weisz, Alessandro Nivola. Dir: Michael Winterbottom.
Land Girls, Dra. Gwyneth Paltrow, Rachel Weisz. Dir: David Leland.
Photographing Fairies. Peter O'Toole.
Plunkett and Macleane, Act/Adv. Robert Carlyle, Liv Tyler, Jonny Lee Miller. Dir: Jake Scott.

Greycat
A Gun for Jennifer, Thr.

Gurney
212-838-2929
Follow the Bitch, Com.

Legacy
213-467-3700
The Leading Man, Dra. Jon Bon Jovi. Dir: John Duigan.

Live
Joyride. Benecia Del Toro.
The Breakup. Bridget Fonda.

October
The Apostle, Dra. Robert Duvall, Miranda Richardson, Farrah Fawcett. Dir: Robert Duvall.
Condo Painting, Doc. Dir: John McNaughton.
Hearts and Minds, Thr, R, 105 min. Dir: Ralph Ziman.
The Naked Man, Com. Michael Rapaport, Rachael Leigh Cook. Dir: J. Todd Anderson.
Orgazmo. Trey Parker. Dir: Trey Parker.
Three Seasons, Dra. Harvey Keitel. Dir: Tony Bui.
24/7. Bob Hoskins. Dir: Shane Meadows.
Untitled Todd Solondz.

Polygram
What Dreams May Come. Robin Williams, Annabella Sciorra, Cuba Gooding Jr.

Shadow
207-872-5111
La Petite Apocalypse *(France)*, Com/Dra, 110 min. Pierre Arditi. Dir: Constantin Costa-Gavras.

Shooting Gallery
212-431-6759
illtown, Dra. Michael Rapaport, Lili Tyalor.

Trimark
Bombshell. Henry Thomas, Frank Whaley. Dir: Paul Wayne.

Zeitgeist
Murders and Murders. Yvonne Rainers.

Boxoffice Magazine presents



MovieFone's Moviegoer Activity Report

For the Month of September 1997

MovieFone® (777-FILM®) and its sister service, MovieLink® Online, are now the single largest source of movie showtime information in the country, providing information to over 12 million moviegoers each month. The following information represents the most requested theatres and exhibitors on MovieFone.

Top 10 Exhibitors & Theatres

Most Requested Exhibitors

Rank	Exhibitor	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
1	United Artists	474,036	1
2	AMC	464,955	2
3	Sony	424,394	4
4	Cineplex Odeon	418,689	3
5	General Cinema	245,485	5
6	Cinemark	145,143	7
7	Century	141,333	6
8	Mann	108,348	12
9	National Amusements	99,165	9
10	Regal	98,826	10

Most Requested Theatres

Rank	Market	Theatre	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
1	NY	Sony Lincoln Square	41,430	1
2	LA	AMC Century 14	29,866	2
3	NY	Sony 19th St. East	22,709	15
4	BO	Sony Cheri	20,722	12
5	NY	Sony Orpheum	19,749	9
6	MI	Cobb Palace 18	19,013	6
7	NY	CO Worldwide Cinemas	17,737	11
8	PH	UA Riverview Plaza	17,365	3
9	PH	UA Cheltenham	17,223	4
10	LA	CO Beverly Center	16,950	13

Most Requested Theatres Per Screen

Total Requests	Rank	Theatre (# screens)	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
New York	1	Sony Astor (1)	7,655	1
741,746	2	Sony Tower East (1)	6,406	39
	3	CO Coronet 1 & 2 (2)	8,653	2
Los Angeles	1	Mann National (1)	5,395	1
519,200	2	San Los Feliz (1)	3,733	8
	3	CO Century Plaza (4)	13,527	14
Dallas	1	Granada Movie Grill (1)	1,356	3
399,817	2	AMC Highland Park (4)	4,814	1
	3	AMC Forum (6)	6,823	2
Miami	1	AMC Kendall T&C (10)	14,004	1
249,958	2	GCC Riviera (4)	4,968	10
	3	Cobb Miami Lakes (10)	11,570	5
San Francisco	1	Blm Royal (1)	4,154	3
211,041	2	Blm Regency (1)	3,059	11
	3	Blm Alhambra (1)	2,879	18
Philadelphia	1	Cinemagic (3)	9,598	3
185,768	2	UA Sameric (4)	11,633	1
	3	UA Cheltenham (8)	17,223	2
Boston	1	Sony Cheri (4)	20,722	1
180,615	2	FEI Somerville (1)	2,920	2
	3	Sony Nickelodeon (5)	12,379	7
Chicago	1	CO Broadway (1)	2,231	9
162,818	2	Village North (1)	1,510	1
	3	Sony Webster Place (8)	10,433	3
Phoenix	1	Hark Cine Capri (1)	1,355	3
147,854	2	Century Glendale (9)	8,435	1
	3	UA Christown Mall (6)	5,134	2
Houston	1	CO River Oaks Plaza (12)	10,109	1
127,349	2	GCC Point Nasa (6)	3,517	7
	3	Dollar Clearlake (8)	4,496	8
Toronto	1	Famous Plaza (2)	3,213	8
103,185	2	Famous Eglinton (1)	1,552	2
	3	Famous Yorkdale (6)	6,126	5
Kansas City	1	Dksn Glenwood (4)	3,001	1
79,210	2	AMC Crown Center (6)	4,087	11
	3	Dksn Westglen (12)	7,618	3

Total Requests	Rank	Theatre (# screens)	Total Requests	Last Month's Rank
Atlanta	1	UA Tara (4)	1,605	10
74,349	2	AMC Galleria (8)	2,915	1
	3	North Springs (2)	709	17
Seattle	1	Landmk Egyptian (1)	1,413	21
74,167	2	Act III Mountlake (9)	8,469	3
	3	CO Northgate (1)	798	6
San Diego	1	Landmk Cove (1)	617	20
73,499	2	Mann Cinema 21 (1)	534	2
	3	The Vogue (1)	439	3
Denver	1	UA Continental (6)	3,272	7
70,501	2	Landmk Esquire (2)	1,066	32
	3	AMC Buckingham (6)	2,660	2
Minneapolis	1	Lankdmk Uptown (1)	1,133	10
57,755	2	GCC Shelard Park (5)	2,352	1
	3	CO Edina (4)	1,824	20
Nashville	1	Carmike Belcourt Twin (2)	1,379	14
55,725	2	Carmike Hickory (8)	5,363	2
	3	Carmike Lion's Head (5)	2,689	4
Las Vegas	1	Gold Coast Twin (2)	1,193	2
49,678	2	UA Showcase (8)	4,279	1
	3	Century Cinedome (12)	5,616	7
Cleveland	1	Regal Severance (8)	4,228	1
47,567	2	General Southgate (3)	1,439	2
	3	GCC Parmatown (5)	1,941	4
Washington, DC	1	CO Uptown (1)	1,319	2
44,973	2	CO Embassy (1)	871	3
	3	CO West End (4)	1,649	4
San Antonio	1	Act III Mission D-I (4)	1,928	4
39,211	2	Act III Rolling Oaks (6)	2,703	3
	3	Act III Embassy (14)	6,059	5
Detroit	1	Star Taylor (10)	2,640	1
33,851	2	Star Lincoln Park (8)	1,645	4
	3	NA Dearborn (8)	1,459	6
Sacramento	1	Century Century 21 (1)	1,005	1
28,583	2	Century Sacramento D-I (6)	2,356	2
	3	UA Market Square (6)	2,267	4

Top 3 Actively* Requested Theatres:

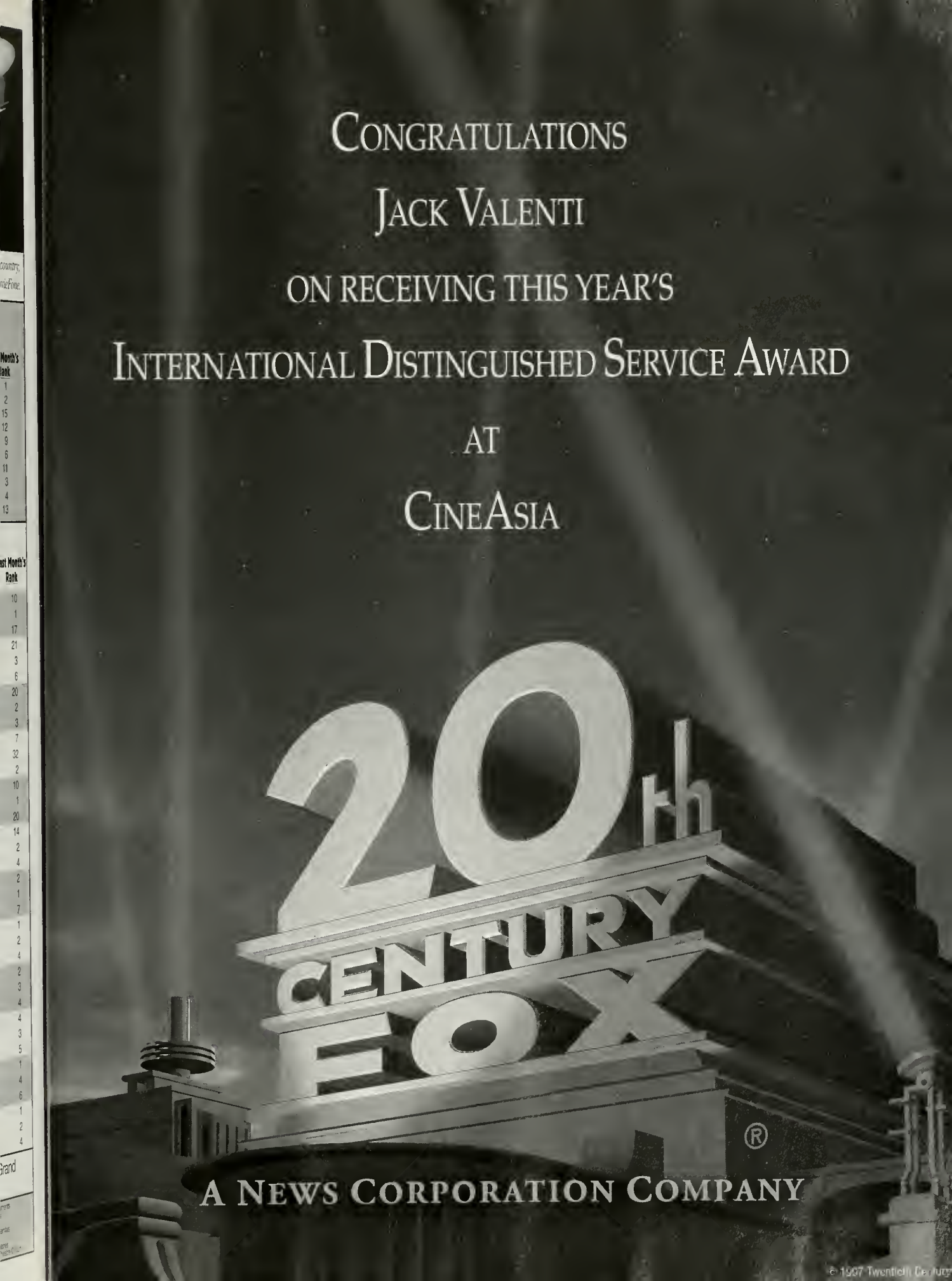
1. CO Worldwide New York, NY
2. Sony Lincoln Sq. New York, NY
3. AMC The Grand Dallas, TX

*Caller specifically requested theatre

Key to Exhibitors

AMC	AMC Theatres, Inc.	Cobb	Cobb Theatres	Hark	Harkins Theatres	NA	National Amusements
Act III	Act III Theatres	Dksn	Dickinson Theatres	Landmk	Landmark Theatre Corp	Pacific	Pacific Theatres
Blm	Blumenfeld Theatres	Famous	Famous Players	Laemmle	Laemmle Theatres	Regal	Regal Cinemas
Carmike	Carmike Cinemas, Inc.	Fei	Fei Theatres	Mann	Mann Theatres	San	San Carlos Cinemas
Century	Century Theatres	Kings	Kings Cinema	Mann MN	Mann Minneapolis	Sony	Sony Theatres
CityCin	City Cinemas	GCC	General Cinema Theatres	Met	Metropolitan Theatres Corp	Star	Loews-Star Theatres
CO	Cineplex Odeon Corp	General	General Theatres	MJR	MJR Theatre Service	UA	United Artists Theatre Circuit

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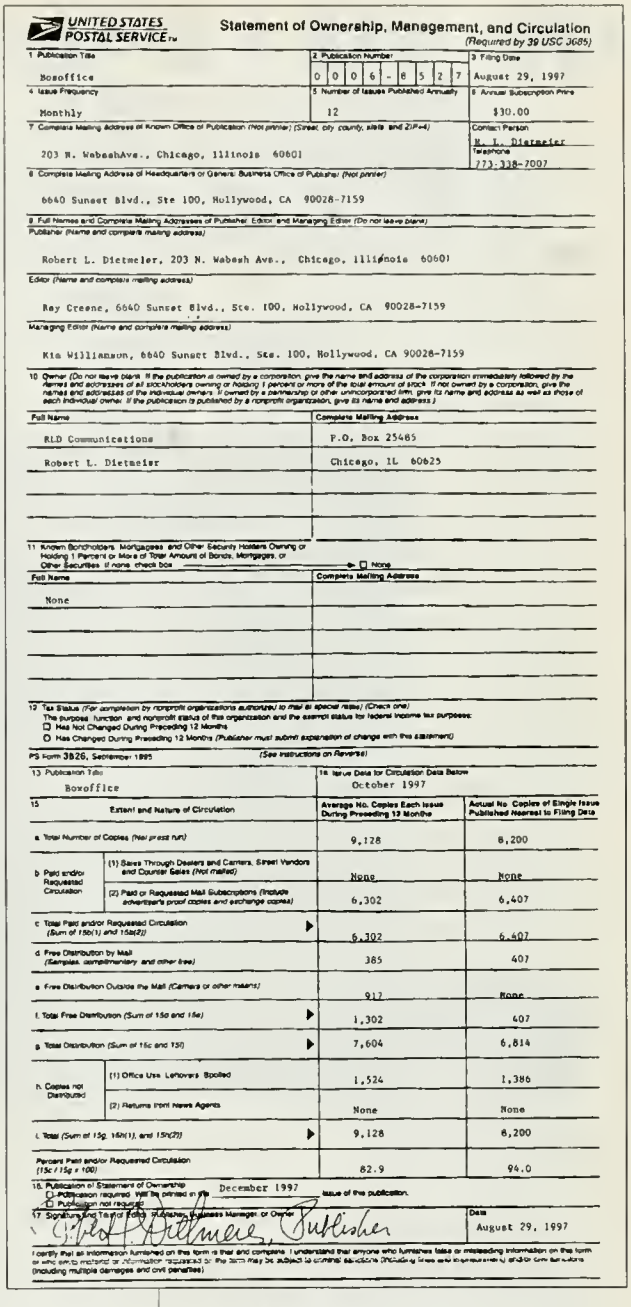
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The Big Picture

The *auteur* theory pioneered by a maverick group of French film critics back in the 1950s opened up a lot of ground for American filmmakers. Basing their methodology on a group of journeyman Hollywood directors whose works had never received any serious evaluation previously, these writers, almost all of whom worked for the legendary *Cahier du Cinema* under editor Andre Bazin, devised a way to look at a body of work (the French word *oeuvre* is still used for this type of approach) and to declare "authorship" (in French "*auteurism*") when unifying genius could be discerned. The impact of the *Cahier* critics, whose ranks included future filmmakers Francois Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard, elevated directors like Hitchcock, Kurosawa, Howard Hawks and Orson Welles into the upper rank of world artists.



A side effect of *auterism* was a new type of creative bond between actors and directors. *Auteurism* made it possible—in some cases, *desirable*—to locate the director-artist's presence inside his work. It became almost inevitable that if "authorship" was now to be conferred on filmmakers, the best of them would claim it in part through forming specialized relationships with talent.

Just as James Joyce had Steven Daedelus as his literary double, Godard had his Jean-Paul Belmondo, Fellini his Marcello Mastroianni, Scorsese his Robert De Niro, Kurosawa his Toshiro Mifune. In the aftermath of *auteurism*, collaborations between directors and particular actors who could be viewed as standing in for the filmmaker's moral and aesthetic concerns took on an added layer of meaning, an extra dimension of import and seriousness. Though this "doubling" approach wasn't new (John Ford's decades of collaboration with John Wayne spring to mind), the *auteurist* critics devised the methodology which helped astute observers to find hidden subtexts in these specialized collaborations—collaborations which, more often than not, were accomplished enough to live up to all that analytical heat.

Such a collaboration was the one between director John Woo with his favorite Hong Kong actor, Chow Yun-Fat, in the late 1980s and early '90s. In his native country, Chow's stardom—like De Niro's, Belmondo's and Mastroianni's—transcended his relative handful of Woo appearances: As one of Asia's topmost boxoffice attractions, he occupied (and still holds) a position with Asia's audiences similar to the one held by Mel Gibson or Tom Cruise in the U.S. But it was Chow's Woo titles—especially "A Better Tomorrow" (Woo's 1986 Hong Kong breakthrough), "The Killer" (perhaps the best *film noir* made anywhere since the 1940s), and "Hard-Boiled" (the torqued-up actioner that launched Woo's U.S. career)—which sealed Chow's persona for millions of moviegoers all over the world.

It has gone almost unnoticed in the U.S. that Woo—one of the hottest directors in the industry in the aftermath of back-to-back blockbusters "Broken Arrow" and "Face/Off"—is actually a very serious-minded and thematically consistent director. Like Hawks', Woo's best films revolve around loyalty; like Ford, he believes in the mythos of the heroic loner; like the American *noir* directors of the 1940s, his heroes move through a corrupt world, trying (and often failing) to keep some little social or spiritual corner of it safe from harm. "The Killer"—Woo's best film to date—is an instructive case in point: In it, a dispassionate hitman accidentally blinds a bargirl during an execution gone wrong, and then discovers he has a conscience when he tries—and fails—to atone for his sins against her.

Chow Yun-Fat played the title character in "The Killer," just as he stood at the moral center of each of Woo's best Hong Kong features with the exception of the little-seen "Bullet in the Head." As an icon, Chow's reputation preceded him (and Woo) within the American movie business: The shades, the dustcoat, the unapologetic cigarette and Chow's ambidextrous way with a pair of guns, have been showing up in dozens of American movies since the early 1990s—films by everyone from Quentin Tarantino at one end of the spectrum to Roger Christian at the other.

Despite their many imitators, what no one has captured about the Woo/Chow collaborations is something ineffable—an indescribable but essential quality that words can't quantify but which, during the films' very best moments, was writ large upon Chow's quicksilver changeling face. Where Jackie Chan remains Hong Kong's ultimate acrobat of physical space, Chow represents something quite different but ultimately as impressive: in Woo's hands (and in Chow's intermittent collaborations with Tsui Hark and Ringo Lam), he became the Hong Kong cinema's gymnast of emotion, an actor capable of Schwarzenegger-like physical heroism, but with a sense of moral and psychological intensity worthy of a Chinese Olivier.

American moviemaking has already been invigorated by John Woo's presence in Hollywood. With "The Replacement Killers," Chow Yun-Fat is poised to follow his mentor's lead by making his American movie debut. While it's doubtful that most moviegoers will understand the full significance of that fact—Chow, like Woo before him, has been positioned relative to his most marketable feature, the fact in this case that he looks great with a gun—this is nevertheless a moment for celebration on at least two fronts. A great filmic artist is about to arrive for the first time in mainstream American moviehouses. And perhaps more importantly, Woo and Chow are now operating again in relative proximity, which makes some sort of future collaboration all but certain. May their future projects together be fruitful and multiply.—***Ray Greene***







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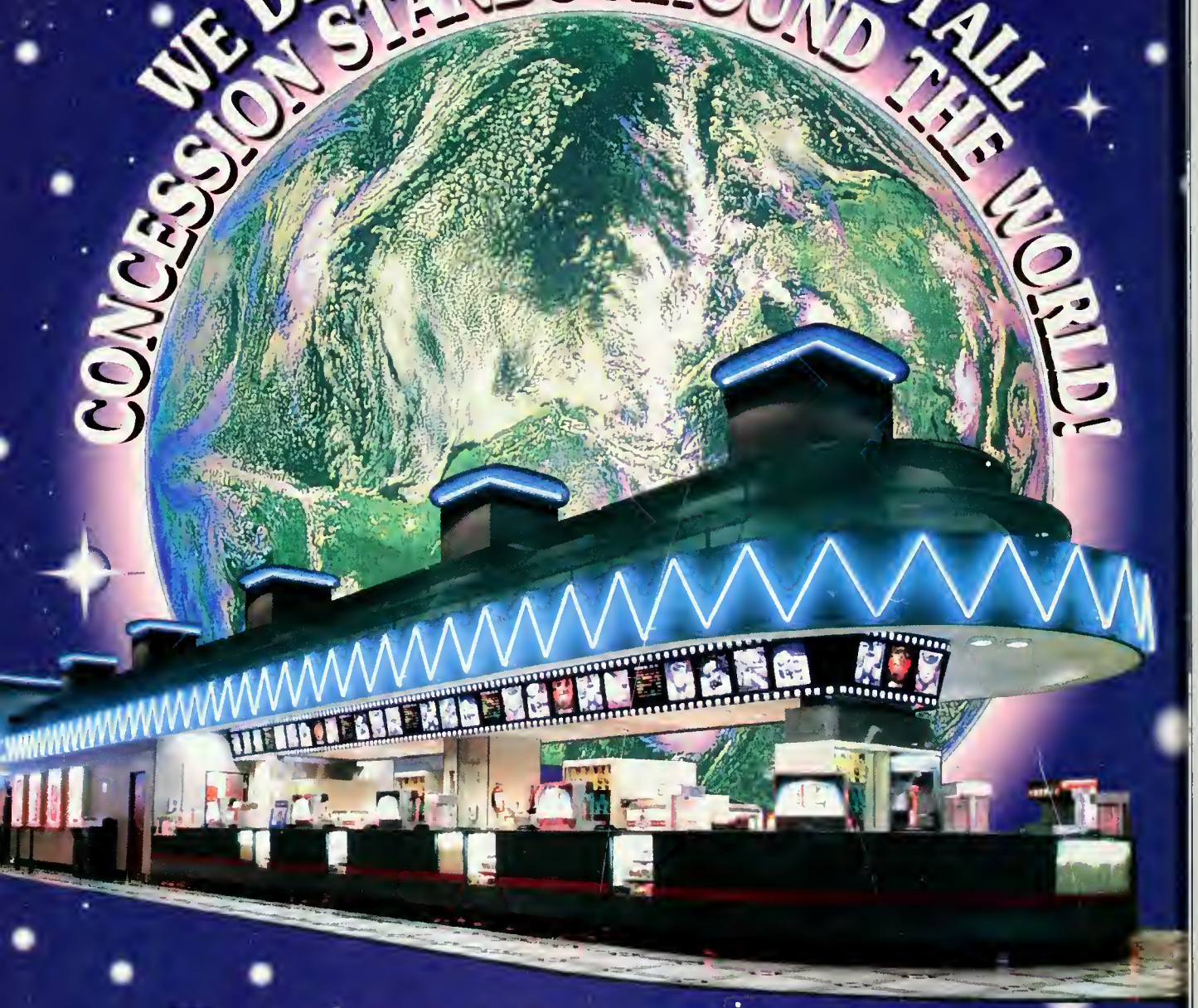
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